

SPEEDWAY

The Indianapolis Motor Speedway was built on the outskirts of Indianapolis in 1909, and the first race was held there in 1911. A year later, Lem Trotter drafted plans for Speedway City—an industrial community to be developed in the area adjacent to the new Motor Speedway. This new city was to be “horseless,” reflecting its commitment to industry, transportation, and progress. Much as the track was a testing ground for automotive technology, Speedway City was to be a laboratory for living in the new automotive era. Its creators envisioned a utopia devoid of the problems typically associated with modern living. Carl Fisher, one of the town's four founders, said in a 1909 interview that in Speedway City “the homes would be homes and not the kind of shacks that usually infest an industrial center.” An advertisement for “Beautiful Speedway City” encouraged people to purchase land and build new homes and businesses there; it touted the sidewalks, water, gas, electric lights, interurban train service and “splendid gravel roadway.”

Speedway offered employment prospects (through the presence of the Prest-O-Lite Company), inexpensive lots, and the promise of a clean and secure living environment. Several companies soon followed Prest-O-Lite in establishing industrial endeavors there. The Electric Steel Castings Company arrived in 1913, followed by Allison Engineering Company in 1917, American Art Clay in 1919, and Esterline Angus in 1923. These factories bolstered the young community, providing good jobs and a strong tax base. On July 14, 1926, the residents of Speedway City petitioned Marion County to incorporate as the Town of Speedway, with a total of 507 residents. The population had nearly tripled, to over 1,400 people, within four years.

A period of rapid expansion followed World War II. Local factories had been mobilized to meet wartime industrial needs, and jobs provided by government contracts revitalized the community after the Depression. Speedway's population was almost 5,500 people by 1950, and the town continued to attract new residents: its population was more than 9,600 in 1960 and more than 15,000 by 1970.

The post-war years also gave new life to the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, which had fallen into disrepair during the war years. Anton "Tony" Hulman, Jr., purchased the track in 1945. His short-term financial investment in the Speedway included reconstruction of several grandstands, resurfacing of portions of the track, and various construction projects: garages, an office, and a museum near the main entrance. Hulman's purchase of the track ushered in a new golden era for the Motor Speedway, paving the way for the Indianapolis 500 to become "the greatest spectacle in racing."

Speedway's attractiveness created strong demand for housing in the 1950s and '60s. This demand was filled by the construction of several apartment complexes, in addition to numerous single-level brick homes on relatively small lots. At the time, these homes were perfect for growing families. They attracted residents with their low cost and their proximity to factory jobs. Soon, the newly built schools also became a strong selling point for the community.

In the fall of 1963, Speedway High School moved from its original location at 5151 West 14th Street to a new building on the corner of Lynhurst Drive and West 25th Street. The former high school became the junior high school facility. New elementary schools were built in the late 1950s and early 1960s,

bringing the total number to four—each one named after a founder of the Indianapolis Motor Speedway.

Changes in public organizations reflected the expanding population and school system. The Speedway Metropolitan Police Department, formed in 1969, replaced the marshal system that had been established in 1926. In 1971, remnants of the original volunteer fire department disbanded, making way for a paid, professional fire department. The Speedway Public Library was built through the efforts of local residents and the support of the Speedway Lion's Club, which contributed operating funds for the board of directors and donated the land on which the library was built in 1968.

By the early 1970s, almost all of the land within Speedway's boundaries was developed and occupied. Homes were owned mainly by white, middle-class families. The school system was gaining a reputation for its high-quality education. The town had become a suburban utopia of sorts: low crime, safe streets, good schools, and none of the problems associated with industrial or urban living.

When Unigov made Indianapolis synonymous with Marion County in 1970, Speedway resisted annexation and remained autonomous. But the town was surrounded on all sides. The commercial and residential development on the west side of Indianapolis blurred the dividing line between Speedway and Indianapolis. The small town west of the city was now engulfed by the city.

