

CITY OF VALPARAISO STRATEGIC PLAN

“Embracing the Journey from Good to GREAT.”

Effective Date
January 15, 2005

Jon Costas
Mayor, Valparaiso Indiana

January 15, 2005

Dear Citizens:

On November 4, 2003, you elected me as the 26th mayor of our city. It has been a great privilege to serve as your mayor over the last year. We are truly a city of vibrant people, effective organizations and varied resources. Indeed, the future looks very bright for Valparaiso.

You elected me based upon a vision for our city that was set forth in “The Costas Plan” a document I released during the 2003 mayoral campaign. As such, the Costas Plan has served as the starting point for establishing a comprehensive vision for our city, which will be known as the City of Valparaiso Strategic Plan. This document is the second installment of that plan. The first was our preliminary strategic plan which was released on April 24, 2004.

Following the adoption of the preliminary strategic plan in April, 2004, we held a number of community forums to gain input from citizens. Also, as a city administration we held additional strategic planning sessions in order to expand and clarify our strategic plan and objectives. This document is fulfillment of those efforts and will serve as the primary tool for directing our major decisions over the next three years.

A strategic plan is of little use unless it is implemented. We are now shifting the emphasis from planning to execution. Deliberate, methodical and relentless execution of our strategic plan will be a hallmark of my administration. It is important to note that a strategic plan is a living, breathing document. As such, we will revisit the plan on a regular basis to make adjustments and additions. While we are pleased with our accomplishments to-date, there is so much yet to achieve. Indeed, the work has just begun.

I believe that Valparaiso is at a critical juncture. Serious challenges and wonderful opportunities await us. Teamwork, planning and creative ideas will be the tools that help us bridge the past we celebrate and the future we embrace. Please join me, the City Leadership Team and your City Council in forging a bold and promising future for all of our residents and for posterity.

Respectfully submitted,



Jon Costas

I. Our City: Our Values

Values form the foundation of all communities. Shared values unite us and define us. Values never become outdated or irrelevant. Although change is all around us, our values remain constant.

Your city administration has identified the five core values which serve as the compass for all of our decisions. We strive to embrace the following values in leading our city:

1. Honestly Accountable
2. Surprisingly Responsive
3. Creatively Frugal
4. Respectfully Compassionate, and
5. Boldly Proactive

II. Today's Priorities ... Tomorrow's Valparaiso

The decisions and choices we make today will determine what our city is like tomorrow. Planning and execution combine as the bridge between the past we celebrate and the future we embrace. Our priorities for improving Valparaiso over the next four years are:

Efficiency. Constantly increasing efficiency to stretch tax dollars is essential to our success. Funds are limited and the needs are great. In every aspect of city services, we must set a high standard for efficiency through careful planning, technology enhancements, the ingenuity of our employees and innovation.

Excellent Service Delivery. Providing a high level of service delivery is a Valpo tradition. Garbage collection, recycling, snow removal, road maintenance, leaf and debris pick up, utility and other city services directly affect our quality of life and must be of the highest caliber. Our improvements in efficiency must not come at the expense of quality service delivery.

Strategic Planning. Valparaiso will prepare for the future through extensive and innovative strategic planning. An effective strategic plan creates a common vision for the city and unites the citizens and city government in pursuit of shared objectives.

Managing Growth. Valparaiso enjoys steady residential and commercial growth. This equates to a healthy economy and great opportunities for our citizens. Growth, however, should be carefully managed so that it enhances rather than weakens our quality of life. We must do a better job of planning for development, transportation, traffic control and housing.

Infrastructure. The condition of our roads, curbs and sidewalks is poor and continues to decline. Currently, there are insufficient funds in the budget to provide for necessary repairs and upgrades, thus additional resources must be directed to improving our roads. In addition, we need to invest in our “people infrastructure” through better training and leadership development and by paying more competitive wages. We must boldly reinvest in our infrastructure so that Valparaiso looks and operates as it should – a vibrant and progressive city.

Economic Development. Our young people need to find quality employment opportunities in order to call Valparaiso home. We must create a climate that welcomes business growth and expansion which produces high quality job opportunities.

Public Safety. A safe community is a healthy community. We must set and maintain high standards of public safety, with an emphasis on prevention and community involvement.

