

STAFF REPORT: OCTOBER 8, 2025 MEETING

PREPARED BY: A. DYE

APPLICATION NUMBER: HDC2025-00387

ADDRESS: 6325 (6301) W. JEFFERSON AVENUE, AKA FORT WAYNE

HISTORIC DISTRICT: FORT WAYNE

APPLICANT: JONATHON FERRIS, WADE TRIM/DTE

PROPERTY OWNER: CITY OF DETROIT, DETROIT PARKS AND RECREATION

DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: SEPTEMBER 15, 2025

DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: JULY 17 & SEPTEMBER 25, 2025

SCOPE: EXCAVATE AND INSTALL NATURAL GAS PIPELINE AND METERS

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Fort Wayne is located in southwest Detroit, about three miles downriver from the Central Business District and just north of the confluence between the Detroit and Rouge rivers. It sits directly south of West Jefferson Avenue at the foot of Livernois. Most of the surrounding riverfront is devoted to industrial use; the newest neighbor is the Gordie Howe Bridge, whose US Port of Entry is directly north of Fort Wayne on the north side of West Jefferson.

Fort Wayne consists of 96 acres, 83 of which are managed by the City of Detroit Parks and Recreation Department; the remaining 13 acres serve as a boatyard for the Detroit District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The Fort Wayne historic district is divided roughly in half on a north-south axis of Brady Street (which is an extension of Livernois). To the east of Brady sits the original Star Fort (and ca. 1848 barracks that were erected within the fort), five late 19th and early 20th century buildings, as well as the Army Corp's facilities. The western portion of the site includes a burial mound, 1890s era service buildings and stable, 19th and 20th century detached residential buildings, a large parade ground, and several World War 2 era warehouses. All of the buildings are in various states of deterioration.



Above: Aerial view of Fort Wayne - blue line denotes the full property boundary; the red line is Brady Street; EagleView image.

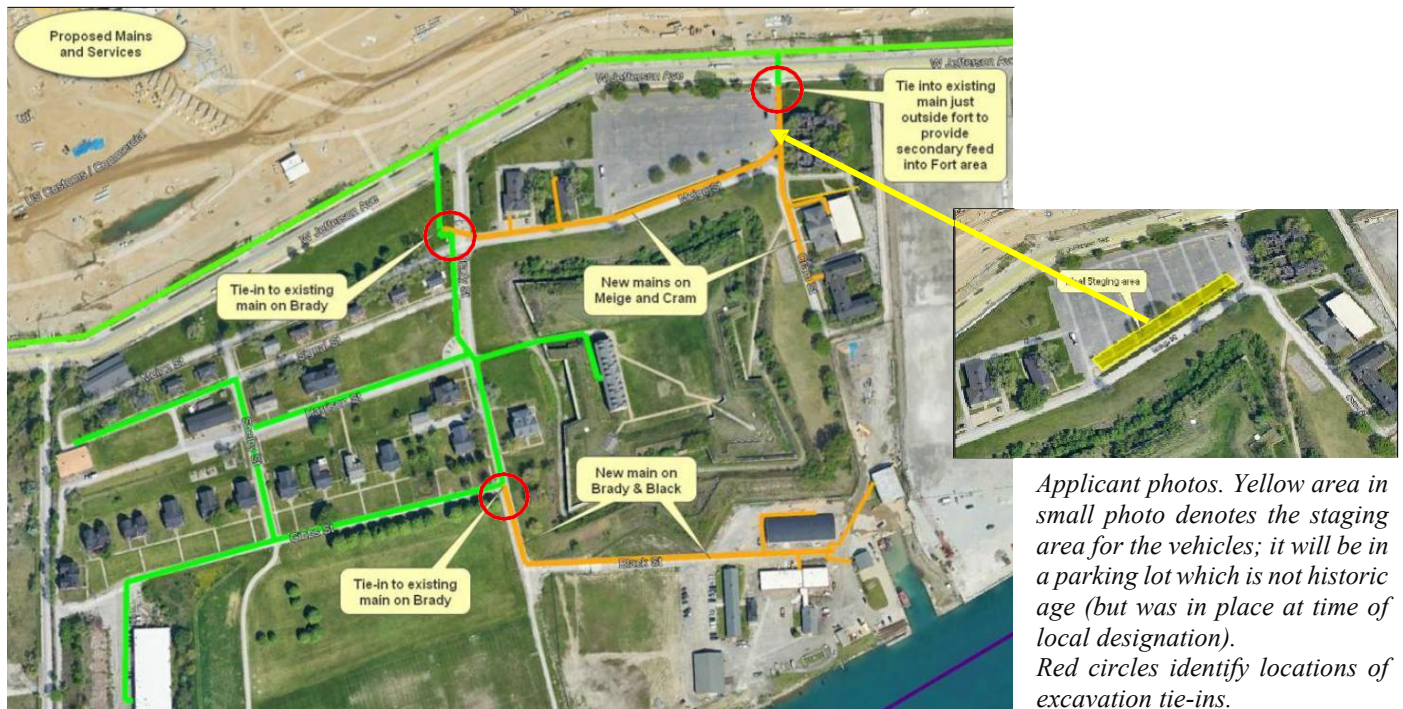
Above right: Yellow boundary identifies the 13 acres run by the Army Corp of Engineers; Detroit Parcel Viewer image.

