

VALPO POLICE *Use Technology to Advance Public Safety*

Technology is more than a convenient tool for ordering groceries or finding your phone. As part of Mayor Costas' 2.0 Plan, the Valparaiso Police Department is maximizing technology to keep our city safer. Consider how a recent string of burglaries ended with an arrest, using assistance from technology:

Success #1 With consent from the business that had suffered losses, the VPD added discrete motion-sensitive cameras to the business. Soon after the cameras were installed, a VPD detective spotted suspicious activity on the camera, leading to a speedy police response. Supplemented by a heat-sensitive drone that guided a foot pursuit, these efforts led to the arrest of an out-of-town suspect.

Success #2 Soon after the first arrest, a second suspect was identified as being involved in these crimes, along with others in Northwest Indiana. After obtaining a warrant, a GPS device was added to the out-of-town suspect's vehicle. When the vehicle was detected near the business on another night, officers immediately responded and initiated a foot pursuit. This individual, also from out-of-town, was found in possession of stolen goods and was arrested.

"We found that similar businesses in Lake County were being hit by this large theft operation. By using technology to our



The Valparaiso Police Department is employing technology in a variety of ways to keep the city safer. The VPD holds itself to the highest standards and is one of just 14 municipal departments in Indiana to be accredited by the Commission for Law Enforcement Agencies, Inc., the gold standard in public safety.

advantage, we are able to keep Valparaiso safer. We continue to look at ways to use new tools for safety," said Valparaiso Police Chief Andrew McIntyre.

Adding Eyes

Much of the technology recently added to the VPD is designed to add surveillance for enhanced safety. For instance, Valparaiso now has license plate readers and is a member of the Flock Safety license plate reader network, sharing valuable information nationwide. "This data has been so helpful to us in providing information that has helped solve crimes and find people. As an example, the technology helped us locate a missing senior citizen from Valparaiso who had driven several states away. By working with other departments using Flock data, we were able to get the man back to his home in Valparaiso safely," he said.

Urban SDK is new technology the City of Valparaiso is using to monitor streets, identifying problem areas for speed. "This new technology aids us in objectively identifying which streets are seeing high speeds, so we can focus our efforts there," said McIntyre. "We get more accurate results with the technology tools as motorists don't see our cars and immediately slow down. These tools will allow us to use our resources in the smartest way," he said.

Drone cameras are another use of technology that are helping to solve crimes, find missing people and even fight fires. "Our drones include thermal cameras that can detect people or fire. We often assist the Valparaiso Fire Department as our drones can detect hot spots that assist in fighting fires," said McIntyre.

Adding Transparency

Technology also adds transparency for police operations. All VPD patrol cars have in-car cameras that point out of the car as well as inside the car, monitoring all VPD interactions – for the safety of the community as well as the officers. Likewise, all VPD patrol officers have utilized body cameras since 2018. Additionally, the technology-based software programs create audit trails, ensuring accountability and proper use.

Dear Neighbors,

In this issue we're sharing updates on many goals I outlined in my Costas 2.0 plan. It's a pleasure to report on progress we're making in public safety by adding technology and tools to make our city safer. The \$10 million Valpo Parks rePLAY initiative is enhancing 10 beloved parks citywide this year. We continue to strengthen our community with the introduction of Paradise Community Homes, helping Valpo residents to achieve home ownership. We're supporting our neighborhoods with grants for their own projects and we're kicking off another record-setting year in paving.

Communications is another priority and I'm pleased to share that we're expanding this newsletter to come out six times per year. In addition to bimonthly newsletters, we encourage you to check out our website at Valpo.us and find us on Facebook at Valparaiso Now.

The season of markets and movies and music is near. I look forward to more opportunities to connect.

Sincerely,

Jon Costas
Jon Costas, Mayor



VALPARAISO AWARDS

Neighborhood Grants



Introduced in 2018, the Neighborhood Improvement Grant program has resulted in a positive impact of more than \$1.8 million citywide. Neighborhoods may submit projects that enhance shared spaces and build community. For details and how to apply, visit the Community Engagement page at Valpo.us.

