



# West Central



## West Central - Days of Yore

In 1887, The Spokane Falls Review wrote about the land that would become known as the West Central Neighborhood: "This high level plain slopes gently on both sides to the river bank. From every portion a view of the city and surrounding country can be obtained."

When Colonel Jenkins first homesteaded in the area in 1879, West Central was a wilderness only reachable by a simple ferry. Those who dared to go across the river fell in love with the view and saw potential in the land. Visionaries like William Pettet, Hiram Muzzy, Colonel Jenkins, and the Nettleton family saw that potential and were integral figures in creating what is now West Central.



William Pettet was a Spokane pioneer, civic leader, real estate promoter, and one of the most prominent citizens of Spokane. He arrived in Spokane in 1883 and made considerable investments in real estate. As the city grew, his holdings grew in value, in time making him one of the wealthiest residents of Spokane.

Hiram Muzzy came to Spokane in 1880 eager to prove his pioneering spirit. Eight years later he earned his homestead patent and quickly platted 160 acres into more than 500 city lots. Muzzy then sold his lots to other local developers and many of Spokane's aspiring newcomers.



In 1887, William Nettleton bought 278 acres at \$100 an acre and platted the property. The Nettletons had faith in the burgeoning City of Spokane and in the natural beauty of the river that surrounded the neighborhood.

By 1909, life in the West Central Neighborhood was booming. With Spokane's continued growth, residents had begun to spread across the banks of the river and sought to live in Spokane's newest suburb. West Central at that time was a destination point for the up-and coming middle class.



By the 1930s, much of the neighborhood was established, and West Central was celebrated as a neighborhood with a wide variety of architectural styles. From Queen Anne-Victorian to Craftsman and Bungalow to Cottage Style, these houses celebrated the different architectural styles that make up West Central. As houses came so did businesses, and well into the early 1960s there were stores and businesses of every kind to cater to the needs of the residents in the neighborhood.

During the late 1800s and early 1900s, the Northern Pacific Railroad and Union Pacific Railroads built routes through the neighborhood, which were abandoned by the early 1970s. An amusement park was located at the western terminus of the Boone Avenue rail line. First known in 1889 as



The West Central Neighborhood Council meets the second Wednesday of each month at 6:30 pm. Meetings are held at the West Central Community Center.

[westcentral.spokaneneighborhoods.org](http://westcentral.spokaneneighborhoods.org)



Ingersoll's, the park was later reopened as Twickenham Park. It featured a forty-piece band and people traveled for miles to hear them play. In 1893 the Spokane Street Railway, a part of Washington Water Power, bought the whole park and expanded it into an amusement park patterned after Coney Island. Renamed Natatorium Park (named for the large swimming pool built in the park), it quickly became the recreation destination for Spokane residents. In 1909, the Looft Carousel (now located in downtown Spokane at Riverfront Park) became a centerpiece for the park. At its peak, Natatorium Park featured a heated indoor Olympic-sized swimming pool, amusement park rides, roller-coasters, miniature rail-road rides, and a baseball park. With the loss of rail car lines in 1939 and more people watching television in the 1950s, the park slowly faded from popularity. Natatorium Park was finally closed and dismantled in 1968.



In addition to many nature parks and trails, such as the Hamblen Conservation Area and High Bridge Park, West Central has A. M. Cannon Park (located on Maxwell). Established in 1912, it originally boasted playground equipment, a baseball field, tennis courts, sandboxes, and a wading pool. In 1929, a larger pool was built and AM Cannon Park became one of the more heavily used parks in the city. Today, it has even more amenities, such as a basketball court, picnic shelter, and water park.



In 2005, the Nettleton's Addition was placed on the National Historic Register, the largest historic district in Washington State.

## Life in West Central - Today

Everyday life in West Central has many contrasts. People of all ages, backgrounds, and income levels live, work, and play in this neighborhood. The mixture of old and new single and multi-family housing, light industrial, commercial, institutional and government facilities, scenic open space, and the proximity to downtown give the area a blending of sights, sounds, and activities. The Spokane County Courthouse complex is a major center of local governmental functions which brings constant activity on weekdays. The West Central Community Center, Native American Community Center, and A.M. Cannon Park provide facilities to help improve the lives of citizens in multiple ways. The popular Centennial Trail travels through West Central along the bluff of the Spokane River. The paved trail provides a significant non-motorized transportation route. Small and mid-sized businesses are located along Maple, Ash, and Monroe streets, serving a variety of needs of the community and greater Spokane. The neighborhood also has a small industrial presence with a number of light industrial businesses south of Maxwell Avenue. West Central still has the look and feel of its historical past, from the ever present courthouse tower, old streetcar rails remaining in the street pavement, and block after block of tightly built houses from the early twentieth century. In contrast, the new 77 acre, mixed-use community of Kendall Yards is steadily emerging, offering a modern living environment in the heart of Spokane.



In recent years more and more young families and singles are buying homes in West Central. Residents often get together with block parties and yard sales.