Visual Valpo. A healthy and vibrant city is one that is clean, neat and well-maintained. A sharp presentation improves economic development, reduces crime and vandalism and creates community pride. We need to look our very best in order to be our very best. A general objective to improve the presentation of our city will be a high priority for this administration.

Neighborhoods. We must focus on building strong and cohesive neighborhoods that will work together to form a vibrant and diverse community.

This strategic plan lays out specific steps to make these general goals a reality. None will be implemented without first building community understanding and engaging in a listening campaign to understand fully the views, needs and aspirations of the entire community. The implementation of programs and new initiatives as outlined in this plan are designed to be completed within budget and consistent with my philosophy of keeping taxes low.

“Our plans miscarry because they have no aim.” -- Seneca

III. Fiscal Reality and Efficiency.

Most cities are fighting fiscal challenges due to rising costs and limited resources. Valparaiso is no exception. While it is prudent to keep government on a short fiscal chain, that chain can also choke the life out of cities when it gets too short. Sharply rising insurance and employment expenses, reduced revenue due to the property tax reassessment and many other factors have depleted the city’s cash reserve and forced us to live on borrowed money for most of the year in our general fund.

Our first response to dealing with these fiscal challenges is to pursue efficiency in all areas of city operations. We must assure the city taxpayers and ourselves that we are operating lean and using all of our resources wisely. Limiting the growth of city government is vital to keeping taxes low. We have been restraining the growth of the government by limiting the number of city employees. The city employs less people now than it did five years ago. We accept the fact that the size of government must be controlled, and, like businesses in the private sector, we need to accomplish more with less.

Fiscal and Efficiency Initiatives

1. Continuous Efficiency Review. City Leadership Team members regularly conduct efficiency reviews of their departments to identify potential savings and additional revenue opportunities. Improving efficiency through a better use of technology, creative ideas and partnerships will help us provide a great value for your tax dollars. In addition, cooperating with other governmental units to coordinate services and avoid redundancy will create new efficiencies.
2. Finance Committee. A finance committee comprised of the mayor, clerk/treasurer, city administrator, city council members and three private sector business leaders was formed in April, 2004. This committee will focus on budgetary and efficiency matters. In addition, an insurance subcommittee was formed in 2004 to evaluate our health insurance costs (which have doubled in the last four years). Their efforts have resulted in cost savings and implementation of a more effective insurance program. In 2005 the finance committee will help us finalize a new budgeting model which will serve to empower department leaders to maximize the allocation of their revenues and reduce expenses.
3. Cash Flow Recovery Plan. Currently, the city lives on borrowed money about nine months out of the year. This has been caused by using our reserves to cover unexpected costs increases particularly for employee health insurance premiums. In our 2005 budget, we fully budgeted our projected health insurance costs for the first time in recent years. In addition we were able to give our employees a fair salary increase of at least 3%. Now we need to increase our cash reserves by approximately \$3 million in order to operate our general fund without regular required borrowing. We will accomplish this over the next seven years through under spending or augmenting revenues to create a combined savings of approximately 3% per year. This spending reduction will increase our cash flow by about \$3.1 million over the next seven years and will result in a yearly savings of \$60,000 by avoiding interest charges.
4. Long Term Capital Plan. We will compile, as part of our complete strategic plan, a comprehensive capital plan by March 2005. This plan will outline and prioritize our facility and capital needs and identify the timing revenue sources for each project. This will help us better plan our needed capital improvements and assist us in managing the requisite funding.

5. Compensation and Benefits study. We will conduct a compensation and benefits study by February 2005, to determine how our current pay and benefits compare to similar cities our size. This study will serve as a benchmark for our compensation and benefits policies. The goal of the city is to pay wages and benefits to city employees that are very competitive with similarly situated cities.

6. Clerk's Office Upgrades. Continue to modernize and upgrade financial management in the clerk's office as funds are available. Goals for the next three years include (1) implementing a full purchase order system, (2) direct deposit of payroll checks (3) exploring health insurance savings accounts and (4) convert old records to electronic data files.