The City of Valparaiso has announced 19 new grants in the 2025 Neighborhood Improvement Grant program, providing \$167,040 in funds to support neighborhood unity and community improvements, with projects including pollinator gardens, public art sculptures, neighborhood gathering spaces, tree plantings and more.

"Building strong neighborhoods has long been a primary goal of this administration. We established the Neighborhood Improvement Grant Program in 2018 and it continues to elevate Valparaiso by supporting neighborhoods in projects they choose themselves," said Mayor Jon Costas. "These projects gather neighbors and add pride, contributing to a better quality of life," he said.

The neighborhoods receiving grants in 2025 are Audubon Estates, Banta, Beauty Creek Estates, Berkley, Brigata Hills, Calkins Hill, Central, College Hill, Courtyards at Pepper Creek, Executive Park, Hawthorne, Hawthorne East, Jefferson Park, Jessee-Pifer, Keystone Commons, Mistwood, Shamrock, Timberbridge and Villas at Vale Park.

The Neighborhood Improvement Grant program is funded by the Valparaiso Redevelopment Commission and administered by the Community Engagement Department. To learn more about the grant program, visit the Community Engagement page at Valpo.us.

COUNCIL CORNER

Featuring a member of the Valparaiso City Council

Peter Anderson | City Council, District 5
Serving since 2020

Peter Anderson has been a resident of Valparaiso for nearly 30 years and has two sons who have graduated or are attending Valparaiso Community Schools. Anderson's top priorities are enhancing the pathways and connections throughout the city and serving residents. He also serves as the council liaison to the Valparaiso Utility Board.

You can reach Peter Anderson at PAnderson@valpo.us.



PARKS

\$10 Million rePLAY Initiative In Motion

The \$10 million rePLAY initiative led by Valpo Parks is underway, with upgrades to 10 city parks scheduled for 2025. “The rePLAY enhancements are inspired by the Costas 2.0 plan, along with community input. We’re excited to make such a widespread difference this season,” said Valpo Parks Director Kevin Nuppnau.

What’s Included?

The rePLAY initiative incorporates many of the amenities originally included in the sports park proposed east of 49 – sports fields, pickleball courts, destination playgrounds and more. RePlay projects prioritize enhancing patron accessibility, addressing infrastructure needs, implementing safety measures and investing in sustainability practices, ensuring a more enjoyable and inclusive park experience for all.

Construction has begun on rePLAY projects, with Will Park and Banta already complete, Fairgrounds Park is underway with completion planned for May, ValPlayso and Foundation Meadows will begin in April. Tower Park and Kirchhoff Park are in the final design phases with playgrounds being voted on by community members. Projects at Rogers Lakewood Park, Ogden Botanical Gardens and Glenrose South Park will happen throughout the spring and summer months.



The rePLAY initiative is funded using bond proceeds originally earmarked for the proposed sports park, instead putting them to immediate use for long-term benefits.

Learn More

To learn more about the rePLAY initiative and stay updated on project timelines and community engagement opportunities, visit bit.ly/ValpoParksrePLAY.

DAYBREAK

Daybreak, Valparaiso’s new shelter for unhoused men has opened! The shelter includes a co-ed warming/cooling center and resource center where individuals can receive support in working toward attaining independent housing. The City of Valparaiso has supported this effort to meet local needs by donating the property on Don Hovey Drive and allocating \$150,000 in American Rescue Plan Act funds. Mayor Jon Costas and City Administrator Bill Oeding have been instrumental in building this project which was completed on time and is fully funded with no outstanding debt, thanks also to many generous contractors and suppliers.



CITY EMBARKS *on Another Record Paving Season*

For the second year running, the City of Valparaiso is embarking on its largest-ever paving season, appropriating \$9.4 million to fund an aggressive schedule including collector, arterial and neighborhood streets. “Prior to 2024, the City had been committing about \$3.5 million annually to road maintenance, which was a productive increase over the annual paving budget of just \$300,000 when I first took office 20 years ago. Certainly, costs have increased, but this aggressive annual budget of more than \$9 million, added to last year’s budget of \$8.8 million reflects a renewed priority on roadways,” said Mayor Jon Costas.

