

# WEST CHICAGO HISTORICAL PRESERVATION COMMISSION

June 25, 2013

*Approved at the November 19, 2013 meeting.*

## Members Present:

Janet Hale  
Richard Vigsnes  
Jennifer Timbrook  
Cheryl Waterman  
Garth Keck  
Blake Kennedy

## Guests:

Luann Bombard  
Dave Sabathne  
Robert Collier  
Steve Treudt

## Special Counsel for the Commission:

## Staff:

Keith Letsche

Jeff Harris  
John Said

### 1. Call to Order, Roll Call and establishment of a Quorum

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 p.m. A quorum was established.

### 2. Certificate of Appropriateness Review

#### a. 425 E. Washington St.

The homeowner is requesting approval to tear off and replace the existing asphalt shingle roof. The new shingles will be Owens Corning 35 year architectural asphalt Onyx Black in color. The property is a contributing factor in the East Washington Street Historical District. A motion was made to approve as presented by Commissioner Timbrook, Second by Commissioner Waterman. The motion was approved with an all aye vote.

#### b. 131 Fremont St.

The applicant is proposing to replace four 49" x 49" windows on the back side of the building. One was damaged by fire and the applicant is proposing to replace four so they have the same appearance. The replacement windows will be energy efficient double pane, clad brown, single light, non-opening, calked to the brick. A motion was made to approve as presented by Commissioner Vigsnes, second by Commissioner Timbrook. The motion was approved with an all aye vote.

#### c. 151 W. Washington St.

The architectural and historical significance of this structure and its contribution to the Turner Junction Historic District and to the historic fabric of DuPage County is well documented and has not been disputed. It is the finest example of Second Empire architecture in DuPage County, was the home of two very prominent West Chicago citizens. Joel Wiant built the house in 1898 next door to his dry goods business. He served as Assessor, Town Collector, Highway Commissioner of Wayne Township and DuPage County Treasurer.

The Wiant House is the only existing Second Empire building from this time period in West Chicago. The City of West Chicago Comprehensive Survey, by Dixon Associates, AIA Architects in 1990, identified the historic district significance of this structure as “Contributing” – the highest rating. It also cited the exterior condition as “Excellent” and noted that this building has not had major exterior alterations to the street façade. The distinctive architectural features of this style are present, and the building has been found structurally sound – as determined by both the Commission's Special Consultants, Gallagher & Associates in May 2013, and the City's own expert witness, Matocha, in the Review dated January 31, 2013.

The Wiant House at 151 W. Washington Street has been recognized by many organizations and agencies, including but not limited to:

- State of Illinois Historical Structures Survey of 1971 - 1975
- Historic Landmarks Survey
- DuPage County Historical Museum – recognized for Second Empire-style
- Cultural and Historic Sites Survey done by the DuPage County Regional Planning Commission, updated in 1992.
- Landmark Illinois’ 2013 list of *Ten Most Endangered Historic Places in Illinois*. The letter from Landmarks Illinois announcing the press release states that this list, which has been announced every year from 1995, is based on input from Landmarks Illinois professional staff, board members, and preservationists from across the state.
- Glen Ellyn Historical Preservation Commission
- Numerous notations, including both the structure and the history of the occupants, on the City of West Chicago website and the West Chicago Museum
- Illinois Historic Preservation Agency,
- United States Department of Interior,
- National Park Service related to the National Register of Historic Places eligibility.

In determining whether to issue or deny a Certificate of Appropriateness, the Commission shall consider, among other things, the effect of the proposed construction, alteration, removal or demolition upon historic, esthetic or architectural value, characteristics and significance of the historic district, according to the five criteria listed in the Municipal Code, Section 4-95(e) which are as follow.

1. The maintenance of the significant original qualities or character of the structure or property, including, if significant, its landscape. The removal or alteration of any historic or distinctive architectural features should be avoided when possible.
2. The compatibility of the architectural style and design detailing the proposed construction, alteration, addition or repair with the original architecture of the landmark or styles within the historic district.
3. The compatibility of the general design, arrangement, scale, texture or materials of the construction or alteration, with the historic, esthetic or architectural values, characteristics and significance of the historic district and/or landmark.
4. The relationship of the location of the construction, alteration, or demolition to the streets, public or semipublic ways and any other improvement or property within a historic district.
5. It is recommended that construction, alteration and demolition shall be done in accordance with the following:

