

**HISTORIC URBAN NEIGHBORHOODS OF INDIANAPOLIS (HUNI)  
FOURTH QUARTER MEETING MINUTES  
Thursday, November 3, 2016, 5:30 p.m.  
Morris-Butler House, 1204 Park Avenue**

Attendees: Chris Carlson, Broad Ripple; Clay Miller, Chatham Arch-Mass Ave; Joan Hostetler, Cottage Home; Mark Reynold, Cumberland; Glenn Blackwood, Fletcher Place; Jim Lingenfelter, Fletcher Place; Michele Annee, Fountain Square; Jeanne Pontious, Herron-Morton Place; Chris Maroldo, Irvington; Marjorie Kienle, Lockerbie Square; Jay Van Santen, Meridian Park; Jordan Ryan, North Square; Ellen McMenamin, Old Northside; Paula Brooks, Ransom Place; Bonnie Ramion, Old Speedway City; Gary Chilluffo, St. Joseph; Kent Schwob, Watson Park; Tom Abeel, Woodruff Place; Sharon Butsch Freeland, Individual Member; Julia Pratt, Individual Member; Lorraine Vavul, Individual Member; Chad Lethig, Indiana Landmarks Staff; P. Sam Burgess, Indiana Landmarks Staff; Ashley Miller, Mayor's Office; Chris Alstott, Guest; Kathy Dawson, Guest; Abbie Hilton, Guest; Jess LaNore, Guest; Ruth O'Neil, Guest; and Brian Weber, Guest.

President Garry Chilluffo called the meeting to order at 5:39 p.m. He thanked Indiana Landmarks, Morris-Butler House and, in particular, MBH Director Gwendolen Nystrom, for allowing HUNI to hold its meeting there. Lorraine Vavul noted that the Morris-Butler House is available for weddings, meetings, special events, and private parties. The meeting attendees, which included HUNI neighborhood representatives and Indiana Landmarks docents, introduced themselves.

Gary mentioned a couple of events coming up soon: "Blood, Sweat & Tears," part of the Spirit and Place Festival, on Friday, November 11 at Indiana Landmarks, which is free; and the Gala Art Auction to benefit St. Mary's Church renovation, which is also on Friday, November 11, at the Athenaeum Ballroom. Marjorie Kienle has tickets for the benefit, which are \$10.

Garry then introduced the speaker, renowned architect James T. Kienle, FAIA, a preservationist, an advocate for neighborhoods, a member of the Indianapolis Historic Preservation Commission, former president of the Indianapolis Historic Preservation Commission, and a longtime Lockerbie resident. Jim's topic was the renovation of the historic Circle Theatre, now called the Hilbert Circle Theatre and is the home of the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra.

Before Jim began his presentation, Marjorie Kienle interjected a story about Jim's and her involvement in the effort to save the building. The theatre was boarded up, and the Indianapolis Power & Light Company was intending to tear the building down to make a parking lot. Jim was out of town on the day the public hearing occurred. Marjorie attended but had to take their young daughter, who was in a stroller, with her. Marjorie stood in the back of the room, pushing the stroller back and forth to entertain their child. The atmosphere in the room was very tense. Even Landmarks' President Reid Williamson, who was always a very composed gentleman, was red-faced and visibly upset about the prospect of losing the theatre. When the Kienles' daughter made a noise from the back of the room, the crowd first thought it was a heckler. After everyone turned around to look, they saw it was a baby. They laughed collectively, and this broke the ice.

Jim gave a little history of the building before getting in to a description of the renovation project. The Circle Theatre was built in 1916 with Adam-style ornamentation, first made popular in the late 1700s. The building was designed by Rubush and Hunter, the premier Indianapolis architectural firm at the time. Among the 200-plus buildings Rubush and Hunter designed were the Murat Temple, Architects and Builders Building, Chamber of Commerce Building, Columbia Club, Indianapolis City Hall, Indiana School for the Deaf, and the Madam Walker Building. In order to make the Circle Theatre meet the symphony's needs, many modifications were necessary.

The Circle Theatre was the first movie palace to be built west of the Allegheny Mountains. It originally had a large clock on top of the marquee, as well as commercial storefronts on either side of the entrance, and an art gallery inside. The site was previously the location of a livery stable, which was narrower in the front, but being on a circle, much wider in the back.

For more than half-a-century, the Circle Theatre was home to first-run movies, premieres, live performances, and special screenings. The last major renovation of the theatre was in 1964, when the movie, "My Fair Lady," came out. By the late 1970s, movie goers began to prefer multiple-screen theatres in suburban shopping malls, where a variety of films were under a single roof, and parking was both plentiful and free.

Throughout the project, the team did its best to take the building back to its 1916 appearance. Thanks to the W. H. Bass Photo Company, the original building was well-documented, which helped in restoring it to its original look.