Below right: Public entrance to Fort Wayne from W. Jefferson. Staff photo, July 17, 2025.

PROPOSAL

According to the applicant's documents, new pipeline "mains" are needed to supply gas service to existing buildings within Fort Wayne. The work proposed will travel the following routes, identified in the image below:

- 1) Beginning at the NW corner of Brady and Meige, travel east along Meige and then north/south along Cram;
- 2) Beginning at the intersection of Brady and Gibbs, travel south along Brady and then east along Black.



The gas lines will be installed by "Horizontal Directional Drilling", tie-in locations (i.e. holes to be dug for the drilling machine to feeds a long line of rods and then the pipe for the gas line) are circled in red. Excavations at the tie-in points will be 5' x 5' or 8' x 8'. The applicant supplied a fact sheet that outlines horizontal directional drilling.

STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

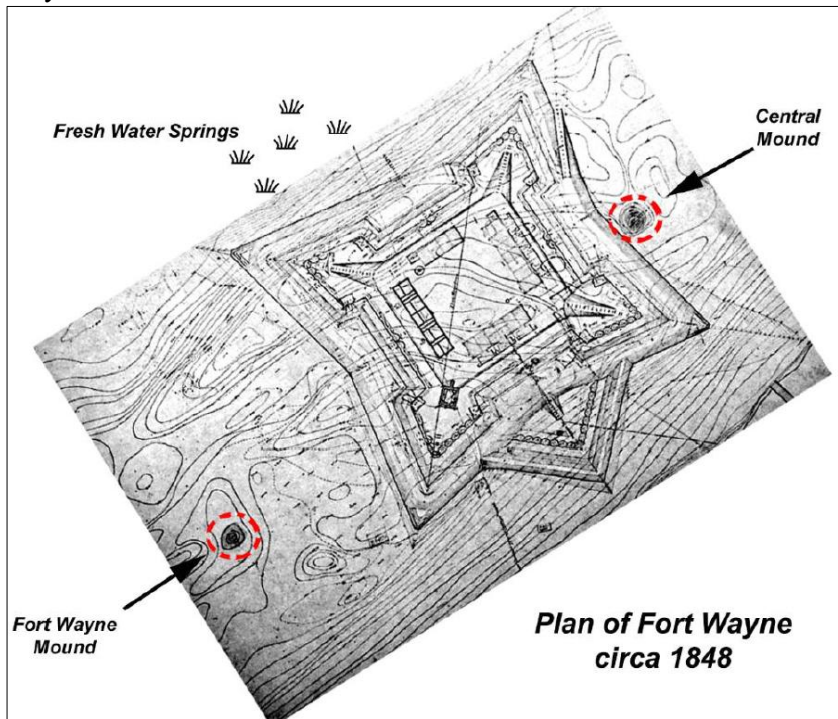
- Fort Wayne was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1971.
- The Fort Wayne Historic District was enacted on August 3, 2016.
- HDAB's Final Report states the property meets:
 - The Historic Designation Advisory Board's first and third criteria:
 - 1) Sites, buildings, structures or archaeological sites where cultural, social, spiritual, economic, political or architectural history of the community, city, state or nation is reflected or exemplified;
 - 3) Buildings or structures which embody the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural specimen, inherently valuable as a representation of a period, style of method of construction; and
 - National Register Criterions:
 - A - Events and Broad Patterns of Events: Due to its direct association with US military response (Canadian Rebellions of 1837, Michigan's involvement in the Civil War, the region's contribution of the World War II "Arsenal of Democracy").
 - C - Design, Construction and Work of a Master: An outstanding example of an American-built star fort representing the work of Montgomery C. Meigs, Thomas Jefferson Cram and Joseph Totten. A diverse range of architecturally significant structures to include the barracks (an outstanding example of Adam-style architecture)...and collection of military architecture.
 - D - Information Potential: Archaeological research at the site has yielded, and will likely continue to yield, insight into the Late Woodlands burial practices and pottery techniques, historic-era Potawatomi village life and its relationship with Euro-American settlement and 19th century social and military history. Staff's comment: The fort's 20th century social and military history is similarly discussed in the report.