- a. All buildings, structures and sites should be recognized as products of their own time. Alterations that have no historical basis and which seek to create an earlier appearance should be discouraged.
- b. Exterior physical changes which may have taken place in the course of time are evidence of the history and development of a building, structure or site and its environment. These changes may have acquired significance in their own right, and this significance should be recognized and respected.
- c. Distinctive stylistic features or examples of skilled craftsmanship which characterize a building, structure, or site should be treated with sensitivity.
- d. Deteriorated Architectural features should be repaired rather than replaced, whenever possible. In the event replacement is necessary, the new material need not be identical to but should match the material being replaced in composition, design, color, texture and other visual qualities.
- e. The surface cleaning of structure should be undertaken with the gentlest means possible. Abrasive cleaning and other cleaning methods that will damage the historic building materials should not be undertaken.
- f. Every reasonable effort should be made to protect and preserve archaeological resources affected by, or adjacent to, any project.
- g. Contemporary design for alterations for alterations and additions to existing properties should not be discouraged when such alterations and additions do not destroy significant historical, architectural or cultural materials, and such design is compatible with the size, scale, color, material and character of the property, neighborhood or environment as outlined:
  1. *Height.* The height of the proposed structure or additions or alterations should be compatible with surrounding structures.
  2. *Proportions of structure's front façade.* The proportions and relationships between the width and height of the proposed structure should be compatible with nearby structures
  3. *Proportions of openings into facility.* The proportions and relationships between doors and windows should be compatible with existing structures.
  4. *Relationship of building masses and spaces.* The relationship of a structure to the open space between it and adjoining structures should be compatible.
  5. *Roof Shapes.* The design of the roof should be compatible with adjoining structures.
  6. *Landscape and appurtenances.* Landscaping and the use of appurtenances should be sensitive to the individual structures, its occupants and their needs. Further, the landscape treatment should be compatible with surrounding structures and landscapes.
  7. *Scale of structure.* The scale of the structure should be compatible with surrounding structures.
  8. *Directional expression of front elevation.* Street facades should blend with other structures with regard to directional expression. When adjacent structures have a dominant horizontal or vertical expression, this should be carried over and reflected.
  9. *Architectural details.* Architectural details and materials should be incorporated as necessary to relate the new with the old and to preserve and enhance the inherent characteristics of that area.
- h. Whenever possible, new additions or alterations to structures should be done in such manner that if such additions or alterations were to be removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the structure would not be impaired.

Under the above criteria, the City did not show that demolition of the Wiant House would not have a negative impact on the Turner Junction Historic District. The City's claim of economic unviability was based upon income projections solely from the Wiant House parcel per appraiser Ken Pollach at a highest and best use as commercial on the first floor and residential on the second floor.

The City's testimony indicated that an RFQ respondent was still being considered. Additionally, Dave Sabathne, President of the West Chicago Community Center said they were willing to undertake the restoration with a commitment of \$400,000 for that purpose. Also, there is no finalized plan for the redevelopment for the assemblage of properties that the City has acquired. The City bought this property with full knowledge of its protected status and also that the property might not be able to be demolished. Commissioner Vigsnes remarked that volunteer workers could be found to do much of the work, under supervision of a professional. Also suppliers could be asked to donate materials in return for publicity.

Luann Bombard, retired Director of the City Museum, made the following presentation: "I worked for City government for 26 years and I understand that a City needs to provide good streets, water and sewer service, police protection and through Community Development, oversee the built environment to protect residents health and safety, but also to protect the buildings, the streetscape which reflects the history of development and the identity of the community. Every community has a unique built environment to preserve. Here, there is a collection of 1870's buildings which reflects the first commercial boom of this community and the wealth that it brought including The Ripley, Turner Town Hall, 1869 C&NW Depot and the Wiant House. These buildings help to define who you are and reflects your unique history—your railroad history. You are the current caretakers of this unique built environment and it is on your watch that the Wiant House needs your help. We will come and go, but the built environment is your legacy for the future and it is worth protecting. It is truly priceless. The City's Motto is *Where History and Progress Meet*. I would suggest taking a step further and make it *Where History and Progress Work Together*. If you all could put your energy into working together, just think what you might be able to accomplish."

Letters were read, in favor of saving the Wiant House, from Jeff Stibal, the DuPage County Historical Society, the West Chicago Historical Society and the Glen Ellyn Historic Preservation Commission (these letters are attached).

A motion was made by Commissioner Waterman, seconded by Commissioner Timbrook for Commission Chairman, Janet Hale, to work with the Commission's Special Counsel, Keith Letsche, to draft a document based on this discussion and the testimony and evidence from the Public Hearing to be delivered at a Special Meeting on July 3, 2013. The motion passed by an all aye vote.

**d. 100 Arbor Ave.**

The issues of the sign's size and lettering font size, were resolved, from the original presentation on May 28, 2013. The bench was removed. A motion to approve as presented was made by Commissioner Timbrook, second by Commissioner Waterman. The motion passed by an all aye vote.