IV. Details of The Valparaiso Strategic Plan

A. Directing Growth through Careful Planning.

Valparaiso will experience steady growth in size and population over the next decade. We must improve our planning in order to direct that growth so that it compliments our city and does not negatively alter quality of life.

Redeveloping struggling commercial areas in the city is vital to the future success of the city. The County Seat Plaza, east Lincolnway and parts of our downtown need attention. It's time to improve these areas now. Redevelopment takes more focus and effort than new development, and sufficient energy and resources are needed to bring these areas up to Valparaiso standards.

Planning Initiatives

1. Annexation. The city's first annexation policy was adopted by the council in 2004. This policy sets forth the factors to consider in determining when annexation is proper. Generally, the city places the highest priority on annexing undeveloped ground on the city fringe that will most likely be developed in the next three to five years and that seek city utilities. A second priority is to explore the annexation of residential subdivisions that are already built and receive city utilities but were never annexed into the city. Two substantial annexations on the city's west side and the north east side will be introduced early in 2005 and further annexations will follow as they are prioritized according to our annexation policy. A holistic approach to development will occur with an emphasis on building sustainable neighborhoods that are integrated and compliment each other.

2. Redevelopment of Declining Commercial Areas. The city's highest planning priority over the next three years is the redevelopment of the East Lincolnway corridor and the County Seat Plaza through private-public partnerships.

East Lincolnway (Eastgate). The city is using a comprehensive approach to the redevelopment of East Lincolnway by involving all stakeholders in the process and seeking a long-term solution to this vital project. Conceptual plans were completed in late 2004 and the redevelopment will begin in 2005. The majority of the road construction will occur in 2006. This area will encounter dramatic change over the next three years transforming it into a unique retail area and a beautiful entranceway into the city.

County Seat Plaza. The County Seat Plaza has been blighted for many years and is currently 60% vacant. The administration is taking a long-term approach to redevelopment of this aging and neglected center. The Redevelopment Commission is pursuing eminent domain of the center so that a complete and thorough redevelopment of the property can begin in 2005. A mixed-use development with a commercial emphasis is most likely the best model to create a viable and progressive center.

3. Vale Park Extension. The extension of Vale Park from Valparaiso Street to Campbell Street will be constructed in late 2005 or early 2006. An emphasis on sustainable environmental management will be a fundamental element of this important project.

4. Improve intersections and traffic flow. Identify all poor functioning intersections such as Glendale/Calumet and Bullseye/Campbell and plan improvements. Design and implement a plan to upgrade all traffic lights at major intersections to smart technology in order to improve flow. By mid 2005, identify all problematic intersections and create a plan to improve performance over the next three years.

5. Housing Strategy. Limit new multi-family rental developments over the next five years while using incentives to encourage the development of affordable owner-occupied homes to allow apartment-renters to purchase their first home here in Valparaiso. This will gradually increase the percentage of residents who own homes. Valparaiso has one of the highest ratios of apartments to single family homes in the state. Encourage developers to use cluster developments to build neighborhoods with varied housing types. Find ways to increase our supply of affordable single-family homes.

5. Reevaluate Comprehensive Plan. Complete review of the city comprehensive plan by Spring 2005 and upgrade the plan by early 2006. We will complete a full audit of our zoning ordinance by mid 2005, and an impact fee strategy by year-end 2005. In 2005 we will institute a full residential plan review process as a first step toward an Insurance Services Office Building Code Effectiveness Grading Schedule.

6. "Code Enforcement and "Visual Valpo". In 2004, the mayor and city council determined that our code enforcement strategy and procedures were in need of significant redesign and improvement. In August 2004, the city's code enforcement structure and procedures were revised and a new position of Code Enforcement Officer in the police

department was created. In 2005, we will complete the enhancements to our code enforcement efforts including a new codification of our ordinances and tightening our private and public city maintenance standards through the newly formed council ordinance committee. The concept of “Visual Valpo” will be further developed in 2005. The purpose of this initiative is simply to improve the look of our city by identifying and correcting conditions that detract from our collective appearance. Part of the Visual Valpo effort will be to engage citizen volunteers to create “litter free” neighborhoods, cleaner signature corridors, problem area clean-ups and improved landscaping.