As the city of Indianapolis expanded around Speedway, the town lost some of its identity but remained a distinct entity in the minds of residents. Today, most residents of Indianapolis think of Speedway as a neighborhood or section of the city, not as an independent town. But nearly all of Speedway's residents fiercely

defend its independence and autonomy. They often cite Indianapolis as an extraordinary resource that allows them to live in a small-town atmosphere yet have access to shopping, professional sports, and other aspects of modern metropolitan culture. But they also see the big city as a different and threatening place—a source of crime, poverty, and other ills. For those wishing to escape the tumultuous or unpleasant aspects of city life, Speedway represents a safe haven. It is—or at least it is imagined to be—a place where things are the way they used to be and the way they should be.

Speedway in Transition

Speedway is a town of stable institutions and organizations that provide security and constancy to everyday life. Among the most important are the Motor Speedway, the civic clubs, and the schools. (The role of religious organizations, a fourth category, will be discussed separately and at length below.)

One of the obvious fixtures is the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, which lies along the eastern edge of the town. Its presence is unavoidable along Georgetown Road and 16th Street, and the businesses surrounding it extend through the center of town along Crawfordsville Road. The track provides jobs for residents and an opportunity for community groups to sponsor fundraisers or special events. The summer seems to revolve around the races—the Indianapolis 500 and now the Brickyard 400—during the month of May and the first week of August. Though residents lament the gridlock that accompanies racing events, they have a special affection for the races and the fans, which bring national attention and tourist dollars to their community.

Speedway's most important and active civic group is the Lion's Club. The town's "elites" have traditionally belonged to the Club.

Members typically know each other from a variety of different venues, both social and professional. The Club continues to lead Speedway's community service, but the number of participating members is declining, which is worrisome to First Vice President Ron Fisher. He feels the group needs to be active in new and different ways, and that continuing with the same programs will not effectively address the needs of Speedway. But his ideas meet resistance from the group's older members, who represent one of the problems he sees facing Speedway. Soon these residents will be gone—and with them, perhaps, the community's stability. When the older population dies or moves away, who will replace them? Fisher would like the Lion's Club to plan for this transition before it becomes an urgent problem.

Of course, the Club is by no means dormant. It is still actively involved in many areas of the community, including the school system. It sponsors awards and other incentives for students who do good work. It is also a major supporter of the athletic teams, and it works closely with the police department. Most recently, the Club purchased a dog for the department. And it does various other sorts of social service work. For example, it helps those in Speedway who have sight and hearing problems by buying them glasses and hearing aids.

Speedway also has a Kiwanis Club and an Optimists Club. The Kiwanis group deals with the local schools and provides social services; it has more activities outside of Speedway's boundaries than does the Lion's Club. The Optimists Club is the smallest of the service clubs in Speedway. Like the other groups, its primary focus is the schools.

For residents of Speedway, the school system looms even larger than the track in shaping the town's identity. Its success is impressive: about 85 percent of those who graduate go on for

further education. The schools are a tremendous source of pride and a primary draw for young families. Because of the school system, Speedway will continue to have a population of young people in the community. An increasing number of these children will come from the apartment complexes. For reasons discussed below, older members of the community tend to view this as a problem, but the school administration reports no negative repercussions from this trend.

These are the organizations and institutions that have helped Speedway retain a small-town feel and sense of community in the midst of an urban environment. But time marches on, and not even Speedway is immune to change. Like any modern town or city, it faces a set of problems and challenges.

First, demographic changes are affecting the community. The residents of Speedway are getting old: there has been a steady rise in the population of seniors in Speedway since 1960. In 1980, the senior population made up about 15 percent of the total population; ten years later, that number had risen to almost 20 percent.

Second, urban sprawl has changed the town. As Speedway has been increasingly surrounded by Indianapolis—a change that was formalized in 1970 with the passage of Unigov legislation—it has become a commuter route. Crawfordsville Road, the main thoroughfare through the city, leads directly to downtown Indianapolis after connecting to West 16th Street; it also has a junction with I-465 at its west end. Thus, Speedway is no longer on the outskirts of a burgeoning city. It is virtually in the middle of it. Consequently, it no longer seems an ideal suburb to many people in Indianapolis.