**3. Preliminary Review**

None.

**4. Historic District/Landmark Update**

None.

**5. Approval of Minutes**

**a. May 28, 2013**

A motion was made to approve by Commissioner Timbrook, second by Commissioner Vigsnes. The motion passed by four aye votes. Commissioners Waterman and Kennedy abstained.

**6. Adjournment**

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Commissioner Vigsnes, second by Commissioner Timbrook. The motion passed by an all aye vote. The meeting was adjourned at 8:29 p.m.

June 25, 2013

Jeffrey Stibal  
424 Highland Ave  
West Chicago, IL

To the commissioners of the West Chicago Historical Preservation Commission,

Due to a scheduling conflict, I am not able to attend tonight's meeting.  
I would like to submit a comment for public participation, or correspondence received.

The Description of Project of the Certificate of Appropriateness, COA #: 12-20, written by Jeff Harris states:  
"The demolition is necessary as part of the City's Downtown Redevelopment project. The city is pursuing demolition because a contractor/developer could not be found ....."

I would like it known to the Historical Commission that the West Chicago city staff has received and is reviewing an RFQ submitted by Town Builders Studio prior to its' March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2013 deadline.

On June 10<sup>th</sup>, the West Chicago Development Committee began a discussion with Town Builders Studio of Riverside, IL. They presented a conceptual review of a Potential Mixed-Use Development of the NW corner of Washington Street and Fremont streets. The development included the proposed new city hall as well as the rehabilitation of the Wiant House. A copy of this presentation should be available to the commission since it was presented to the Development Committee in an open meeting.

I have attached a portion of COA 12-20 relevant to the comments above, the meeting agenda of the Development Committee from June 10<sup>th</sup>, and information from Town Studio's website for your review.

I ask that the West Chicago Historical Preservation Commission reaffirm its' denial of the Certificate of Appropriateness, COA #: 12-20.  
Thank you.

Jeffrey Stibal

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION  
AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY

ITEM TITLE:

Demolition  
151 W. Washington St.  
City of West Chicago

C.O.A. # 12-20

AGENDA ITEM NUMBER: 2d

COMMISSION AGENDA DATE: 8-28-12

STAFF REVIEW: Jeff Harris, City Planner

SIGNATURE

John Fincham, Building Official

SIGNATURE

ITEM SUMMARY:

The City acquired the property containing historic structure known as the Joel Wiant House approximately 2 years ago. The acquisition was driven by the City's Downtown Redevelopment Plan to create a new municipal campus on the north side of West Washington Street west of Fremont Street. The previous owner let the property fall into severe disrepair with respect to the exterior of the structure. Knowing the historical significance of the structure the City has attempted to find a suitable developer capable of restoring and preserving the character building so that it could remain intact within the City's proposed redevelopment area. Unfortunately over the past 9 months the City has not received the desired response from ~~developers~~ specializing in historic preservation and is pursuing the secondary option of demolishing the structure. Please note that the City is continuing the pursuit of the building's preservation until such time that the City Council determines another course of action is desired.

ACTIONS PROPOSED:

Consideration of the demolition of historic structure located at 151 W. Washington Street.

APPLICATION FOR CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS

PAGE 2

DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT:

(Include items listed under Submittal Requirements)

Demolition of the former residential structure known as the Joel Wiant House. The demolition is necessary as part of the City's Downtown Redevelopment project. The City is pursuing demolition because a contractor/developer could not be found making restoration of the deteriorated structure possible.



# CITY OF WEST CHICAGO

WHERE HISTORY & PROGRESS MEET

## DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Monday, June 10, 2013  
7:00 P.M. - Council Chambers

### AGENDA

1. Call to Order, Roll Call, and Establishment of a Quorum
2. Selection of a Vice-Chairman
3. Approval of Minutes
  - A. Development Committee of May 13, 2013
4. Public Participation
5. Items for Consent
6. Items for Discussion
  - A. Downtown Redevelopment Opportunity - Town Builder Studios
7. Unfinished Business
8. New Business
9. Reports from Staff
10. Adjournment

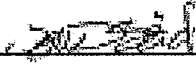
475 West Street  
West Chicago, Illinois  
60185

TEL: 708-433-2800  
FAX: 708-433-2002  
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Robert Pardo  
Mayor  
Nancy A. Smith  
City Clerk