B. A Vibrant Downtown in Valparaiso.

Our downtown area is vital to the reputation and future success of the entire city. It defines us and sets us apart from many other communities. We must support the downtown business and property owners with programs and initiatives designed to enhance the vitality of our downtown.

Downtown Initiatives.

1. Implement HyettPalma Plan. Continue implementation of the HP Plan in 2005 and complete implementation of most HP improvements by the end of 2006. Organize a Business Improvement District (a downtown land owner’s organization funded by yearly assessments) and create a streetscape improvement plan by mid 2005. Begin streetscape improvements in the downtown region identified by the HP plan and complete improvements no later than early 2006. We will also explore a partnership with the county to transform the county courthouse lawn into an urban gathering place. Finally we will complete the way-finding signage plan started in late 2004 by mid 2005.

2. Encourage more residential. We will explore new ways to increase the number of persons who live in the near downtown area. One way is to create incentives for building owners to convert second and third floor space to residential. Also, we will research ways to encourage the conversion of larger vacant buildings into apartments or condominium complexes.

3. Increase Downtown activities. Expand downtown festivals and events to better showcase our retailers and restaurants. Strengthen the link between downtown merchants and the student population. Encourage Valparaiso marketplace shoppers to visit our stores and restaurants in the downtown area through effective signage and marketing.

4. Attract additional restaurants and specialty retail. In addition to the downtown being the center of government and office activity, the city must make the area more attractive for fine dining and specialty retail. Special incentive plans will be developed during 2005 to augment these important sectors and strengthen our downtown.

C. Improving our infrastructure: Its time to invest in the future of our city.

Business owners know that they must continually reinvest in their business to keep it vibrant and healthy; a city is no different. Improving roads, sidewalks, sewer systems, bridges, and parks is necessary to keep Valparaiso looking sharp and functioning well. Valparaiso is a city of abundant resources and we can look better. We must find the funds to improve our aging infrastructure and build for the future. We must identify and prioritize the most pressing city infrastructure needs and find the funds to get the job done.

Infrastructure Initiatives

1. Capital Plan. Compile a three to five-year capital plan by March 2005 to prioritize infrastructure needs in the city and identify the funds necessary to complete those projects.

2. Improve condition of roads. Our most pressing need as a city is to improve the condition of our existing roads. Over the years, the amount of funds allocated to road repair has decreased drastically. In 2004, the city had only about \$300,000 to spend on road repair. We estimate that at least \$1.8 Million is needed each year to satisfy our road repair needs. This level of funding would allow the city to achieve a 15 year road surface replacement plan. In addition, we need to focus on improving curb conditions especially on more visible and highly traveled roads. Now that we have quantified the need for road repair funds, we will, by the end of 2005, attempt to arrange the proper funding through new efficiencies, allocation of existing funds and identifying new revenue sources.

3. Improve Sidewalk Program. Although we repaired more sidewalks in 2004 than in any previous year, we must improve our ability to make sidewalk repairs throughout the city. In 2005, we will make improvements to our sidewalk reconstruction program to avoid long waiting periods in the future. Additional funds must be allocated to augment the citizen investment and spur more repairs. We will look for ways to partner with neighborhood organizations to complete missing links in sidewalks and repair damaged sections. Finally, our citywide pathway plan – being overseen by our Park Department – will help us identify and improve key sidewalk routes throughout the city.

4. Capital Equipment Plan. During 2004, each city department identified their capital and equipment needs through 2007. Various plans are being developed to meet those needs. One significant development is the creation of a citywide capital equipment fund which occurred in November 2004. Approximately \$300,000 in annual funds have been allocated from the Redevelopment Commission to this fund. New safety vehicles and equipment, as well as street and sanitation equipment will be acquired through this new fund. In addition, a greater emphasis on grant writing and obtaining federal and state funds are keys to our success.

