

## Home Sweet Home:

### *Valpo Works to Support Balanced Housing*

Thanks to its safety, strong schools, walkable downtown and excellent quality of life, Valparaiso continues to attract new residents of all ages and incomes. “With rising housing costs and a nationwide housing shortage, even vibrant cities like Valparaiso must plan ahead to make sure everyone from young professionals to working families to longtime residents aging in place can find a home that fits their needs,” said Mayor Jon Costas. “Like good communities nationwide, we are studying our housing stock and looking for ways to provide a variety of options to support a diverse community,” he said.

#### **Strong Stock, But Room to Grow**

Valparaiso has one of the most diverse housing mixes in Northwest Indiana. Roughly 65-70% of homes are traditional single-family houses – an asset for families and long-term residents. The city also includes:

- **Multifamily housing (15–20%):** These apartments, particularly near downtown



*Higher density infill developments like Glenwood on Glendale Boulevard are a creative way to transform vacant spaces into added housing to broaden Valparaiso’s mix. Not only do the new units provide more housing opportunities, but they open up other homes in highly valued neighborhoods.*

and Valparaiso University, offer rental options for students, professionals and downsizers.

- **Small multifamily buildings (10%):** Often found in older neighborhoods, these two- to four-unit homes provide flexible, more affordable rentals.
- **Townhomes and condos:** These lower-maintenance options appeal to both first-time buyers and empty nesters looking to simplify.

Compared to neighboring communities, Valpo is ahead of the curve. “But we recognize that gaps remain and we’re

working to promote an environment to fill these gaps,” said Costas. Smaller multifamily units – often called the “missing middle” – are underrepresented. This housing type, vital for affordability and flexibility, ideally makes up 15% of a healthy market. Valpo currently sits at around 10%.

#### **Aging Homes, Aging Population**

Nearly one in five Porter County residents is 65 or older. And many of Valparaiso’s homes

were built before 1980, often lacking accessibility features and energy efficiency. That combination creates challenges: seniors stay longer in larger homes they no longer need or want – simply because there aren’t enough smaller, suitable alternatives nearby.

Without new housing options, those larger homes remain off the market, unavailable to younger families eager to move in.

Dear Neighbors,

Outdoor movies and concerts and markets. Days at the park and exploring on bikes. Summer brings us together in great ways! The summer of 2025 is especially memorable as we've been gathering to celebrate openings at parks citywide, made possible through the \$10-million RePLAY initiative. It's been a blast to welcome kids to the new inclusive playground at Foundation Meadows Park and kids of all ages to the new PicklePlex at ValPlayso Park. There's more fun to come and I encourage you to explore our Valpo Parks this season.



Road construction is also in action as we've launched another record paving year – with improvements planned for more than 60 lane miles and more than a mile of sidewalks. We thank you for your patience as detours today make for better driving tomorrow.

In this issue of City Talk, we celebrate the season and we look ahead, exploring housing. Responsible cities nationwide are looking at ways to encourage a variety of housing and Valparaiso is plugged in. As a city, we're engaging many people and organizations to study our housing stock and look for ways to provide options that support a diverse community.

Like kids on summer break, I hope this season is bringing you moments of fun in the sun. Enjoy!

Sincerely,

*Jon Costas*

Jon Costas, Mayor

## Record Paving Season Underway

Construction orange is the color of the season as the City of Valparaiso is well into its largest-ever paving season, following last year's record-setting year. For 2025, the City appropriated \$9.4 million for an aggressive program 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

### View the Project List

A complete listing of roadway projects and schedule for work is available at [tinyurl.com/ValpoWorks2025](https://tinyurl.com/ValpoWorks2025). To report a roadway or sidewalk that needs attention, visit [valpo.us](https://valpo.us) and enter your information at the "Voice a Concern" icon found on the homepage.

million reflects a renewed priority on roadways," said Mayor Jon Costas.

To view a short video about how paving decisions are made in Valparaiso, visit the Engineering page at [Valpo.us](https://Valpo.us) and look under "Resources."

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.



## Neighborhood Improvement *Grants in Action*

Mayor Costas and Community Engagement Director Maggie Clifton congratulated neighbors in Jefferson Park as they have come together to create a pollinator planting at 200 East Park. The neighborhood completed the project with the help of a Neighborhood Improvement Grant and partnership with Valpo Parks. The 20x60 foot planting space is designed to support native birds and insects. Since 2018, the Neighborhood Improvement Grant program, funded by Valparaiso Redevelopment, has succeeded in funding 139 projects in more than 45 neighborhoods, resulting in more than \$1.3 million in neighborhood improvements. To learn more, including how to apply, visit the Community Engagement page at [valpo.us](https://valpo.us).