Michael A. Heinen  
City Administrator

# CITY OF WEST CHICAGO

DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY	
<b>ITEM TITLE:</b> Conceptual Review Town Builder Studios Potential Mixed-Use Development at NW Corner of Washington and Fremont Streets	<b>AGENDA ITEM NUMBER:</b> <u>16. A.</u> <b>FILE NUMBER:</b> _____ <b>COMMITTEE AGENDA DATE:</b> June 10, 2013 <b>COUNCIL AGENDA DATE:</b> _____
<b>STAFF REVIEW:</b> John D. Said	<b>SIGNATURE:</b> 
<b>APPROVED BY CITY ADMINISTRATOR:</b> Michael Guttman	<b>SIGNATURE:</b> _____
<b>ITEM SUMMARY:</b> <p>Mr. Jim Louthen and the development team of Town Builder Studios (TBS) propose a mixed-use development on the City-owned +/- 14 acre site at the northwest corner of Washington and Fremont Streets. Prior to getting into more detail, or further pursuing this concept, Mr. Louthen will appear before the Development Committee on June 10 to meet West Chicago officials, to obtain their input regarding this idea.</p> <p>The TBS concept proposes residential, commercial and municipal uses on the site, with an internal street that corresponds to the existing street/driveway network in the area. It should be emphasized that the concept is only very general in nature at this time, with a parcel subdivision plan that is limited to showing general land uses.</p> <p>The plan is within the larger Draft booklet submitted by Mr. Louthen/TBS in response to the City's RFQ (Request for Qualifications) for renovation of 151 W. Washington. Therefore, 151's renovation is identified as a component of the document; however, the proposal takes on a much broader scope with the proposed redevelopment of the 14-acre City-owned site. Overall, the proposal (provided to the Committee by email on May 30), includes the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. City background and history</li> <li>2. Review of 151 W. Washington</li> <li>3. Market Review</li> <li>4. 14-acre Site Analysis</li> <li>5. Development factors, concepts and steps</li> <li>6. Development team qualifications and previous projects</li> </ol> <p>As part of their development terms with the City for this site, TBS would propose a public-private partnership with the City. To determine what next steps to take, if any, staff and the developer seek direction from the Aldermen on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Is the City amenable to having a single developer for the private development that would be</li> </ul>	

constructed as part of this project? (Staff would support this concept as a reasonable and unified approach to development.)

- o What is the Committee's opinion regarding the mix of residential and non-residential uses for this area?
- o Is the City agreeable to the residential component to this plan? If so, is the City amenable to a residential model that is designated for a targeted population (such as disabled veterans)?
- o Historically, the City Council has indicated that price points for residential development should be sufficiently priced to fund the public services (that serve the development); would development with a targeted population offset that policy directive?
- o Is the City agreeable with the sizeable public contribution that will likely be requested? This will likely include the following:
  - "Write-down" of land costs (which is typical of public-private agreements);
  - City provision/financing of infrastructure (road/utilities); and
  - City completion of environmental remediation (which will likely be a requirement no matter what private sector developer is involved).

Conversations with TBS indicate that such aspects may be sought for this project. The City may need to provide such incentives and improvements for any possible redevelopment, although these can be financed through TIF revenues to the extent they are available.

While public-private agreements are fairly common between developers and municipalities, the details of the TBS concept and possible terms remain open for discussion and Development Committee/City Council input and direction.

Should the City be receptive to this concept and with direction based on the answers to the questions noted above, staff and TBS can then determine whether it is appropriate to pursue further steps on a development concept. Should further steps be pursued, they will likely consist of preparation of a draft term sheet outlining primary development and negotiation points for City Council review.

#### **ACTIONS PROPOSED:**

Conceptual review of the potential mixed-use development concept, and desired course of action concerning a potential public-private development agreement based on the requests for policy direction.

#### **COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:**

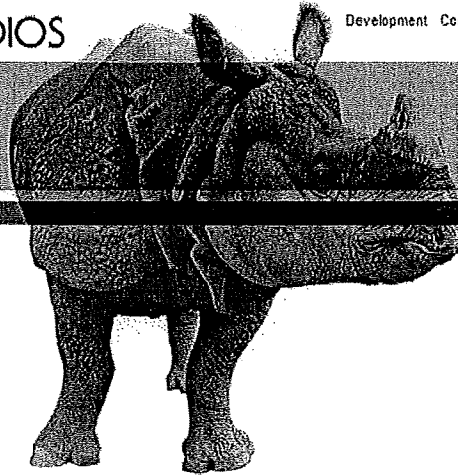


# TOWN BUILDER STUDIOS

Development Construction Consulting Portfolio News Staff Partners

## Welcome

A Development and Design Services Firm



Town Builder Studios is celebrating its' 5th anniversary! We are Town Builders! We are TBS!

