



NEWS RELEASE

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Town of Zionsville acquires Carpenter Nature Preserve

During dedication ceremony, founders Jim and Nancy Carpenter were awarded the Sagamore of the Wabash

Zionsville Parks and Recreation has added 215 acres to their parks system with the Town of Zionsville's acquisition of Carpenter Nature Preserve located at the southwest corner of south Michigan Road and State Road 32 (the land formerly known as Wolf Run Golf Club). The purchase marks the beginning of the legacy of the Carpenter Nature Preserve – Union Township's first park, Boone County's largest nature preserve and a future regional destination for visitors to experience the wonders of nature.

To celebrate, Zionsville and Boone County officials, organizations and citizens joined together yesterday for a dedication ceremony at Carpenter Nature Preserve. During the ceremony, Jim and Nancy Carpenter, founders of the Carpenter Nature Preserve and longtime Zionsville residents, were awarded the Sagamore of the Wabash. This award is the highest honor that the Governor of Indiana bestows.

The Town of Zionsville acquired the Carpenter Nature Preserve from the Carpenters, who are also the founders and owners of Wild Birds Unlimited. After visiting the property with Mayor Emily Styron and former Deputy Mayor Julie Johns-Cole, the Carpenters saw an opportunity to protect the natural environment. They purchased the property in 2021 for \$5.5 million to preserve the land for generations to come.

"When we were invited out to the property by Mayor Emily Styron, we knew what would likely happen to it in the years to come for development. We couldn't let that happen. You cannot find anything like this in central Indiana that will ever be available again," said Nancy Carpenter.

As interim owners, the Carpenters got to work caring for the land and planning for a future park. They mowed the old golf cart trails, established bird boxes and planted experimental pollinator gardens. They worked with the Parks Department to complete a master plan for Carpenter Nature Preserve. Nancy Carpenter also helped form the [Zionsville Parks Foundation](#) to raise money for the town's parks system.

Following the completion of the master plan, the Parks Department secured external funding. In early 2023, the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (DNR) awarded the department \$3 million from the [Next Level Conservation Trust](#) to support the property's permanent conservation.

Additionally, the project has been recommended by the DNR for grant support from the Land and Water Conservation Fund. The project will also receive financial support from the DNR's Indiana Stream and Wetland Mitigation Program to

fund restoration work along Eagle Creek.

“Through special partnerships and historic funding, together we’re protecting land across the state like the Carpenter Nature Preserve,” said Dan Bortner, DNR director. “In fact, the Next Level Conservation Trust represents the largest single infusion of funding into conservation in Indiana history. By coming together, we’re both preserving important future habitat for wildlife and providing great places for people to get out and explore.”

In May of 2023, the Zionsville Town Council voted to approve a \$5.5 million bond to purchase the land from the Carpenters and fund the cost of engineering, surveys and construction documents for the first phase of construction. After an updated appraisal, the Carpenters committed to a \$1.5 million gift by selling the property to the town for \$4.52 million.

The first phase of the preserve will be completed by late 2025 or early 2026 with the basics: trails, parking and restrooms. Future plans call for a nature center and a small mixed-used space for weddings or dining. The preserve will also have enhanced wetlands, woodlands and prairies, along with boardwalks, a nature-inspired playground and Eagle Creek overlooks.

“I am extremely grateful to Parks Superintendent Jarod Logsdon and our entire Parks and Recreation team for the work they put into the grant process and into this remarkable preserve. I want to recognize and thank the Carpenters – without them, this wouldn’t have been possible. This is a legacy project for our current and future generations,” said Mayor Emily Styron.

“Yesterday would not have been possible without the generosity of the Carpenters and without Mayor Emily Styron’s vision to see this land become a nature sanctuary,” said Zionsville Parks and Recreation Superintendent Jarod Logsdon. “This preserve increases our current park system by over half. It’s a historic moment for us.”

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