*"It has a beautiful future and it feels great to be a part of the transition. It is so close to downtown, has beautiful views off the Centennial Trail and is only going to get better!"*

-Rachae Dell

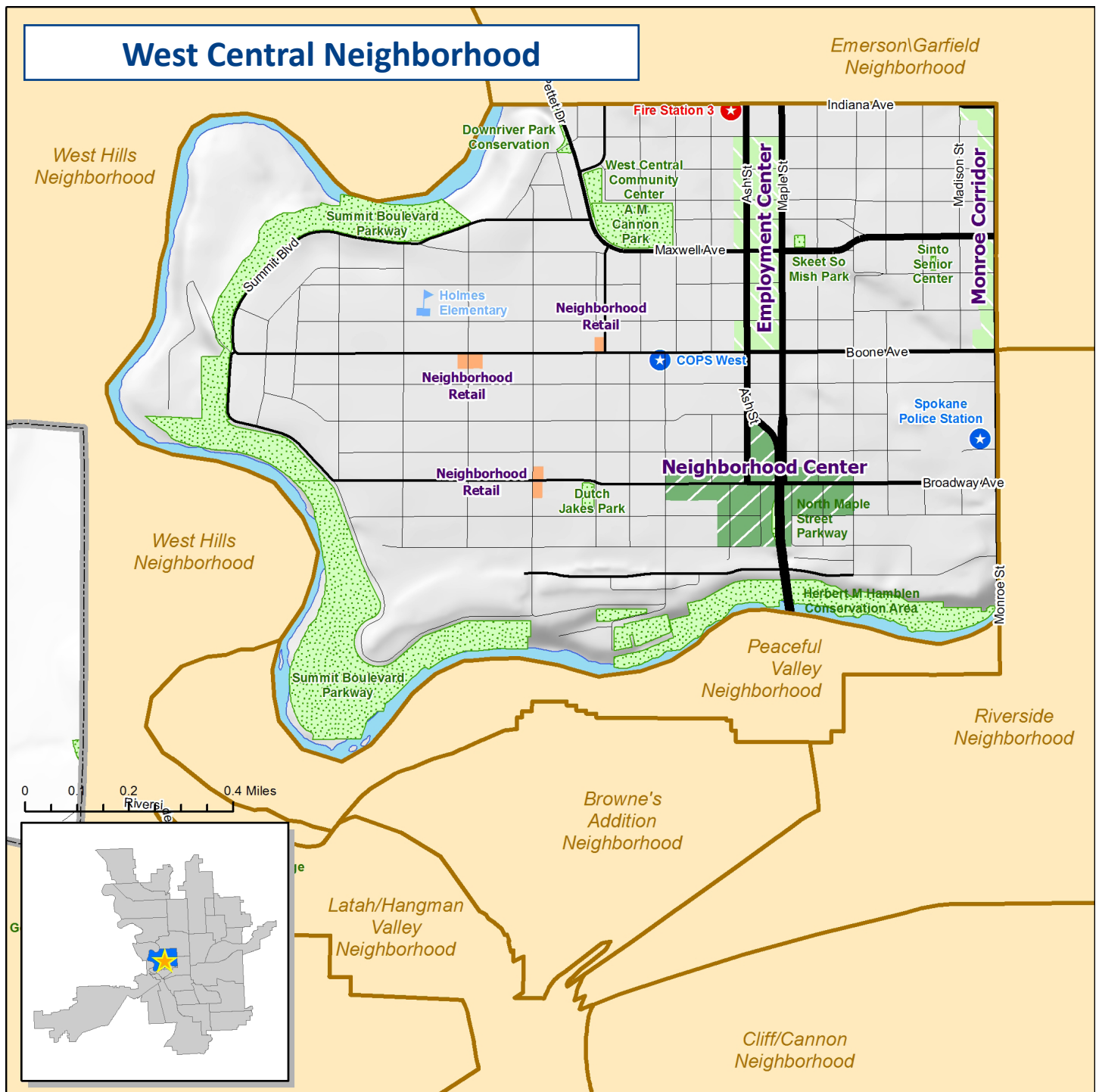
## West Central - Treasures

- Spokane County Courthouse
- Nettleton's Historic District
- Grace Baptist Church
- Muzzy-Shrine House
- Finch Hall
- Gardner & Engdahl Apartments/ The Gables
- Centennial Trail
- Monroe Bridge



## West Central - Natural & Built Identity

The defining natural feature of West Central is the Spokane River. The meandering river, far below the built community, makes up more than 60 percent of the neighborhood's boundary. The other boundaries are Indiana Avenue on the north and Monroe Street on the east. The ridgelines above the river valley still provide spectacular views and sought after real estate. The river valley's northern bank has steep slopes with dense native conifers, native shrubs and grasses, scattered rock out-cropping and a variety of wildlife. The upper terrain is generally flat with periodic rolls and hills. Few native trees remain on the upper area, as West Central has been thoroughly developed. However, many old, large deciduous street trees planted years ago still remain. The construction of the Monroe Bridge over the Spokane River in 1911 allowed convenient access for the continuing development of West Central. East-west grid streets were laid out with small, single-family residential lots for modest housing for the growing population of Spokane. Today, most of these dwellings still remain in a variety of structural and aesthetic conditions. In general, West Central is in transition from a thriving working class community. The recent Kendall Yards development and the central location provide the neighborhood new opportunities. Presently, 29 historic buildings in West Central are listed on the local Spokane Historic Register.



#### SOURCES

The Spokane Falls Review, "A History of West Central" Maria Lewis, The Spokesman Review

The Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/>

Neighborhoods in Spokane, Washington <http://metrospokane.typepad.com/photos/west-central/finch.html> <http://natpark.org/>

<http://www.discovery-school.org/natatorium>. Figure 5 - The muzzy mansion.

Photo by Kelly Cruz, from: A Footprint to the Future West Central Neighborhood, City of Spokane, Washington, Neighborhood Action Plan May 2012.