Together we are an integrated team of professionals and we routinely partner with the public sector and other private institutions. We are active in the revitalization of distressed communities where we focus on design, economic development, and construction. TBS proactively creates public private partnerships to master-plan, manage, and develop real estate deals that contribute to the growth, fabric, and economy of a community.

For example, today we are servicing our clients and partners delivering master plans and actively developing projects including affordable work-force, senior, and accessible housing. These are being financed through tax credits, Home Funds, Neighborhood Stabilization Program, federal stimulus grants, and debt financing through HUD and USDA. Today we are working nationally including Northeastern Illinois, Florida Keys, and San Juan County New Mexico.

You should contact us if you are ...

- a government entity with blighted areas in your town in need of revitalization;
- a tax credit investor/developer searching for high-score QAP projects;
- a developer in search for deals too'd up for joint venture;
- or if you simply have a personal interest and want to contribute to Town Building!

**Senior Housing Initiative**  
Town Builder Studios is currently developing multiple senior housing projects.

[Read more...](#)

**Wet Ink**  
The latest in community planning



**Robbins TGD  
Neighborhood**

A Rebirth for Robbins

**News**  
TBS is in the news ...



**Cermak Plaza Renovations**



# TOWN BUILDER STUDIOS

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## Development

### Building a Sense of Community

Town Builder Studios provides development services for our own investments as well as for key clients. For a development project to succeed, it requires a team of professionals able to address all of the variables inherent to the project. TBS is a collection of professionals that work together offering complementary development expertise to advance projects from inception to completion.

Town Builder Studios focuses on project management and meeting the project's financial goals, as not enough to stop there, we truly believe that the community as a whole should benefit from the project, therefore establishing a public-private partnership is a key aspect to our strategy.

The following list summarizes our development services:

- Project Management
- Proforma Modeling
- Land Assembly and Site Control
- Entitlement and Zoning
- Project Financing
- Design
- Redevelopment Agreement Negotiation
- Construction Management and Owners Representation
- Property Management Support Services

### Featured Projects



#### Robbins TOD Neighborhood

A Retreat for Robbins



#### Senior Housing Initiative

Providing safe, affordable housing for all age groups



#### Hidden Meadows

Living in the city, on the edge of the forest

**DUPAGE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY**  
**PO BOX 1460 WHEATON IL 60187-1460**

[www.dupagehistory.org](http://www.dupagehistory.org)

June 18, 2013

RECEIVED  
JUN 20 2013

Mayor Ruben Pineda  
West Chicago City Hall  
475 Main Street  
West Chicago, IL 60185

BY: \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Mayor Pineda,

DuPage County is rich with history and respects its heritage.

It is so unfortunate that the Joel Wiant House c. 1869, located in West Chicago, is on the 2013 Statewide Ten Most Endangered Historic Places. It is among the oldest remaining houses in the county and is significant to keep.

**Every effort must be made to save this distinctive landmark as it contributes so much to West Chicago's history and the people of DuPage county. It contributes to what makes West Chicago unique.**

The DuPage County Historical Society Board supports saving this landmark and hopes that West Chicago can utilize it in its plans. It may seem expensive to restore, but if a good plan is developed, it could be done in phases. In addition, adaptive reuse can make this building a strong community component – a focal point – for your residents and tourists visiting West Chicago. This could generate positive publicity, a potential for a positive success story.

From the DCHS's website and the online book section "DuPage Roots" I have attached the chapter submitted by West Chicago in 1985 in case you don't have it.

Sincerely,



Carol Marcus, Co-President  
DuPage County Historical Society (Founded in 1929)

CC: Janet Hale- Chair, West Chicago Historic Preservation Commission  
John Said - Director, Community Development

Attachment



## **West Chicago**

*Jerry Musich*

West Chicago was the first Illinois community created by the coming of railroads. A few settlers owned property in the area of present-day West Chicago as early as the late 1830s. The town itself, however, did not begin to form until 1849-1850, when the tracks of the new Galena & Chicago Union Railroad reached the vicinity. Because several railroads were the principal cause for the creation of West Chicago, a brief survey of the activities of those companies is in order.

The G&CU (which eventually became the Chicago & North Western) was Chicago's first railroad. The laying of its track west from the city began in 1848, with the intent of reaching the Fox River, Rockford, Freeport, and Galena. The railroad arrived in what is now West Chicago in November 1849, and reached Elgin in February 1850.

The decision to lay tracks directly northwest from the West Chicago area to Elgin upset residents of the Fox River communities of Batavia, Geneva and St. Charles. They realized that the new railroads were going to transform the area. For example, the 40-mile mail run by train in 1850 from Chicago to Elgin took three hours, while the 44-mile mail run by stage from Chicago to Aurora to Sugar Grove over mud roads took 16 hours. Any community without access to this new, speedy means of transportation would be at a serious disadvantage.