Last year’s paving program came in under budget, due to competitive bids, resulting in improvements to 42.3 lane miles, plus 21 lane miles of crack sealing and more than a mile of sidewalks.

Evaluating Roadways

Roads are selected for paving based on the national PASER (Pavement Assessment Surface Evaluation Rating) rating system which assigns a value of 1 through 10 to each roadway. The number reflects the quality, including things like the amount and frequency of cracks and potholes. A brand new road is rated a 10 whereas older fractured streets requiring extensive reconstruction are at 1 and 2.

“The PASER system attempts to provide objective criteria and is beneficial in choosing the right application for the right road at the right time,” said City Engineer Max Rehlander. “The Engineering Dept combines PASER data with other factors such as functional classification and traffic levels to provide a recommendation. We are also uniquely aware of future projects pending with Valparaiso City Services and NIPSCO that might affect the timing of projects,” he said. “We work to maximize our funding for the best long-term results,” he said.



2025 Project Highlight: Goodrich Extension

While the project list continues to evolve, one project that will happen during the summer of 2025 is the extension of Goodrich Road between Ransom and Vale Park roads. “Goodrich Road is a collector street and this extension is part of the City’s thoroughfare plan,

created more than a decade ago,” said Rehlander. The extension will include a pathway on the west side and will also allow for improvements to the water main, adding better drainage and reliability for nearby residents.

Funding sources for the ambitious 2025 paving program include a \$1.5 million Community Crossings matching grant awarded through the Indiana Department of Transportation, funds from the local road and street fund and the motor vehicle fund, along with a short-term bond which will not result in the need to raise any taxes or fees.

Learn More

A complete listing of roadway projects and schedule for work will be available at tinyurl.com/ValpoWorks2025 in coming weeks. To report a roadway or sidewalk that needs attention, visit valpo.us and enter your information at the “Voice a Concern” icon found on the homepage. To learn more about how paving decisions are made, view a video at tinyurl.com/PavingDecisions

TREE CITY USA

For the 20th year, the City of Valparaiso has been named a Tree City USA for its commitment to the planting, care and celebration of trees. Valparaiso’s extensive urban forest includes more than 10,000 trees and adds more than \$29 million in value to the city. Pictured is a recent downtown tree planting event organized by the city’s ISA Certified Arborist and City Forester Matt McBain.

Join the City of Valparaiso for a tree planting event at 10:00 am on Saturday, April 26. Meet at

Will Park, 354 Morgan Blvd. Funded by a Neighborhood Improvement Grant.



VALPO WORKS *to Promote Attainable Housing*

As housing costs and demand rise nationally, the City of Valparaiso is working to expand attainable housing efforts by supporting a new nonprofit organization, Paradise Community Homes (PCH). “As a city, we want to do our part in assembling resources to assist residents in achieving homeownership,” said Mayor Jon Costas. “Valparaiso has succeeded in creating a community where people want to live and work. As a city, we’re interested in supporting opportunities for attainable housing in Valparaiso,” he said.

The Challenge of Attainable Housing

The median price of a home in the United States has risen to \$435,000, according to the National Association of Realtors. The idea behind PCH is to build quality homes of modest size (1,000-1,200 square feet) for a cost under \$300,000. To do this, PCH is working to find cheaper land, reduce development costs, partner with builders and reduce building costs.

Paradise Community Homes (PCH), Formed in 2024

The new, soon-to-be nonprofit, PCH is committed to developing neighborhoods and offering homes that are attainable for working families. “We want to help Valparaiso residents invest in their community, find places to live and places to make a difference,” said Bill Oeding, who serves as City Administrator for the City of Valparaiso as well as President of PCH. “We focus on obtaining, renovating, building and facilitating the purchase of homes. Creating quality homes that people are proud to live in contributes to the long-term health of Valparaiso,” he said.