A third issue is its housing stock. Many of the houses in Speedway were built during the post-war building boom and are small by comparison to typical suburban homes. And yet they are pricey. The typical wood-frame house starts at \$85,000.

Speedway residents who have moved out say the main reason was their desire for a larger house. A member of Speedway United Methodist who lived in Speedway for a short time, then moved to a larger home, commented that people live in Speedway "on their way up the ladder." This is a new phenomenon: most residents who moved to Speedway in the 1950s moved there to stay. They worked at local factories and liked the schools. There seemed little reason to leave. Now, people are moving further out of the city as they move up the social ladder. This reflects the new ideal in suburban living. Once, Speedway's housing stock was the best available; now the houses are not modern or large enough for an active suburban family. And being close to Indianapolis, although it is still a benefit of living in Speedway, no longer seems to be such a great attraction. A half-hour trip to the movies or to church is not a burden for most Americans.

A fourth major issue facing Speedway is the rise of the renting population. Speedway is about half-renter and half-owner occupied. Much of the rental property consists of apartment complexes that were built between 1960 and 1970. (The rental market is also driven by people who buy up groups of houses and lease them.) Since the town had been built out by the 1960s, the only remaining source of housing revenue lay in apartment complexes. Though these complexes seem to consist of comfortable, middle-class apartments, residents consistently cite this as a negative change.

Their impression is that, with the building of the apartment complexes, crime increased and the town's environment became

less stable. They suspect that apartment dwellers are not interested in the community and do not involve themselves in government. Long-time Speedway residents take pride in the fact that people care about their property and spend time on their lawns and gardens; it is rare to see an unkempt house or lawn. The presence of people who are not responsible for the upkeep of their own property is threatening to them.

A fifth issue is Speedway's increasing racial diversity. Residents draw a correlation between the increase in apartment dwellers and the increase in non-white residents. To long-term residents, it seems that these trends coincided, and census data support this perception. Between 1980 and 1990, there was a sharp rise in the African-American population, from 1.87 percent of the total population to 5.46 percent of the population.

Still, there remains a noticeable lack of racial diversity in Speedway's churches and community organizations. A couple who spoke about the negative effects of the apartment buildings and the subsequent arrival of African-Americans commented that "99 percent of the apartment renters are unchurched." This extreme claim probably contains a grain of truth in it. Minorities who move into Speedway are not deeply involved in the civic or religious life of the town. The only organization in Speedway where there is a notable minority presence is the school system: Tom Smith, the principal of Speedway High, said that 13 percent of the students are minorities.

Reaction to this increasing diversity is mixed, depending on the age of the person who talks about it. Very few people say it explicitly, but residents seem to draw a correlation between the increase in racial diversity and an increase in crime (specifically, drug traffic). A reporter from the town newspaper noted that the people most resentful of the change in racial demographics

tend to be older; he has not encountered any negative reaction from the younger population. One member of the town council, a retired school administrator, said he was glad about the growing diversity in the town: soon his young grandson would begin school, and he wanted him to see that there are different kinds of people in the world. Notably, this positive spin came from a person with a direct relationship to the school system through a child. Older residents whose children have graduated and moved away may not have such direct contact with the more heterogeneous population, and they may be more inclined to believe the worst.

It seems fair to say that many of their fears are unfounded and misplaced. On several occasions, Speedway residents mentioned a drop in school enrollment as if that were an established fact—though, in reality, the enrollment has not declined. It is difficult to account for this disconnect, but perhaps it is partially explained by fear. Residents who fear the worst might be inclined to conclude that their school system is being negatively affected by changes in Speedway. They should be comforted to know that, according to census data, the percentage of high school graduates in Speedway still exceeds the Indianapolis Public Schools by 10 percent.