Therefore, residents of St. Charles formed the St. Charles Branch Railroad in 1849. This line ran from St. Charles to a junction with the G&CU just north of present-day West Chicago. Another company built a two mile long track from St. Charles to Geneva, thus connecting Geneva, by way of the St. Charles Branch, with the G&CU at West Chicago.

lots. He, therefore, recorded the community's first plat in 1855 under the name of the Town of Junction. He also donated two lots - one to the Congregational Church, another for an early school.

Turner's plat is the section of town just south of Washington Street. As a railroad executive, he assigned railroad-related names to many of the first streets - Depot Street (now Main Street), as well as Chicago, Galena, and Fulton streets, named after the three projected terminal cities of the G&CU.

In 1857 Dr. Joseph McConnell and his wife Mary platted a second portion of town, those lands lying just north of J. B. Turner's plat. The McConnells were early members of the Congregational Church and were deeply appreciative of Turner's donation of land to the congregation. Therefore, they chose to record their plat as the Town of Turner in honor of the railroad president. There now existed a platted Town of Turner and a platted Town of Junction. As a result, the community took on the name of Turner Junction.

At this time in the mid-1850s, the new community was quite small and undeveloped. John Lakey, who served as master mechanic (superintendent) of the small G&CU shops, wrote the following recollection in 1895:

It was in the pleasant month of June 1854, that I came to the small railroad town that is now known as Turner, Illinois, then only a Junction station of the Galena and Chicago Union Railroad, with its Dixon Air line and a road running south to Aurora and LaSalle.

The principal buildings belonged to the railroad company. There was a two-story building 30 X 75 feet, used as an eating house. ( There was also) the "Store" occupied by the McDonald Brothers and across the road was a small building used by W. I. Mowry as a post office and grocery.

On one side of the highway (then North Street, now Washington Street) there was a brick 3-stall engine house, and adjoining it was a brick blacksmith shop used for repairing T-rails. These were the principal buildings and not one of them are in existence at the present time, they having either been burned or torn down and removed.

The railroad company owned twenty-two acres of land, lying northeast of the main track and south of the highway. This land was vacant at the time. On the north side of North Street lands owned by Dr. Joseph McConnell, and southwest of the main track the lands were the property of the Winslow heirs. None of this land was platted, hence none had land to sell.

Most of the residents, who were chiefly farmers or railroad employees, appear to have been of English or Irish stock. A sizable number came from New York State.



Census information of 1860 and 1870 for Turner Junction is imprecise. The community did not draw clearly defined boundaries until it incorporated in 1873. Census takers in 1860 and in 1870 counted everyone listed in the area of the Turner Post Office. The 1860 figures show 722 residents, while in 1870 there were 1,086 residents.

By the late 1860s, the Chicago & North Western (as the former G&CU was now known) built a substantial brick depot and a major roundhouse here. Several church structures graced the community, including the First United Methodist Church, built in 1855; the Congregational Church, built in 1867; and St. Mary's Catholic Church, built in 1868. In 1871 St. Michael's Evangelical Church was added.

The community had taken on a permanent character, and so the residents incorporated it in 1873 as the Village of Turner. A total of 850 residents lived within the boundaries of the new village, with Lucius B. Church serving as the first village board president.

Population continued to increase, growing from 1,001 in 1880 to 1,506 in 1890. A sizable number of the new residents were German immigrants, who settled in the portion of town near St. Michael's church.

This population growth demanded added services. In 1873 the community built the three-story Turner Public School. Because of the 50% population growth of the 1880s, the community added the Southside School in 1887 (renaming the 1873 building the Northside School). The village board authorized the construction of the three-story town hall in 1884. This multi-purpose building was designed to house the volunteer fire department, a one-man police department, and the village council chambers.

During these early decades, Turner was chiefly a one-industry town. According to census data, nearly 40% of the men employed in non-agricultural occupations worked for the C&NW.

This situation began changing in the late 1880s with the arrival of a new railroad, the Elgin, Joliet & Eastern or Outer Belt Line. This line is a feeder railroad rather than a cross-country one, transferring freight from one outlying Chicago community to another. The prosperity of the EJ&E depended on its having factories located all along its right-of-way, as a means of generating freight traffic for the railroad. The EJ&E offered free factory sites for any industry willing to locate along its right-of-way. Local developers quickly realized that companies that did locate here would create increased demand for housing, stores and services. Much promotional literature was produced including wall maps of 1893 that proclaimed Turner "Chicago's Coming Great Manufacturing Suburb." The advertising copy on the map continues by asserting that:

a logical spot for a milk plant. (The plant eventually became a Reid Murdock pickle plant, and later Jel Sea)

As industry located in West Chicago and new jobs opened up, the population increased. By 1900 it reached 1,877, while 2,378 people resided in town in 1910.