5. Redevelopment Commission Projects. Most of our major capital improvement projects will be funded and directed by the Valparaiso Redevelopment Commission (“VRDC”). This is due to the fact that the VRDC has the largest source of annual funding for capital projects through its tax increment financing districts (estimated at \$3.2 Million per year). During 2004 the VRDC carefully identified the various city projects which will receive TIF financing. The VRDC is expected to consider merging the various TIF districts in early 2005 and will research the benefits of a TIF bond to complete vital projects in a timely manner. The major VRDC projects include (1) Extension of Vale Park Road from Valparaiso Street to Campbell (late 2005 or early 2006); (2) East Lincolnway (“Eastgate”) redevelopment with new road configuration (2005 and 2006); (3) Road and lighting improvements to Calumet Avenue next to County Seat Plaza (2005) (4) Downtown streetscape and entranceway improvements (2005 and 2006); and (5) Improve Vale Park Road from Rt. 49 to Calumet Avenue (2006 or 2007).

6. Storm water Projects. Begin utility relocation work for the Valparaiso Street Project in the spring of 2005 and construction of the project in fall of 2005. Complete in 2006. We will begin construction of Union Street sewer separation project in 2005 and complete the Phase Two discharge program. Continue planning for design and construction of Evans Avenue Storm Interceptor and Marks Road Storm Sewer.

7. Facility Improvements. There are three major facility improvements that need to be completed as soon as the funding can be established: (1) A new police station, (2) Improvements to our public works campus, and (3) Renovations to City Hall. In 2004 we engaged firms to assess these needs and determine the necessary improvements. In early 2005 we will compile a plan to set forth the specific improvements and identify the proper funding sources with the goal of completing the improvements in late 2005 and early 2006. All of these vital facility improvements will be geared toward increasing efficiency and making government more accessible to our citizens.

D. Strong Neighborhoods

Just as an airplane is made up of many parts that work together, so a city is made of various neighborhoods. The strength of those individual neighborhoods creates the vitality of a city. Each neighborhood has its unique characteristics and needs. City resources should be used to augment the natural and human resources within the various neighborhoods.

Neighborhood Initiatives

1. Neighborhood Advocate. It has been our goal to create a part-time staff position of director of Neighborhood Development for the purpose of mobilizing neighborhoods to address their concerns and celebrate their strengths. This position would report to the Planning Director. Due to budget constraints, we have not been able

to staff that position but hope to find room in the budget for 2005 or 2006. During the first six months of 2005, an intern will assist the city in clarifying the objectives of this position and will set the foundation for an effective neighborhood advocate program in the near future. The goal is to use city resources to leverage neighborhood resources in strengthening neighborhoods and in improving communication between the city and neighborhood leadership. The neighborhood advocate will encourage greater leadership within individual neighborhoods and work with those leaders in creating a stronger neighborhood network for the city.

2. Community Policing. In 2004, Police Chief, Michael Brickner, took neighborhood policing to a new level. He established the city's first bike patrol and named a number of neighborhood leaders as official liaisons to the police department. Continue to augment our community policing programs to connect our safety personnel with the people they protect. Name additional neighborhood liaisons and expand our effective community watch program.

3. Communication. In 2005 we will create a "Neighborhood Network" homepage on the city website where residents easily identify what is happening in their neighborhood and how they can be involved in its progress. These neighborhood bulletin boards will be an effective way for residents and the city administration to communicate.

4. Volunteerism. Volunteerism is alive and well in Valparaiso and can benefit the city in many ways. In 2005, we will create the city's first volunteer office to assist the mayor and administration in carrying out certain administrative functions. This office will augment the city's effectiveness without creating additional cost to the city. The new volunteer office will be housed in the new GVCC building.

5. Ethics. In 2005, Mayor Jon Costas appointed the city's first ethics officer for the purpose of increasing awareness and education of ethics matters related to the city administration. Mayor Costas also requested that the Ethics Commission review and recommend improvements to the ethics ordinance and to play a more proactive role in its duties to further ethics education, dialogue and enforcement.

E. Economic Development: Create a Climate that Fosters Opportunity

Valparaiso must become a city where young people can return after their college education or vocational training and find great employment opportunities. Jobs are created by individuals and companies, not government. The city's role is to help create the best environment for business to grow.

Our job creation plan is three-fold: First, we must do all in our power to help our current employers expand their businesses. This is vital because approximately 75% of new jobs result from the growth of existing businesses. Second, we must create an "entrepreneurial environment" within our city that helps small businesses get started and grow. Finally, we need to take a targeted approach to attracting new business and

industry. We must identify those types of businesses, which would be a natural fit for our city (such as advanced manufacturing, biosciences and professional office) and pursue them with tenacity and innovation. We will strive to help create at least 400 new non-retail and sustainable jobs per year.