Brief History of Fort Wayne - most of which was excerpted from the district's Final Report:

- Period of Significance: 1000 A.D. – 1971.

Prehistory

- The district retains one single burial mound, though significantly disturbed, remains intact and stands as the only visible remnant of Late Woodland cultures (ca. 500 BC – 1643 AD) which occupied the region into the 15th century.



Engineer's construction plan (1848). Many reports indicate the central mound was destroyed during the building of the star fort. The Fort Wayne Mound was investigated/partially excavated in the 1940s, and artifacts and human remains were found and sent to the University of Michigan. The excavated soil was restored and it is likely other archaeological/human remains remain deeper within the undisturbed areas of the mound. This is the existing burial mound within the Fort Wayne property. This map was copied from the 2018 Phase I archaeological survey (of western sections of Fort Wayne) executed by Gray & Pape Heritage Management for the National Park Service.

1800s

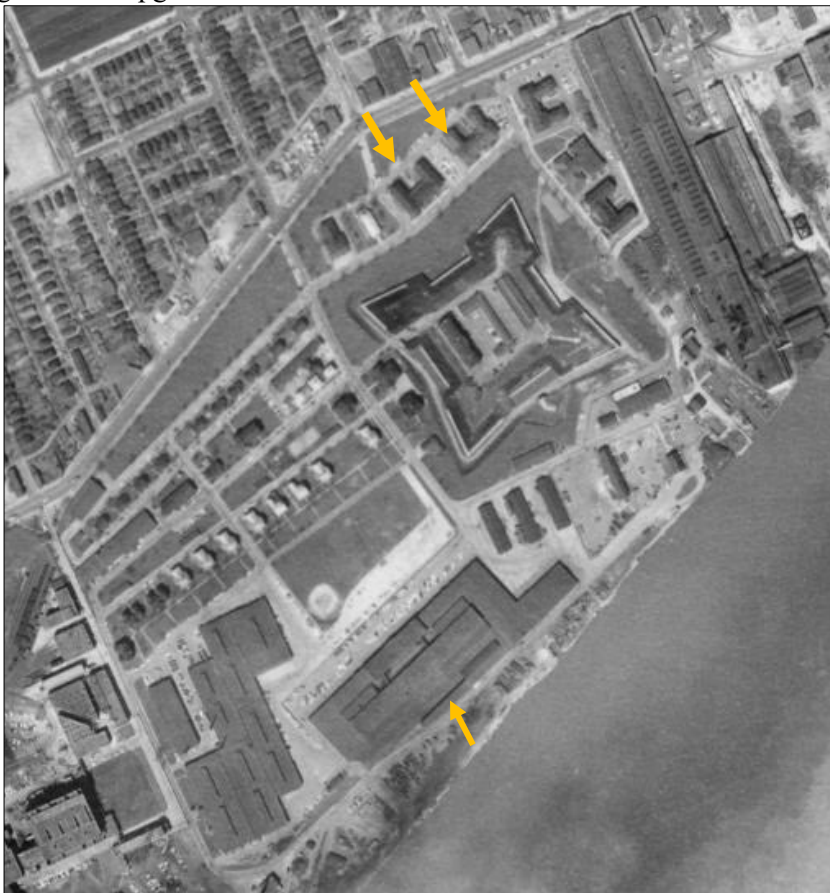
- The War of 1812 concluded with the Treaty of Spring Wells, a peace agreement signed at or near the future Fort Wayne site on September 8, 1815. This area was incorporated into Springwells Township in 1818.
- In 1841, Congress authorized the construction of Fort Wayne as part of a series of defenses along the US-Canadian border.
- Fort Wayne construction began in 1842; it is one of the few remaining examples of a star fort in the United States.
- Fort Wayne became an active military installation in 1861 and served as a “camp of instruction” for organizing and training recruits, specifically the Michigan Volunteer Infantry and Artillery Troops.
- Not long after the Civil War the design of the fort was rendered obsolete by advances in military technology and the reduced threat of war in the Great Lakes region. However, it continued to serve as an infantry garrison, and then a supply and logistics center.
- New buildings were erected west of the star fort, including a series of homes for officers (1880s).