A new nonprofit organization, Paradise Community Homes, is committed to assembling resources to assist residents in achieving home ownership. To learn more, visit ParadiseCommunityHomes.org.

The PCH board of directors includes an impressive list of long-time community leaders, including a banker, lawyer, engineer, realtor, builder and others in the field of construction and remodeling. The City of Valparaiso is supporting the effort through funding, increasing the density of housing units in specific zones, reducing permit fees and bringing together talent and resources.

Who Qualifies for Attainable Housing through PCH?

To qualify for purchasing a home through PCH, you must have lived or worked in Valparaiso for at least three years. To learn more about how to apply, visit ParadiseCommunityHomes.org.

GRAND GARDNER

Construction of the Grand Gardner Hotel is well underway, transforming the historic 1899 Gardner School building into a boutique hotel. The new hotel will include 52 guest rooms and six suites, a meeting venue, spa services and a speakeasy. Urschel Development Corporation is investing more than \$40 million in the project, creating more than 60 construction jobs and 25+ permanent jobs once the facility opens. “The City of Valparaiso supports this dynamic transformation in a project that elevates a historic building into a true destination,” said Mayor Jon Costas. The Grand Gardner Hotel is expected to open in early 2026.



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VALPO PURCHASES *Former McGill Building for Redevelopment*

The City of Valparaiso's Redevelopment Commission has purchased the vacant factory at 909 Lafayette St. for future redevelopment. Once one of Valparaiso's largest employers as the original McGill plant, the 242,000-square-foot building and 16-acre parcel has been vacant since 2021 when Regal Beloit shuttered the building.

"Because this property is located in the heart of a downtown neighborhood, we want to find the right use that fits the community," said Mayor Jon Costas. "Just as we originally acquired the former ANCO building and guided its redevelopment into the Journeyman Distillery destination, we want to see this site complement the neighborhood. This sort of thoughtful redevelopment has been part of the city's success over the past 25 years," he said.

The City has taken an interest in the property for years, rezoning it from industrial as the use no longer matched the neighborhood. Many options are possible for the space, which includes a building with abundant open space, plus available parking. "The space might make sense as a senior center or indoor activity center. We've also envisioned an indoor park, with room for a maker space, childcare and a community health clinic. We could even partner with providers to maximize the space. We are committed to thoughtful planning," he said.

The site is currently undergoing environmental remediation, funded by former owners Emerson Electric as the City pursues ideas and potential grant funding. As the space is re-imagined for its best use, it will be maintained as a good neighbor by the City of Valparaiso.

Valpo Police *Continued from p. 1*

Adding Safety

For added safety in medical emergencies, every one of the VPD Emergency Medical Responders and Emergency Medical Technicians has an Automated External Defibrillator (AED), a high-tech medical device that can help treat a person whose heart has stopped. "These devices are invaluable when responding to cardiac emergencies, where every second counts. We're looking to equip as many officers as we can with these life-saving devices.

Many of our AEDs have been purchased using donations to the department and the City is grateful for the support," said McIntyre.

Adding Accountability and Organization

The VPD has also added high-tech crime scene investigation software that provides digital documentation of a crime scene, recording the most minute details and measurements, allowing investigators to return to the scene virtually to precisely evaluate evidence. This advanced software even allows officers to bring the crime scene to a courtroom, allowing jurors to see details for themselves.

Further, evidence management software accounts for each piece of evidence as it enters the station, issuing a bar code that precisely tracks each movement for accountability.

Technology Maximizes Resources and Training

"Technology helps us to do more for our community, to be more proactive," said McIntyre. The VPD continues to work with other departments, to keep neighborhoods, streets, schools and the overall community safer. They are currently partnering with departments to add cameras throughout the city, leading to a real-time crime center to add layers of safety. "We are also grateful for the Valparaiso community that continues to be an excellent partner in promoting safety. Technology is an excellent tool, but we would be nowhere near as successful without the community's support. We work at positive, community policing to earn Valparaiso's trust," he said.