The Churches of Speedway

Churches are among Speedway's most visible institutions today, but this was not always true. The original advertisement for Speedway City said that the new town would possess churches rather than "undesirable persons and lines of businesses," but the first church was not officially established until 1926. Formed from a Sunday school class that started in 1917, Speedway Christian Church is the oldest and one of the most important churches in the town's history. It was Speedway's only church

until 1937, when Father Leo Lindemann overcame resistance from Protestants and established St. Christopher's Catholic Church at the corner of 16th Street and Lynhurst Drive. St. Christopher's quickly attracted a large congregation and often faced problems of overcrowding. With well over 6,000 members today, it boasts the largest congregation of any church in Speedway.

For 25 years, these were the town's only two churches. This slow religious development might reflect the town's small population. It might also indicate that Speedway was more interested in developing industry than its spiritual life. Whatever the reason, the pace of growth increased during the 1940s and 1950s and continued at a strong rate through the mid-1960s. With the exception of the Speedway Church of Christ, which moved from Indianapolis to Speedway in 1980, the development of churches and religious institutions in the town was all but complete by the late 1960s—a pattern paralleling that of Speedway.

Today, churches are an integral part of everyday life and contribute a measure of stability to Speedway. This is most obviously manifest in the long tenures of local pastors. The duration of their service with a congregation is, in some cases, double or triple the average for religious leaders. The average pastorate does not exceed five or six years, but there are several pastors in Speedway whose tenures have lasted nearly 20 years or more. The town's oldest church, Speedway Christian, has had only four pastors in its 72 years. Its present leader, Rev. Andrew Crowley, has served the church since 1979. St. Christopher's Catholic Church also has a record of long pastoral tenures. Its original pastor, Father Leo Lindemann, served the church for 37 years. Its third pastor, Father Mike Welch, was appointed in 1983 and has remained at the church for 15 years.

The pattern of long pastorates in Speedway is not limited to the older churches. Many pastors of the churches established during or after World War II have also had long-term tenures. At Speedway Baptist Church, Larry Hamm has served as senior pastor since 1980. Roger Dean has served as senior pastor at John Knox Presbyterian Church for 26 years. Evangelist John Welch has been the leader of the High School Road Church of Christ since 1973. Richard Hunt served St. Andrew's Lutheran Church from 1978 through 1997, retiring after almost 20 years with the church. At the First Assembly of God Church, Paul Strietelmeier has been the pastor for 18 years.

These long tenures lend a sense of constancy and regularity to life. Many people in Speedway either grew up knowing these pastors or were relatively young when they arrived to serve their congregation. The fact that these leaders apparently do not feel any desire or pressure to leave their positions reflects the stability that is so valued in Speedway. In a town that has not changed in any obvious ways for several decades, it is not surprising that pastors tend to stay longer than the average. Their presence is particularly important to older residents who settled down with young families in the 1960s (or earlier) and have seen the town surrounded by Indianapolis. To those who resist change and hearken back to "the way it used to be," it must be comforting to know that within many of their local churches, the pastors have been there for many years and likely will be there for many more to come.

The age breakdown of churches reflects the overall trend in the town: congregations have a high percentage of senior citizens. The only church in which fewer than 25 percent of the members are over 55 is St. Christopher's Catholic Church (at 15 percent). Some churches, like Speedway Church of the Nazarene, have

congregations in which half the people are over 55. The priorities of older congregations are different than those in which there are a large number of young families. Older people tend to be more involved in the life of the congregation, because they are retired and can devote time to volunteer service. The irony is that a church cannot afford to have these senior adults remain as their only active members: once they die, the church will die with them.

The shifting demographics of Speedway, and the evolution of its relationship to Indianapolis, affect the activities of the churches. Changes in Speedway have forced churches to redefine their own communities and ask of themselves, "Who are we serving?" Implicit in this question is the issue of what programs they offer and why they offer the programs they do.