1900s

- The City of Detroit annexes this part of Springwells Township in 1906.
- Construction of additional residential, administration and headquarters buildings was completed.
- Fort Wayne provided construction troops during WWI, including 1,300 African American soldiers.
- During the Depression, the site housed Civilian Conservation Corps works as well as people who had become homeless. Fort Wayne continued to expand with a row of duplexes for non-commissioned officers, erected in

1938.

- The Works Progress Administration invested in Fort Wayne through landscaping projects and the rehabilitation of many buildings. An additional million-dollar allocation funded the construction of a new gymnasium, theater, hospital and barracks, provided extensive tree planting, resurfacing of roads and the rehabilitation of officers' quarters.
- In 1940 it ceased serving as infantry garrison and transitioned to its new role "Fort Wayne Ordinance Depot" as it prepared vehicles and parts for shipment from the Port of Detroit. World War II was possibly the fort's most important military period; it was designated a "principal motor supply depot" and served as a supply center for war material, especially vehicles produced in the Detroit area.
- More buildings were erected at this time; some single-story concrete warehouse buildings remain at the southern corner of the property along the river.
- In the late 1940's ownership of a portion of the fort was transferred to the City of Detroit, and the Detroit Historical Society (DHS), which was then a division of the city's government, began supporting the operations of Fort Wayne.
- Fort Wayne served as a military induction center during the Korean and Vietnam wars; cold war era anti-aircraft guns were upgraded in 1957.



This is the earliest aerial photo staff found of the fort property prior to the early 1970s demolitions and landscape alterations completed by the Detroit Historic Museum.

Most notable demolitions included the largest of the WWII warehouse buildings near the river and the barracks from the "induction center era". The current parking lot was installed upon the former location of the barracks (arrows).

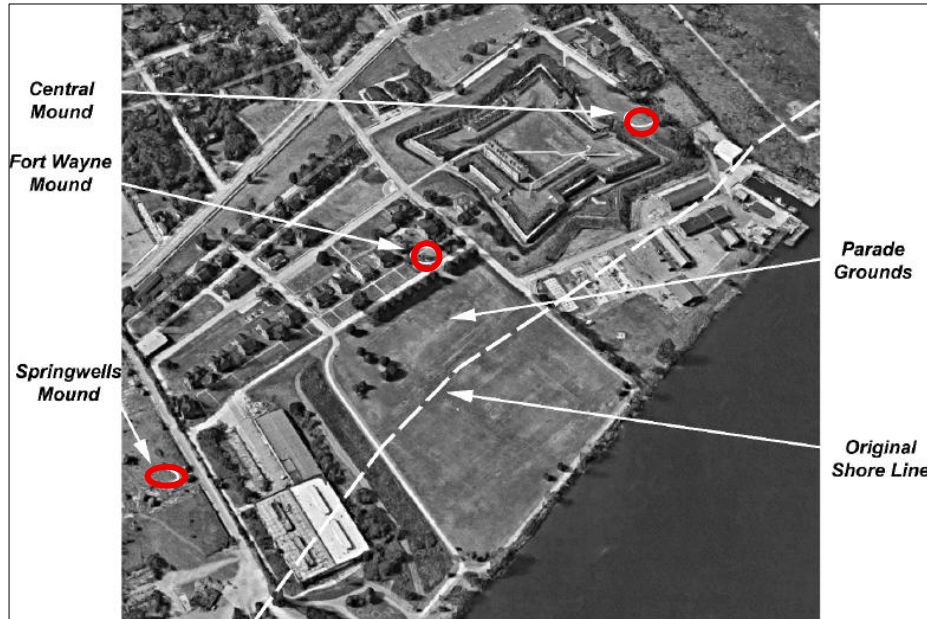
1956 aerial image of Fort Wayne, DTE.