Jim showed some drawings to help the audience understand the modifications that were made. There was no lobby originally, so a lobby was created. Only a few small bathrooms existed in the original theatre, so bathrooms were added. The proscenium was moved, and the stage had to be enlarged to accommodate an orchestra. Another big project was to knock out the back wall of the building and add some space behind the theatre, above the alley known as Court Street. The current balcony was not the original. Beautiful details on the walls were revealed when the heavy draperies that covered them were removed.

All the work was done in compliance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards, which is the enforcing agency for the National Park Service and the Internal Revenue Service, for a property to qualify for a tax credit. The tax credit was critical to the success of the project. Historic Landmarks of Indiana (now Indiana Landmarks) played a major role saving the building and adapting it for reuse. After a decade in Clowes Hall, the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra wanted to leave that venue, since ISO could never own the Butler University-owned property. At Clowes Hall, the ISO could not practice whenever it wanted, and it had to schedule its concerts around performances by other organizations and performers.

IPL received the tax credits for the renovation. They got over \$2,000,000, which in today's dollars would be more like \$20,000,000. IPL did the renovations and leased the building to ISO for ten

years. At the end of the lease, ISO took ownership of the theatre building. ISO also owns the buildings behind the theatre, which face East Washington Street.

The HVAC system was hidden in tunnels under the floor. A variety of new lighting techniques were installed. A new fire protection system used semi-recessed heads that you can barely see. A lot of the acoustics were originally designed for choral performances, because the director at the time, John Nelson, was known for choral works. About ten years ago, modifications were made to the stage and the acoustic system by Browning Day Mullins Architects.

While installing a 10-foot high truss to support a structural wall and widen the stage, workers were using welding equipment, and the whole back end of the theatre caught on fire. Fortunately, the fire department responded immediately. The basements under the front of the theatre and the back of the theatre were not connected, so a connection was created between them.

Jim then acknowledged “the players” in the renovation. The architect and engineer was Archonics Design Partnership. The project architect was the late Valentina Williamson. The engineer was John Demeter of Archonics. The mechanical engineer was Trace Kaelin. The project was done in association with Dalton Van Dijk and Johnson from Cleveland, Ohio, which had done a very successful theatre project. Chris Jaffe was acoustician. Guepal DeMars was the construction manager. Charles C. Brandt Construction Co. was the general contractor. Demolition began in 1982, and it was completed in August of 1984.

A few questions were then posed by members of the audience.

When did the Hilberts get involved with the building?

The Hilberts were not involved in the original renovation that occurred in the 1980s. They gave \$10,000,000 after ISO took ownership of the property from IPL, about a decade later.

What do you know about the clock?

The clock over the marquee was removed before World War II, as it is not present in a photo from the early Forties. It was probably taken down in the Thirties, during the Depression.

Who painted the mural over the marquee?

Local artist Rebecca Garland did the restoration of the Clifton Wheeler mural over the marquee.

Marjorie Kienle mentioned that the National Park Service required that when the proscenium was moved, the plaster work had to be replicated. The project team was concerned about having to bring in plasterers from Italy, but it turned out Italian plasterers in Indianapolis came out of the woodwork and did a beautiful job matching the original plaster work.

The balcony originally had plywood seats, as this was the “Negro Section” of the theatre. African Americans were not allowed to sit on the main floor. Sadly, Indianapolis was a segregated city in those days. Garry noted that this shameful situation led to the construction of the Madam Walker Theatre. The Circle Theatre’s balcony was redesigned, and the wooden seats were replaced with cushioned seats.

After Jim Kienle ended his presentation, a short break was taken, so that the Indiana Landmarks docents could leave the meeting if they so desired.

Garry reconvened the meeting and asked for amendments to the minutes. A correction made earlier by Jim Garrettson was noted, which was incorporated into the minutes. Marjorie Kienle moved that minutes be approved as amended. Paula Brooks seconded. The motion carried.

Lorraine Vavul had to leave the meeting early, so Jay van Santen reported for the Editorial Board. He sent around a sheet listing the Editorial Board member for each HUNI neighborhood. Please keep your contact person informed about activities in your neighborhood, so that they can be promoted on the HUNI website. Please follow us on Twitter and Like us on Facebook.

Marjorie Kienle reported on the digital billboard issue. About a year ago, HUNI was among the organizations that fought Prop 250. Prop 250 was the billboard companies’ attempt to ram the approval of digital billboards through the City-County Council. However, this method was not the proper way to change an ordinance. The Department of Metropolitan Development finally put together a sign ordinance task force. There are a lot of billboard people on the task force, but there are also representatives on the task force of the six groups that fought to see that due process was observed. They include Decatur Township, Wayne Township, Pike Township, Nora, NESCO, and HUNI. The task force has had three meetings so far and expects to finish the sign ordinance by late spring or early summer of 2017. The billboard people would really like to place digital billboards downtown, claiming that Marion County is “underbillboarded.” Ten years ago, about forty professionals worked on the regional guidelines task force, which banned billboards. Even though we’ve had a ban on billboards in place for ten years, the sign companies have gotten billboards approved by applying for variances. Indianapolis is looking to Portland, Oregon; Denver, Colorado; Austin, Texas; and Houston, Texas as models for Indianapolis.