### Partnering for Progress

The City of Valparaiso recognizes that no single solution can address housing affordability and that the City is unable to impact some key drivers of cost, including interest rates and the soaring costs of building materials. That's why the City supports a variety of nonprofit and community-based initiatives, including:

- **Home Team Valpo**

helping preserve existing homes.

- **Habitat for Humanity of Porter County**

building homes for income-qualified buyers.

- **Paradise Community Homes (PCH)**

a new nonprofit creating attainable homeownership opportunities for working families and first-time buyers who live or work in Valpo.

One of PCH's volunteer founders, Bob Coolman, knows housing – and Valpo – well. Over the last five decades, Coolman has developed nearly 2,000 homes across Center Township, from townhomes and condos to mixed-income neighborhoods, including Heritage Valley, Keystone Commons, Essex Park, Timber Bridge and St. Paul Square. His mission has always been to “find a need in the marketplace that's not being addressed—and meet it.”

### Focus: The Empty Nesters

Coolman's newest projects are designed for those looking to downsize without sacrificing quality or community. “We're not just building housing,” he says. “We're trying to create really good places where people have a stake in their neighborhood and their city.”

By creating homes that meet the current needs of older adults – think 2-bedroom, 1,100 sq. ft. homes – Coolman's

developments help free up larger homes in family-friendly neighborhoods. This natural turnover helps new families build equity and life in Valparaiso, creating what Coolman calls a “chain of attainability.”



### Flexible Policies, Thoughtful Growth

According to Coolman, the key to sustainable housing solutions lies not just in what gets built – but in how. “The City plays a huge role,” he said. “We've always needed a willingness to work with developers, to be flexible where codes don't align with real needs.”

Decades ago, Coolman helped pioneer the use of Planned Unit Developments (PUDs) in Valpo – projects like Aberdeen and Keystone Commons that combined different housing types in walkable, mixed-income neighborhoods. That same flexibility remains essential today, whether it's easing zoning restrictions to encourage duplexes or revisiting fees that discourage attainable housing. “One of my all-time accomplishments happened when we had four generations of the same family living in Heritage Valley. We were able to accommodate their needs at all stages of life with a variety of products in the same neighborhood,” he said. “That's planning.”

Coolman sees the successes Valpo has made. “Valparaiso is probably the healthiest

county seat in Indiana. But if we want to keep it that way, we have to be creative, collaborative, and community focused.”

### A Future-Ready Housing Vision

Housing costs in Porter County continue to rise. In May 2025, the median sales price for a home reached \$330,000 – among the highest in the region. Without deliberate policies to support affordability, middle-income buyers may be priced out, and younger generations may look elsewhere.

“We see the challenges and, fortunately, Valparaiso is not sitting still. As a city, we are committed to moving forward and supporting balanced

housing,” said Costas. Through studies and a recent housing symposium, the city is committed to supporting:

- A balanced housing mix with ownership and rental options.
- Middle-density zoning that encourages duplexes, townhomes, and small apartment buildings.
- Partnerships with nonprofits and developers to meet the needs of all residents.
- Infrastructure and transit that connect people to opportunity without requiring car ownership.

From revitalizing historic neighborhoods to welcoming smart infill and senior-friendly development, Valparaiso is proving that small cities can think big when it comes to housing.

“We believe that a strong, cohesive community isn't just built on foundations and frames, it's built on the belief that everyone deserves a place to call home. That's why we're working to study housing and address the needs, for today and into the future,” said Costas.

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*As part of the \$10 million RePLAY Initiative Valpo Parks recently celebrated the opening of the brand-new inclusive playground at Foundation Meadows. All ages are enjoying the new space, including upgraded restrooms, ADA walkways, bench swings, seven ramp-accessible elevated components and 15 ground-level activities.*

## **Parks RePLAY Initiative Hits Fast Forward**

### *\$10 million in improvements in 10 parks citywide*

The hits just keep on coming as Valpo Parks continues to roll out the exciting enhancements of the \$10-million RePLAY initiative. This summer we've celebrated the opening of a brand-new inclusive playground at Foundation Meadows, the opening of the Byron Smith III Sports Complex at Fairgrounds Park, the positively popular PicklePlex at ValPlayso Park, upgrades at Butterfield Pavilion and so much more. We're also enjoying watching the transformations happening at Tower Park and Kirchhoff Park as new playgrounds, shelters, restrooms, pathways and more take shape. RePLAY projects citywide will enhance accessibility, safety and infrastructure as they add sustainability.

More ribbon cuttings are on the playlist as the improvements continue! To learn more about the RePLAY initiative and see a complete list of upgrades at all 10 parks, visit [bit.ly/ValpoParksrePLAY](http://bit.ly/ValpoParksrePLAY) or scan the QR code.



**SCAN ME**