



# South Bend Common Council

**Karen L. White**  
At-Large Council Member

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To: South Bend Common Council  
Office of the City Clerk  
From: Councilmember At Large Karen L. White, Residential Neighborhoods Committee  
Chairperson  
Date: December 11, 2025

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## 2025 Annual Report of the Residential Neighborhoods Committee

Dear Council Members,

As Chairperson of the South Bend Common Council's Residential Neighborhood Committee, I am pleased to file the 2025 Annual Committee Report. Pursuant to Section 2-10(i) of the South Bend Municipal Code. This report provides a summary of the key activities conducted by the Residential Neighborhoods Committee.

**Duties:** The Residential Neighborhoods Committee is one (1) of the eleven (11) standing committees of the Common Council. It oversees the various activities and issues related to neighborhood development and enhancement per the City Code.

While the Residential Neighborhood Committee plays an important role in addressing local concerns, many neighborhood-related efforts — such as housing, infrastructure, and broader community development initiatives — do not come directly to the Committee. Instead, these matters are often overseen through other City departments, specialized task forces, or external partnerships. The Committee's focus remains on issues that directly impact neighborhood quality of life and on collaborating with district representatives to ensure resident voices are heard.

**Committee Members:** Four (4) Council Members and one (1) Citizen Member served on the Committee for the year. They included:

1. Karen L. White, Chairperson
2. Sheila Niezgodski, Vice-Chairperson

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3. Ophelia Gooden Rodgers, Member
4. Sharon McBride, Member
5. Gabe Murei, Citizen Member

**Meetings:** Public meetings were held. All Committee minutes and notices have been posted and may be accessed on the Common Council's website.

Meeting dates in 2025 and topics discussed are as follows:

**February 10, 2025 4:45 PM:** Organizational Meeting

**June 26, 2025 3:30 PM:** Working Session

**July 23, 2025 4:00 PM:** Working Session

**August 6, 2025 5:30 PM:** Joint Meeting with Personnel & Finance Committee

**September 8, 2025 5:15 PM:** Bill No. 51-25 Amending the Youth Advisory Council Ordinance

## **South Bend Common Council Youth Advisory Council:**

The South Bend Common Council Youth Advisory Council (YAC) serves under the direction of At-Large Council Member Karen White. In 2003, the South Bend Common Council passed an ordinance which created the Youth Advisory Council. The ordinance created a mechanism for youth to provide input and become involved in the civil engagement process so both our youth and the City can benefit.

The Youth Advisory Council was created to serve high school students grades 9-12 by providing the means to positively engage with City government, explore local social justice issues, policy development and prepare them to effectively organize, lead and understand the importance of their input and engagement. The **South Bend Youth Advisory Council** participated in two (2) town hall meetings hosted by the **South Bend Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.** Following these sessions, the Council was invited to a luncheon with community leaders. During

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the luncheon, members shared their perceptions on how to effectively engage young adults in civic life. They emphasized the importance of:

- Creating inclusive spaces where youth voices are valued
- Building mentorship opportunities with established leaders
- Designing programs that reflect the real challenges and aspirations of young people

Their contributions highlighted the critical role of youth perspectives in shaping community engagement strategies.

As outlined in the Ordinance, on Monday, February 10, 2025, members of the Youth Council attended Mayor James Mueller's Finance Report to the Council.

## **Meetings with the Near Westside Neighborhood Association Environmental Concerns:**

I, along with other Committee Members, were invited to attend the Near Westside neighborhood meeting with regards to their environmental concerns that directly impacted their neighborhood. The meetings were held on September 17, 2025, September 24, 2025, and August 30, 2025. Members from the administration, St. Joseph County Health Department, and IDEM were part of the discussions.

The Residential Neighborhoods Committee dedicated attention to addressing a variety of issues impacting neighborhoods across the City in collaboration with district representatives. As part of this effort, each district selected a theme to guide their neighborhood clean-up initiatives, ensuring that the work reflected the unique needs and priorities of their communities.

In addition, the Committee requested that district representatives identify individuals from both the Committee and City administration to serve on the **Food Desert Committee**, which will focus on strategies to improve access to healthy food options in underserved areas.

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As the Residential Neighborhoods Chair, the year 2025 has been both productive and rewarding. I am deeply appreciative of the support provided by Mr. Darryl Scott, Assistant to Major James Muller, and Ms. Mary McAfee, Director of Engagement & Economic Empowerment. Their collaboration and commitment have been instrumental in advancing our neighborhood initiatives and strengthening community engagement.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karen L. White". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Karen L. White, Councilmember At-Large  
Residential Neighborhoods Committee, Chairperson  
South Bend Common Council

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