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Contact: Joe Fox

(260) 450-4523

jfox@tomhenryformayor.com

HENRY DRAWS ATTENTION TO SIDEWALKS & ALLEYS, KEY BUILDING BLOCKS OF NEIGHBORHOODS

Candidate's Proposals Aim to Beautify, Strengthen Fabric of the Community

Fort Wayne, Indiana – Dubbed the low-key, often unnoticed workhorses of public works, Mayoral candidate Tom Henry spent time today talking about Fort Wayne's sidewalks and alleys, underscoring their value to community vitality. During a news conference at 4901 Vance Avenue, near Lane Middle School, Henry rolled out his ideas for two programs to encourage better coordination, maintenance, repair and enhancement of this important infrastructure. Accompanying Henry was 2nd District City Council candidate Karen Goldner.

“Sidewalks-to-nowhere and alleys that require four-wheel drive vehicles to navigate are more than minor frustrations for residents,” observed Henry. “They are indicators of the overall health of our city. Walkability, connectivity and sustainability are core characteristics of thriving communities. To promote all three, I will focus my energy on strengthening these building blocks of our neighborhoods and fostering lasting community connections.”

In every quadrant of the city, there are sidewalks that end abruptly, linking to nothing, sometimes in the middle of a block, at the end of a subdivision, at the property line of a school or even at the edge of a park. In some instances, developers may not have been required to put in sidewalks, or no storm sewers and storm drains exist through roadside swales. Ultimately, not all sidewalks may be connected due to practical realities. However, as a matter of policy, sidewalks-to-nowhere undermine city livability by limiting pedestrian travel, endangering the safety of those on foot and creating barriers and a sense of isolation.

To tackle these issues, Henry's Sidewalk Strategy specifies the following elements:

- A comprehensive assessment of existing sidewalks and sidewalks-to-nowhere to establish an up-to-date inventory;
- A long-term sidewalk management plan with recommendations to address unmet needs, maintenance and connectivity issues;
- A prioritized list of sidewalks to be completed based upon criteria that includes: safety, public input, cost, condition of surrounding sidewalks and other projects planned or being completed in the area;

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- Collaboration with organizations such as school systems, neighborhood associations, businesses, Urban Enterprise Association and others to help fund connecting sidewalks that benefit the area;
- Ongoing support for Plan-it Allen! goals and strategies that support walkability, connectivity and sustainability throughout the city;
- An evaluation of funding sources to determine potential available resources (federal, state, Public Works, CEDIT, grants, etc.); and
- An annual report on progress achieved.

In older parts of Fort Wayne, there are alleys that are in disrepair or falling into disrepair. The current city policy on alley repair is for owners to pay 75 percent of the cost. The number of concrete alleys significantly increases the cost of any work. Currently, alleys are not included in the city's pavement management rating system.

“I am keenly aware that orphan issues like alleys are easy to overlook, but they can lessen the desirability and development potential in our older neighborhoods, and they matter to residents,” noted Henry. “I know, I was on City Council and responded to many calls. Alleys, like sidewalks, are one of the basics that make our city work, that reflect our image to the world. I am committed to meeting our infrastructure needs, large and small, in a comprehensive fashion. It just makes sense.”

Henry's Alley Improvement Initiative will concentrate upon these components:

- A thorough assessment of all city alleys;
- Development of a process to score the condition of alleys;
- Computation of costs to repair alleys, and an exploration of potential funding sources;
- Creation of a multiyear, prioritized alley repair program based upon alley condition, use, ability of alley users to partner in financing necessary work, and coordination with other relevant nearby activity or anticipated projects in the area;
- Development of a ongoing schedule for alley maintenance;
- Identification of alleys that could be abandoned, including driving surface removal, land transfer to new property owner, easement assignment to ensure utility access; and
- An annual progress report on alley accomplishments.

Henry's sidewalk and alley proposals emphasize his dedication to several basic leadership principles: promoting private-public partnerships, providing responsive leadership, playing to the community's strengths and getting the most bang from every taxpayer dollar.

Tom Henry is the Democratic candidate for Mayor of Fort Wayne. He is a successful business owner, a five-term Fort Wayne City Councilman and a nonprofit leader with deep roots in the community.

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1920 Bluffton Road • P.O. Box 5713 (46895) • Fort Wayne, Indiana 46809 • 260.478.8239

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