- The fort's residential buildings provided temporary housing for people displaced by the 1967 uprising; some of whom continued to reside there until 1971.
- Additional property was transferred to the city in 1971, leaving only six buildings and the Army Corps of Engineers boat yard (along the river at the eastern end of the site) under federal military control.
- Most recent ownership transfers occurred in 1976; buildings to the north and east of the star fort, located in this application's project area, were given over to local ownership through the federal Land to Parks program. The DHS demolished two of the six buildings (both residential barracks) for the creation of a visitor parking lot.
- The Detroit Historical Society continued to operate the facility; museum and interpretive functions were expanded, and several buildings were open to the public with staffed, interpretive exhibits.
- The Detroit Historical Museum ceased interpretive activities at Fort Wayne in the early 1990s, closing all

buildings except for Warehouse 2C, which continues to be used for collections storage and is not open to the public.

2000s

- In 2006, DHS entered into an agreement with the City of Detroit at which time Detroit's Parks and Recreation Department took on the management of Fort Wayne.
- Local historic designation was enacted on August 3, 2016.



2018 aerial view showing the historic locations of three burial mounds. As the Fort Wayne property grew, the Fort Wayne mound became centrally located within the property.

- The site is supported by volunteer organizations: Friends of Fort Wayne, the Historic Fort Wayne Coalition, and the All-Nations Veterans Council.
- On September 17, 2020, the City of Detroit General Services Department (in which the Parks and Recreation Department is located) put forth a request to City Council for the abrogation of then-existing deed restrictions (which were part of the federal government's previous transfer of ownership to the city) by way of the establishment of a Historic Preservation Covenant, which included:
 - No plans for any work, including ground-disturbing activity, would be undertaken without prior review and written approval of the Local Historic District Commission and the State Historic Preservation Office. The *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*, the *Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes*, and any other applicable National Park Service Guidance and Preservation Briefs will be used in project reviews.
 - Prior to submitting documentation to the HDC for a Certificate of Appropriateness, the applicant (i.e., the Grantee) shall provide the SHPO with all documentation regarding the Proposed Action.



Aerial view of Fort Wayne, April - May 2016, at time of local historic district designation.

Elements of Design

The coordinating elements of design that relate to this proposal include:

#13 - Relationship of significant landscape features and surface treatments. The designed landscape of Fort Wayne is highly significant. The original star fort is situated on a gentle rise in the landscape and overlooks the Detroit River. Linear streets and sidewalks provide circulation throughout the districts; street widths are relatively narrow. Although residential buildings are surrounded by open spaces, the open spaces do not read as individual lawns. Streets are asphalt and sidewalks are concrete. Existing parking lots are generally created by building demolitions and, therefore, not significant landscape features... Shrubbery, foundation plantings, and ornamental trees are not common, but exist around some buildings, including Buildings 110, 207, 303, 311, and 312...

#20 - Orientation, vistas, overviews. Orientation, vistas, and overviews are an essential feature of the district, reflecting the history of the facility as a military installation, and its prehistory as a burial location...In general, orientation of buildings contributes to a sense of place, with buildings of Officer's Row facing the river, buildings of NCO Row facing West Jefferson Avenue, and buildings clustered around the star fort facing inwards towards the fort...

#22 - General environmental character. Fort Wayne is a 96-acre district of structures of various scales and functions which, due to orientation, design and historic use, exist visually as a cohesive unit. Although some buildings on the Parade Ground were demolished in the 1970s, buildings known as Officer's Row and NCO Row form an intact streetscape. Generally, infill construction would be inappropriate, as open spaces, landscaping, and roadways are significant to the history of Fort Wayne and sense of place in the district. Visually, Fort Wayne is distinct from its surroundings, which consist of the Detroit River and adjacent industrial areas.