Churches in Speedway have no lack of channels through which people can get involved. At larger churches like Speedway Christian Church, Speedway United Methodist, and John Knox Presbyterian, there are numerous fellowship groups and social committees that need the energy and talents of members. The problem is not a lack of things to do; the problem lies in attracting people to church, especially young people. To that end, churches in Speedway offer youth groups that provide fellowship and Christian-education programs, and some sponsor activities that are unique to Speedway. At Speedway Christian, for example, the youth group raises money for its programs by parking cars in its lot on race days.

Additionally, there are plans at several Speedway churches to create a more contemporary worship service, with modern elements like video projection and guitar-based music. At least three of the churches—Speedway United Methodist, John Knox Presbyterian, and Speedway Baptist—have been working this

summer to implement a new service. Reactions from the congregants are mixed. A pastor at Speedway United Methodist said that older members of a congregation are more conservative and tend to be the ones in power. Consequently, planning for this kind of change progresses somewhat slowly.

The fact that Speedway's churches are searching for young people to join their congregations points to another change in the churches' focus: that of geography. Churches do not view their ministry area as limited to Speedway. Rather, they believe that they serve the entire west side. Based on estimates by the pastors, only two of 13 churches in Speedway draw a majority of their congregation from within Speedway's town limits. Both of these churches claim that Speedway residents make up about half of their congregation. The percentage of Speedway residents in other congregations ranges from 10 percent to 27 percent. (Unfortunately, the membership records of Speedway Christian, one of the oldest and most visible churches in Speedway, were unavailable.)

This large number of "drive-in" congregants has led to an expanded focus in the churches. The outreach pastor of Speedway United Methodist mentioned that, recently, the church considered changing its name to "Westside Community Methodist Church" because it feared that the "Speedway" moniker might limit outreach opportunities. The many people who come from all over the west side to attend church in Speedway contradict his theory. But drawing numbers from a wide area also limits the number of people who are eager to foster close ties between the Speedway community and the church.

This broad focus is well represented in the comment of a youth leader at Speedway Christian. He said that, at one time, you had to belong to one of "the big three" to get into town politics: the

Allison plant, the Lion's Club, or Speedway Christian Church. The churches established first in Speedway—Speedway Christian, Speedway United Methodist, and St. Christopher Catholic—tended to have more of a community focus at mid-century. Most people did not dream of driving 20 minutes to church, so Speedway's churches were filled with Speedway residents. The boom in automobile use, coupled with the building boom on the west side, opened up a greater geographical area for churches to draw from. Because of the geographic diversity among members, Speedway's churches have become regional rather than local in focus.

If churches are not exclusively Speedway-focused, in what ways do religious organizations contribute to the culture of Speedway? In other words, if changes in Speedway are affecting churches in the ways described above, how are churches affecting Speedway?

The Intersection of Faith and Culture

Speedway is a community with a high level of social capital and a strong sense of community, but the intersection of religion and culture is relatively small. Churches in Speedway do not define themselves by their address; their outreach is not dictated by their location. The task of maintaining the town's identity is assumed instead by civic and service organizations and other local institutions.

While it is true that the membership lists of these organizations are filled with the same people who fill the pews of Speedway's churches on Sunday mornings, many influential people in Speedway see a sharp delineation in their roles. Maintaining the strength of Speedway is a priority for them; however, the church is not the forum for thinking about community-specific issues.

In general, the "vitals" of the churches in Speedway are healthy. The leaders perceive strong support from their congregations (which is not surprising, given the inordinately long tenure of many church leaders). But churches in Speedway are more concerned with their own church family than with the outside community. Building community in Speedway does not appear to be of major concern to them, though the spirit of community within the churches is amazingly strong. Their family-like interaction is intimate. St. Andrew's Lutheran, Speedway Church of Christ, Speedway Church of the Nazarene, and others have small-group programs, organized around a particular task, that help develop to develop an internal sense of community.