At the same time new subdivisions were springing up in outlying areas. One of the moving forces behind these ex-urban subdivisions was the new electric interurban, the Aurora, Elgin & Chicago (later to be reorganized as the Chicago, Aurora & Elgin). This line began service from Chicago to Wheaton to Elgin in the fall of 1902. In 1909 it added a line from Wheaton through High Lake subdivision to West Chicago, and on to Geneva. Just as the EJ&E earlier had tried to attract industry to its right-of-way, the AE&C promoted residences along its tracks, hoping to generate passenger traffic for itself. High Lake, with its communally owned lake and lodge, was one such street car suburb promoted by the interurban, even to the point of the railroad commissioning the foxtrot "Come Where the Birds Sing," to promote High Lake.



*The Chauncey Reed Home. Photo by Jim Jarvis*

The increased population brought added demands on the community. In 1904 High School District 94 was formed, and in 1908 a new and larger school building replaced the old Northside School. This new building, eventually known as Washington School, housed half of the 1st through 8th grade classes as well as all of the high school classes. In August 1906 the village reincorporated itself as the City of West Chicago, with banker Grant A. Dayton serving as first mayor.

The city's population grew by only 9% after 1910, reaching 2,594 in 1920, but then grew a dramatic 30%, to 3,477, by 1930. Industry continued to expand although a major foundry, Union Tool Co., relocated to Ohio.

Several changes occurred during these decades. In 1912 the C&NW built a new passenger depot (now the West Chicago Community Center) and an underpass, as well as the Wilson Street bridge over its mainline as a means of reaching its roundhouse area. At the same time the railroad moved its 1869 depot to the north side of what is now Washington Street, converting it into a freight depot. This new location for the old depot was adjacent to the coach yards, where the suburban commuter coaches were stored overnight, and where as many as four coal-burning steam engines fired up at a time each morning.

Two important changes relating to schools also took place. After the Southside School had been destroyed by fire in 1919, Lincoln School was built in 1921. By the mid-1920s the Northside School had become so overcrowded that two rooms for high school classes were rented at the back of the nearby Buick salesroom. In 1926 the new high school was built on Joliet Street.

Between 1923-25, the city government under Mayor Edward J. McCabe embarked on a major street improvement program, building nine miles of concrete streets and installing an ornamental street lighting system. Starting in 1930, the city renamed several streets and instituted a new numbering system for building addresses.

The decade of the 1930s saw the town's development slow dramatically. The population actually decreased by 122 residents to a total of 3,355 in 1940. The CA&E interurban abandoned its West Chicago branch in 1937, and the city government opened the City Hall at night as a sleeping place for the homeless.

World War II brought new economic vitality, which was dramatically increased in the post-war years of suburban growth. The population grew 17% during the 1940s to a 1950 total of 3,973; a whopping 80% during the 1950s, to 10,100 in 1970. Part of this growth reflected annexations of existing developments; but much of it resulted from new building, including the construction of a number of apartment complexes. By 1980 the population reached 12,500.

Significant changes in the face and structure of West Chicago occurred throughout the postwar period. The newly formed Rotary Club of West Chicago created the Swimming Pool Association in 1954-5, which in turn sold \$100,000 in bonds and built an outdoor pool in the city-owned Reed-Keppler Park. Through local volunteer effort a scout cabin was also built in that park. The West Chicago Railroad and Historical Society was formed in the 1960s, and attempted to save one of the town's most famous houses, the Neltnor or Anthony Home, as a museum. This effort failed and the

July 1983. The Chamber of Commerce, another active organization of the time, moved its offices to the depot that summer.

In one small sense, West Chicago's history was brought full circle in 1981 when the C&NW located its Illinois Division headquarters in West Chicago, on the former site of the old roundhouse. This move by the C&NW appears to guarantee that West Chicago, the first Illinois community created as a result of the coming of the railroads, will remain a significant railroad town for the foreseeable future.

*The Author*

*Jerry Musich is Curator of the West Chicago Historical Museum*



Incorporated July 2, 1975

# West Chicago Historical Society

P.O. Box 246 / West Chicago, Illinois 60186



Kruse House 1917

June 17, 2013

RECEIVED  
JUN 18 2013

West Chicago City Council  
West Chicago City Hall  
475 Main Street  
West Chicago, IL 60185

BY: \_\_\_\_\_

West Chicago City Council Members,

The West Chicago Historical Society Board supports the preservation of the Wiant House. Therefore, our organization is willing to pledge – as seed money – \$500.00 towards the support of this property until formal arrangements are in place for the restoration and use of the house.