Staff Observations related to proposed scope of work

Gas line/main installation

- Upon completing the historical research of this property, it is staff's conclusion that no *above-ground* distinctive character-defining features or materials will be removed or altered as part of the proposed "horizontal directional drilling" and gas line/main installation. As illustrated in the applicant's documents and confirmed at staff's two site visits, no historic elements (i.e., sandstone curbs) comprise the

roadway/curb/sidewalk locations where the drilling will take place, nor will any trees be removed.

- *Underground disturbances/alterations* related to the drilling and excavation of the tie-in locations, however, are a concern.
- The HDC has jurisdiction over below-ground resources per Section 21-2-2 of the City Code, which defines “work” under the historic ordinance as “construction, addition, alteration, repair, moving, excavation, or demolition”.
- Further, Secretary of the Interior Standard 8, which protects archaeological resources, must be met:
Significant archeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.
- A group site visit was completed on Friday, August 15. Representatives from the city (PDD/Historic and GSD staff), state SHPO, Wade Trim and DTE met at Fort Wayne to review and discuss the proposed work and walk the site to access historic resources and potential impact. At the conclusion of the meeting, it was agreed that ground penetrating radar must be conducted, and its results submitted as part of DTE’s application to the city and SHPO.
 - DTE hired a Toledo company to canvas the work area with their radar equipment; results of this survey is listed on pages 9 – 11 of the applicant’s narrative.
 - The narrative further states, “DTE will have archaeological monitoring on site, as provided by an SHPO approved archeological service. Excavators and Hydro-vac trucks were mentioned in the list of equipment earlier in this narrative, however SHPO has raised concerns particularly at the south end of Cram, where the chances of coming across artifacts increases. In these areas once a hard surface has been broken through, the archeologist can request that soft digging (hand shoveling) occurs.

Meter installation



Applicant map of where gas lines are to be installed.

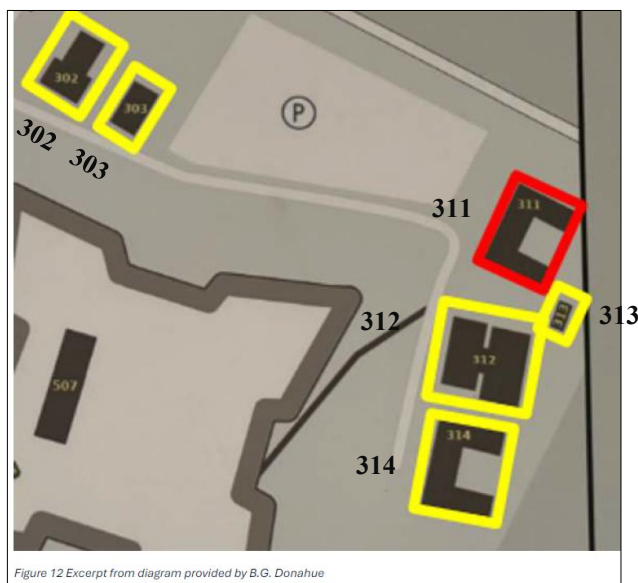


Figure 12 Excerpt from diagram provided by B.G. Donahue

City of Detroit Parks and Recreation map. The historic buildings planned for new meters, once the buildings are in a physical condition to receive gas service, are identified in yellow. The building outlined in red is too deteriorated to be considered at this time.

- The buildings being considered for gas service are historic age and contributing buildings to the historic district, erected between 1890 and 1939. Each building is historically and architecturally significant with many distinctive character-defining features. For this staff report, the structures are only outlined by name, location, erection date(s), historic/contemporary usages and a brief physical description, as the only proposed work relates to the exterior installation of freestanding gas meters. Detailed architectural descriptions and distinctive features and materials for each of these buildings can be found in the document *Appendix A, Historic Resource Inventory*, which is posted within the Staff Report section of the property page. Detailed photos of the proposed meter installations are within the applicant’s document *Assessment of buildings along Meigs and Cram*, which is posted within the applicant’s materials on the property page.

Building 302 – Guard House.

Erected: 1905; Addition: 1930s

The guard house is directly east of the main entrance, on the northeast corner of Brady and Meige, and directly north of the star fort's northern berm. It is a one-story masonry structure that sits on a tall limestone base. The existing gas meter is located at the front of the building, and the contractor recommends that this unit be removed and new meter be installed at the rear of the building (and not visible by those entering and existing the building from the primary public entrance).