Saying that a church is inwardly focused is not a profound revelation; but the underlying reasons are important to discern. There are a plethora of possibilities. One is that Speedway does not lend itself to church involvement because few glaring problems confront the town. Churches tend to mobilize around specific causes and issues. For example, they may rally to keep adult entertainment, a liquor store, or a gambling venue out of the community. Such businesses do exist in Speedway, but they are associated with the racing element, and Speedway's churches are ambivalent about race issues. They concede that the Motor Speedway was there before them and remain essentially neutral about the races and the culture accompanying them.

Likewise, churches sometimes become active in the community when issues like homelessness, poverty, and violent crime surface. These types of problems simply are not visible in Speedway. In this case, too, churches have no issue to rally around.

Another explanation for the inward focus of Speedway's churches is the relatively old age of the congregations. An older congregation must deal more frequently with issues of health,

depression, and loneliness, and these needs are met within the walls of the church, not through community activism.

The tradition or theology of a church plays a role in its inward focus as well. Though "mainline" Christianity is well represented in Speedway, the community has several theologically conservative churches. In these, the outside world is seen as the enemy, so they often act out of fear about, or hostility toward, the world. They typically understand "outreach" as an attempt to win souls for Christ. For example, Speedway Church of the Nazarene has a very active youth group. This group does indeed mingle with the community, but it is usually under the auspices of "winning souls." Many such churches have poor and working-class members, and the social services of the church are done informally and strictly for church members.

Of course, not all the churches have an inward focus. Speedway Christian is an outwardly focused church. Many of its activities touch people beyond its walls, and the pastor's sermons deal with the idea of the world beyond the local church. But most of its outward focus is directed beyond Speedway, toward international missions and organizations like Habitat for Humanity. Again, this may simply indicate that Speedway lacks the problems that traditionally addressed by church outreach.

There are other examples of churches becoming involved in the community. Perhaps the most significant example is in the area of child care. Nearly half of the churches have a structured program. Speedway Baptist hosts the largest, with well over 200 children enrolled. Generally, these programs draw from all over the west side of Indianapolis. Churches tend to see these programs as a form of outreach, not as profit generators. In many of the programs, the majority of the enrollment comes from outside the congregation. Speedway United Methodist, for

example, has 100 percent outside enrollment; its children come mostly from working- and lower-class homes.

Other areas of community involvement involve the two major races. Most churches in Speedway are ambivalent about them, but some see them as a time for celebration. Speedway Church of the Nazarene's parking lot, for example, becomes the venue for contemporary Christian music concerts. Members hand out refreshments and religious tracts to those who attend the show.

The best generalization about religion's role in Speedway is that it serves as an anchor to help stabilize the community. This function makes the churches' work important: stability is among the most cherished ideals of the town. But to find the bedrock source of stability in Speedway, one must look elsewhere. While there is much overlap in the membership of civic organizations and the churches, the former are much more active than the latter in addressing community issues.

Conclusion

Speedway's institutions and organizations have helped it maintain a strong sense of stability, but changes loom that threaten to disrupt the constancy of civic and religious life. For example, the formation of the Indy Racing League as a separate entity from CART in 1996 threatens the Indianapolis 500. Many of the famous names and popular drivers no longer compete in the 500. Although ticket sales have remained constant, attendance estimates have declined, and many Speedway residents have noticed the race is "not what it used to be."

With respect to the churches, there will likely be changes in the pastorates of several churches soon. As noted, many of them are ripe for a change. And, when pastors serve for very long periods of time, their retirement or transfer cannot help but disrupt the

stability of the congregation. For example, St. John's Episcopal faced a dire situation upon the departure of a leader whose charisma had made him something of a local institution. Membership dropped to less than one-third its original level. The church now faces a difficult time of rebuilding while it struggles to maintain a viable organization.

How Speedway will look in 10 or 20 years is anyone's guess. It is a town of contradictions and dilemmas. The architecture of the city repels young families, but the schools draw them in. The churches are filled with aging congregations, yet many are looking to develop contemporary services. The civic clubs hope to bring Speedway into the twenty-first century, yet they are filled with aging members. These issues, and others, make determining the future of the town a difficult task.