Our organization is small, on a limited budget and has very real expenses associated with the support of another West Chicago treasure, the Kruse House Museum. We see value in preserving the Kruse House, the Wiant House and other historically significant properties that make West Chicago both interesting and unique.

If as a community, we do not make an effort to preserve our past, the roots of our small Midwestern frontier town will exist only in electronic media. Please give strong consideration towards incorporating the Wiant House into a long term plan for our City's downtown renovation.

Members of the West Chicago Historical Society Board:

Lance Conkright, President  
Donna Orlandini, First Vice President  
Kent Orlandini, First Vice President  
Jim Beifuss, Second Vice President  
Tony Wdowiarz, Treasurer  
Joan Conkright, Secretary  
Garth Keck, Assistant Secretary  
Susan Terronez, Historian  
Ken Richardt, Director  
Sara Phalen, Director

**West Chicago Historical Society**  
P.O. Box 246  
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June 17, 2013  
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cc:

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Page 3

cc:

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Director - Community Development  
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West Chicago, IL 60185

Michael Guttman  
City Administrator  
West Chicago City Hall  
475 Main Street  
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David J. Sabathne  
Western DuPage Chamber of Commerce  
306 Main Street  
West Chicago, IL 60185

The West Chicago Garden Club  
P.O. Box 313  
West Chicago, IL 60186

Friends of the West Chicago City Museum  
132 Main Street  
West Chicago, IL 60185



May 31, 2013

Mayor Ruben Pineda  
City of West Chicago  
475 Main Street  
West Chicago, IL 60185

Dear Mayor Pineda:

Please allow me to introduce myself. My name is Lee Marks and I'm chairman of the Glen Ellyn Historic Preservation Commission. I've been following the discussion regarding the historic Joel Wiant House with much interest. I was deeply disturbed to read the recent article in the Trib Local on Thursday, May 30, entitled *Clock is ticking on the Joel Wiant House*.

I am a long-standing supporter and participant in historic preservation. In 1968 I had the good fortune to begin work on the restoration of historic Stacy's Tavern in Glen Ellyn, an 1846 traveler's inn and stagecoach stop. I was also fortunate to work alongside restoration expert, the late Ron Nelson, an employee of the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency in Springfield throughout the entire project, which concluded in 1976. Ron and I often talked about the importance of preserving historic and architecturally significant buildings and historic museums, and how they can help to attract heritage tourism to the benefit of our many small town business districts.

A few years ago, the National Trust for Historic Preservation published an outstanding booklet on heritage tourism. The premise of the book was based on a survey done throughout the country, asking people, what's the most meaningful thing that you like to do when you travel? The vast majority of those polled answered we like to visit historic sites, historic buildings and historic communities! The National Trust survey should be a bell-ringer, not only for those who support historic preservation, but also for those people who have no background or knowledge of this incredibly important endeavor.

Sadly to say, DuPage County could be the poster child for the number of historic and architecturally significant buildings that have been torn down over the last thirty or forty years. These have included everything from our earliest Greek Revival style buildings to many wonderful Victorians as well as the later Arts & Crafts bungalows. And what we fail to comprehend is that once they are removed these incredibly important and educational links to our past are gone forever!

The Joel Wiant House is an exceptionally rare and important example of Second Empire architecture, a style not common in DuPage County. Its brick construction is also significant, as most examples are wood-sided.

*Communitarian  
Exhibit  
#7*



I urge all who are in the process of discussing the fate of the Joel Wiant House to do everything in their power to save it! And please don't fall victim to the oldest trick in the book, which occurs when someone wants to tear down a building or doesn't want to see it restored, and they quote an absurdly high cost estimate in an attempt to scare everyone involved! It seems that someone has already done that, as the Trib article stated that repairs have been estimated to cost \$250,000 to \$500,000. Restoration expert Ron Nelson said that he often encountered that thinking, and he would tell the parties involved that all they need to do is to find a restoration carpenter who has some friends in the trades, and they can do any repairs at a fraction of the cost! Incidentally, the Joel Wiant House doesn't need a museum-quality restoration it just needs to be repaired to bring it up to current occupancy standards.

It's wonderful that the city has offered the building for \$1.00. It's totally unrealistic however, to expect an individual to complete all the repairs in one year. I would suggest that this particular requirement be removed from any offers. Working on a historic building demands a comprehensive thought process and shouldn't be rushed!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lee Marks". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "L".

Lee Marks

Chairman, Glen Ellyn Historic Preservation Commission

cc: West Chicago Historical Preservation Commission