The HUNI Neighborhood reports followed. Broad Ripple has its regular first-Saturday-of-the-month cleanup this Saturday, November 5th. There are two more weeks left in the Broad Ripple Farmers Market at Broad Ripple High School, Saturday, November 12 and Saturday, November 19. On December 3, the market moves indoors to Bent Rail Brewery on Winthrop Avenue south of 54th Street. On November 22, the BRVA Land Use and Development Committee will meet to review proposed projects and variance requests. November 26 will be Small Business Saturday, on which you can show support for local companies. Saturday, December 3 is *BROAD RIPPLE Lights Up!* with activities for kids, a parade, and a tree-lighting. The event is based at the Broad Ripple Firehouse, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. A new activity in

Broad Ripple this year is an additional winter market at the Broad Ripple Methodist Church, across Guilford Avenue from the Kroger store, which will run from December 3 to April 22.

Fletcher Place held a historic home research workshop on August 20 at Hinge Bureau, as part of its observance of the Bicentennial. It was well-attended. In April, they plan to have a historic home tour. On November 4, there will be a First Friday event at Hinge Bureau, 719 Virginia Avenue, which will feature local community organizations. Demerly Architects will be making a presentation at their next neighborhood meeting, regarding renovations of 421 S. Park Avenue, a home that was built in 1865. The house next door was built in 1867 and was just demolished.

Cottage Home is hot right now. After thirty-two years of being “up and coming,” the neighborhood is “there.” They are now struggling with growing pains and do not have enough homes to meet the demand. 3,000 people attended this year’s Cottage Home Fall Block Party.

*[ At this point in the meeting, the digital recorder was inadvertently paused or turned off. The remaining portion of the meeting was not recorded, so the secretary did not have a recording as a backup to her notes. If any neighborhood representative wishes amend the report that appears below, please send the revisions to [sharon.b.freeland@sbcglobal.net](mailto:sharon.b.freeland@sbcglobal.net) .]*

Old Speedway just erected a sculpture in the roundabout at the convergence of 16th Street, Main Street, and Georgetown Road. The renovated Rosner Building is now occupied by a consulting firm. The neighborhood association is working on a membership drive and a flagpole project.

Cumberland will again host its annual Christmas event, Weihnachtsmarkt on December 3. The latest plan for St. John’s United Church of Christ at East Washington Street and German Church Road is to keep its historic appearance and have senior housing at the back of the building.

North Square reported that the Tonic Ball will be on November 28, but it is already sold out. In December, the neighborhood will nominate people for the election of new officers. An issue of concern is a proposed project at 1024, 1028, and 1034 Virginia Avenue. The developer wishes to rezone the site from C5 to mixed-use zoning, demolish the interiors of two buildings, construct a new building inside the original walls of those two buildings, add a third floor to those two buildings, demolish the third building. and construct a totally new building in its place. The new building would be 5 stories high and contain 74 residential units and 6 commercial spaces.

Meridian Park will have its annual progressive dinner, which is for dues-paying members only. There will be a neighborhood holiday part on December 4.

Irvington hosted its 70th Hallowe’en Festival. Approximately 56,000 people attended. Irvington will have its annual luminaria display on December 18.

Herron-Morton Place hosted Rock 'n Romp in the HMP Park on July 25. The neighborhood is considering a home tour next year. A progressive dinner for dues-paying members is planned.

Watson Park has a new website. The neighborhood just completed its fall cleanup, at which they focused on the Watson Park Bird Preserve and the Watson-McCord Park at 36th and Watson Road. The Midtown Holiday Home Tour will be on Saturday, November 12 and Sunday, November 13. Michael O'Brien and Jackie Nytes will host a Mapleton-Fall Creek gathering in their home from 6:30-9:30; cost is \$5.

Woodruff Place received a \$45,000 matching grant. Woodruff Place also has a new website, on which you people can pay dues and make donations.

St. Joseph has completed a restoration of its brick alleys. Next Thursday, November 10, the Firefighters Credit Union will hold an open house in its new building at 748 Massachusetts Avenue. A developer wants to tear down the Day Nursery Building and build a 5-story apartment building.

Ransom Place's housing market is hot, but the buyers are not owner-occupants. They are investors catering to college students. Ransom Place still has pedestrian problems. They need sidewalks.

Lockerbie has a lot more younger people moving into the neighborhood.

Fountain Square is experiencing lots of requests for variances. Several businesses will participate in First Friday tomorrow evening, November 4. The Tonic Ball is coming up on November 18. Santa will be in Fountain Square on December 10.

The next HUNI Quarterly Meeting will be on Saturday, February 4, 2017, at 9:00 a.m. The speaker will be Tammara Tracy, Principal Planner for the City of Indianapolis. The location of the meeting has not yet been determined.

Mark Reynold moved that the meeting be adjourned. Marjorie Kienle seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 7:37 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon Butsch Freeland  
Secretary