Speedway was created near the beginning of the twentieth century from a blueprint for a new, industrial suburb; it was realized from a meticulous plan. As the city faces the turn of another century, it is once again charged with planning its own future. It is quite possible that the role of religion will evolve. As the needs of Speedway change, the churches may become more active and involved in the life of the town. Exactly how Speedway will adapt to change remains a mystery. Nonetheless, it is clear that the town's institutions are vital resources that will play a crucial role in its attempts to meet the challenges of a new era.

A TIMELINE OF FAITH AND COMMUNITY: SPEEDWAY, 1909 TO 1994

- 1909 The Indianapolis Motor Speedway opens.
Carl Fisher has an idea to create a "horseless city" opposite the Speedway. The city is one of the first "scientifically designed" industrial communities in the United States.
- 1911 First auto race at Speedway.
- 1912 Fisher builds new Prest-O-Lite factory in Speedway.
- 1913 Hugh McKennon Landon starts Electric Steel Castings Corporations.
- 1917 During World War I Speedway houses an army factory and camp east of Main Street and north of the B & O Railroad tracks. There are barracks for 650. The factory rebuilds and tests fighter planes. The airstrip for testing is near the back stretch of the track.
The first Sunday School is organized by Ida Marvel in a schoolhouse at 10th and Auburn Streets.
- 1919 American Art Clay Company (AMACO) locates in Speedway.
Their first product was Permoplast, a modeling clay.
- 1920 Allison Experimental Company changes name to Allison Engineering Company.
- 1923 Esterline Angus locates in Speedway.
- 1926 One hundred men erect the Speedway Christian Church in one day. First service in the church is held the following day.
Residents petition Marion Co. Board of Commissioners to change status to Town of Speedway.
Census of Speedway shows population of 507. There are 307 voters and sixty-seven property owners. The town trustees move that the town seal will bear the emblem of an airplane and the words, "Town of Speedway."
- 1928 First Community Bible School at Speedway Christian Church.

- 1929 Ownership of the Allison Engineering Company passes to General Motors.
- 1935 Saint Christopher Parish is established.
- 1936 Bishop Ritter breaks ground for St. Christopher Catholic rectory and chapel. (Building is dedicated September 5, 1937.)
- 1937 Father Lindemann from St. Christopher's Catholic church becomes official chaplain of the Motor Speedway.
St. Christopher's holds its first annual lawn festival.
- 1941 The first worship service of the congregation that will soon form St. Andrew's Evangelical Lutheran is held at the Speedway Theater with fifty adults and sixteen children in attendance.
- 1929 Congregation incorporates as St. Andrew's Evangelical Lutheran Church.
Town Hall erected.
- 1945 Anton Hillman, Jr. purchases the Speedway.
- 1947 Forty people meet to organize what will become the Speedway United Methodist Church.
Speedway United Methodist is formally launched with a \$20,000 donation from the Board of Missions and \$3,000 from the bishop.
- 1948 St. Christopher School opens at 5335 W. 16th Street.
Women's Society of Christian service formed at Speedway United Methodist.
- 1949 The 104 members of Speedway United Methodist Church purchase two lots for \$4,500.
St. Andrew's Evangelical Lutheran dedicates church building at 16th and Beeler Streets. Formerly services were held at the Speedway Town Hall.
- 1950 Membership of Speedway United Methodist Church is 230.