Staff photo, September 25, 2025.

Building 303 – The Post Theater

Erected: 1939

The theater is located on the north side of Meige, across from the north berm of the star fort, and east of the guard house. The single-story building has a masonry veneer. The structure's exaggerated height, due to its design/use as a theater, is given the illusion of a two-story structure due to the windows placed above the building's entrance. The current meter is on the west/side wall near the rear of the building and is not visible from the public right of way. The proposal is to install the new meter in the same location.



Staff photo, September 25, 2025. The east wall of the guard house can be seen at the left side of this photo.

Building 311 – Enlisted Men’s Barracks

Erected: 1890; Altered: ca. 1939

This building is located on the east side of Cram, between Meige and W. Jefferson. It is the northernmost building within Fort Wayne, sitting close to W. Jefferson Avenue. It is highly dilapidated; the building’s roof caved in between 2020 and 2025. It is a masonry structure, whose original height was 2-1/2 stories.



Staff photo, July 17, 2025. This building is included here for informational purposes due to its adjacency to the other buildings that are planned for future gas service. This is the building outlined in red on the Parks and Rec map.

Building 312 – Service Club & Recreation Center / Contemporary use: Visitor’s Center

Erected: 1903; Addition: 1939

Located on the east side of Cram, south of the Enlisted Men’s Barracks. The original structure and addition are of brick masonry bearing wall construction. The 1903 structure rests on a limestone base whereas the 1939 addition sits on a concrete base. The existing meter is on the north wall of the original structure, hidden from view due to the rise of the front lawn and existing concrete retaining wall. The new meter will be installed in the same location.



Staff photo, September 25, 2025. The bakery is partially visible at the far-left side of this photo.

Building 313 – Bakery/Paint Shop

Erected: 1904

This structure is just north of Building 312, and sits from back from Cram, almost at the eastern property line. The small one-story brick masonry building sits on a masonry foundation. There is a wood frame extension at the southern end which is clad in vertically installed clapboards. This building is highlighted in yellow on the Parks and Rec map, but due to its current condition and lack of identified future use, the installation (or replacement of existing meter if present) was not discussed and is not part of this application.



Applicant photo.

Building 314

Erected: 1906; Addition of Porches: ca. 1939; Rehabilitated: 1970s, 1980s (southern half)

This building is the southernmost residential structure on Cram and is separated from Building 312 and 313 by an asphalt driveway. The structure has a U-shaped footprint, with two long, front-gabled masses joined by a recessed two-story structure which is divided centrally in half by a brick firewall, thus creating two independent buildings within a symmetrical unified design. The existing meter is on the front of the building; the tentative proposal is to move it to the north side, between the window opening and first angled wall, obscuring it from view.



Staff photos, September 25, 2025.



Other rehabilitation/repair work

- In 2019, 2023 and 2024, Historic staff has reviewed and approved scopes of work at various buildings within Fort Wayne, consisting of the installation of new asphalt shingle roofs (replacing asphalt shingle roofs) and the repair of wood windows, trim, installation of gutters/downspouts, and other in-kind work.

ISSUES

- The disturbance or destruction of underground archaeological items that may be caused by the drilling and excavation of the tie-in locations.
 - Historic staff should be notified if items are located.
 - If the location of work needs to be altered for any reason, work will stop immediately. The applicant will notify Historic staff of the pause of work and will apply for the Commission's review of the proposed changes and the reasons for the change.

RECOMMENDATION**Section 21-2-78, Determinations of Historic District Commission****Recommendation 1 of 1, Certificate of Appropriateness**

Staff recommends that the proposed work will be appropriate according to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and the Fort Wayne Historic District's Elements of Design, with the condition that:

- The archaeological monitoring during the drilling and excavation work will be reported to staff in real time and notified if archaeological items are located.
- If the pathway of work needs to be altered for any reason, work will stop immediately. The applicant will notify staff of the pause of work and will apply for the Commission's review of the proposed changes and the reasons for the change.
- When 302, 303, 312 and 314 are repaired/rehabilitated to the level needed for the installation of gas service, DTE or its contractor will submit to staff details illustrating the placement and installation method of the exterior meter(s) as well as a cut sheet of the meter and its associated frame and pipes.