- 1953 Speedway United Methodist Men organize. Their biggest money-maker is parking lot rental on Qualification and Race days.
- 1954 Rev. Howard Wright becomes pastor of Speedway United Methodist Church. During his nine-year stewardship, the congregation grows from 241 to 1,300.
- 1956 Covenant Baptist Church members meet in garages as a mission church for the 2,000 homes in Eagledale.
- 1958 New St. Christopher's Church is dedicated.
Covenant Baptist Church building is constructed for \$72,000 at W. 30th Street and Falcon Drive, with seating for 380.
Speedway Baptist is formally organized.
Fifty-eight people petition the Bishop of Indianapolis for the establishment of an Episcopal Church in Speedway—later to be called St. John's Episcopal. The first services are held at St. Constantine & Elena Roumanian Orthodox Church on W. 16th Street.
- 1959 First resident vicar, the Rev. John Lowe, arrives to head the St. John's Episcopal Church. Services are held at the Westside YMCA.
- 1960 Groundbreaking for St. John's Episcopal Church.
St. John's Episcopal Church occupies its new structures.
St. Andrew's Evangelical Lutheran moves to its new building on Crawfordsville Road. The move is in response to parking problems and growth of the town.
Members of St. Luke's United Church of Christ formally organize and locate building at Beeler & 16th Streets, which they purchase from St. Andrew's Lutheran.
- 1961 Forty people meet to plan what will become the John Knox United Presbyterian Church. The first services are held in September.

- 1962 John Knox United Presbyterian is officially organized.
There are 120 charter members. Rev. Laurence A. Sunkel, Jr. is the organizing pastor.
- 1963 Boy Scout Troop 410 forms at St. John's Episcopal.
- 1929 Phase III of St. Andrew's building and the youth building are dedicated.
Construction begins on the John Knox United Presbyterian Church.
- 1965 The first unit of John Knox United Presbyterian Church sanctuary and four classrooms are completed.
Speedway Town Board votes to create a library. 1,200 people sign petition supporting it. The library will be financed by a twenty-nine-cent tax levy.
- 1967 Groundbreaking is held for the library.
- 1968 New Coca-Cola plant locates at 5000 W. 25th St.
Official opening of the Speedway Library.
- 1969 The Speedway Lions Club donates the one and 1.5-acre site to the Library.
- 1971 John Knox United Presbyterian Church completes seven additional classrooms and office space.
- 1929 St. Christopher's rectory is expanded and the grounds are re-landscaped.
- 1974 More than ninety percent of the graduating class at Speedway High School started kindergarten in Speedway.
The third unit of John Knox United Presbyterian is completed, doubling the size of the sanctuary.
- 1975 Membership at St. John's Episcopal Church is 120 families.
By this year the Prest-O-Lite facilities cover 46 acres.
- 1978 Speedway is among several county schools fighting the school desegregation plan ordered by Judge S. Hugh Dillon.
The Speedway schools were ordered to accept 300 black children from Indianapolis.

1985 Voters reject proposal to switch to an elected school board from one appointed by the Town Board.

1987 Sharon L. Zishka is town's first elected female official to Town Board.

1989 The school district's total enrollment is approximately 1,350. Ten percent of the students are minorities. Speedway is excluded from court-ordered desegregation.

1990 Impact of the Indianapolis 500 race remains strong on Speedway. The Classic Motor Inn room rent increases from \$33 to \$250 during the month of May. Pit Stop Liquors, within 2 blocks of the Speedway, will have as many as 100 customers lined up to buy liquor the Saturday before the race. As much as eighty percent of the store's business occurs in May.

According to the Indianapolis Chamber of Commerce, the economic impact of the race on Speedway and Indianapolis is approximately \$46 million "new money," which they estimate will be turned over 2.2 times resulting in a total impact of approximately \$101 million.

1993 Attendance on race day is approximately 400,000.

The Lions Club celebrates its 50th anniversary with 121 members.

The Town Council sets up a Beautifications and Improvements Committee whose first task is to produce a design for a town flag.

"Neat lawns, quiet neighborhoods and pride at maintaining its independence from Indianapolis are cornerstones of the town," according to the Indianapolis Star.

1994 The NASCAR 400-mile race is held for the first time.

Speedway resident Joseph Wilson announces "Speedway GREEN Alliance," a group of citizens working to advocate environmental awareness.

Speedway police have established two Crime Watch groups in the Coppertree apartments after residents complained about vandalism and burglaries.

"Dollars for Scholars" program raises scholarship funds to assist Speedway graduates in seeking higher education. In the five years the program has been in existence, volunteer student phone-fundraisers have raised more than \$50,000.