Economic Development Initiatives.

1. Emphasize partnerships. Creating jobs is a team effort. We must work closely with the Valparaiso Economic Development Corporation and the Greater Valparaiso Chamber of Commerce in their business retention and job creation efforts. We will also explore partnerships with Valparaiso University, Ivy Tech, local labor unions, and Valparaiso High School to create job-training opportunities. We must coordinate our many resources and focus them on a shared vision of what our local economy will be tomorrow.

2. Business incubator. In 2004, the city formed a partnership with Porter Health Systems to create a business incubator in a new building that Porter will construct at the corner of Roosevelt and Lincolnway. In 2005, the new building should be constructed and the incubator firmly established. We are completing negotiations with local universities to provide to the incubator in order to assist entrepreneurs to develop their ideas into marketable products and turn those products into ongoing businesses which create sustainable jobs.

3. Technology Park. In early 2005, we will file our application with the state to create a certified technology park, which will include the commercial area around the business incubator and the downtown area. We will use funds generated by the technology park to improve technology infrastructure in our city, including the expansion of our free wireless internet areas throughout the city. Also, in 2005 we will explore other tax incentives for job creation such as CRED legislation.

4. Targeted approach. In our quest to attract new employers, we will avoid a shotgun approach to bringing new firms to Valparaiso. Rather, we will focus on certain sectors such as IT/Software firms, healthcare, biosciences and advanced manufacturing which may be best suited to our area. In 2005 we will increase our efforts to partner with developers to build office parks along the Route 49 corridor.

5. Education. Our city administration will enthusiastically support our school system in its drive for excellence, recognizing that our school system is vital to economic development and our overall quality of life. Companies want to locate in communities with superior schools like those in Valparaiso. We will continue to build partnerships with local universities especially in the areas of business and workforce development. Finally, The mayor and city administration must celebrate and promote the value of “life long learning” in Valparaiso

F. Keeping our City Safe: State of the Art Police and Fire Departments.

Our police and fire departments should set the standard for professionalism, specialized training, use of technology, state of the art equipment and cooperation with other departments. We must increasingly focus safety efforts on prevention and deterrence. Neighborhood policing must advance to the next level. We need to create a stronger bond between the residents of Valparaiso and the men and women who risk their lives to keep them safe.

Safety Initiatives.

1. Community Approach. In 2004 we created the city's first police liaison (Hilltop neighborhood) and developed community watch programs in 13 communities. In 2005, we will strive to increase the community watch programs to exceed 20. These community/police partnerships will increase our preventative efforts to keep the peace, by enlisting the support of our watchful citizens. In early 2005 we will conduct a resident satisfaction survey for police services and use the results of that survey to improve our service.

2. Training and accreditation. We will continue to expand our training and specialization programs to ensure excellence in preparedness. In 2004 we established leadership training programs in both the police and fire departments and these will continue in 2005. We will begin the accreditation process for our police and fire departments in 2005 to improve their operations and enhance their reputations. We will attempt to obtain a lower Insurance Service Organization rating through enhanced fire protection to lower insurance costs for our citizens.

3. Intergovernmental cooperation. Work closely with nearby fire and police departments to find ways to combine resources and avoid unnecessary duplication of services. We will seek to merge 911 dispatching with the county by the end of 2005. In 2005 we will complete our study to analyze providing local ambulance services through our fire department. We will step up efforts in partnering with our local school system to ensure the safest learning environment possible for our students. This will include maintaining full-time School Resource Officers at the high school and between the middle schools, and working with the school system to conduct a comprehensive safety audit and implement the safety plan that emanates from the audit. A new level of cooperation and collaboration with neighboring police and fire departments was established in 2004 leading to many opportunities for synergy and a collective effort. In 2005 we will support the organization of a countywide investigation team in order to improve department collaboration in investigations. This approach to collective effort will continue to be a high priority in 2005 and beyond.

4. Facility and Equipment Plans. We will begin construction of our third fire station in late 2005 or early 2006. Construction of this station is a partnership with the Center Township trustee with virtually all of the funds to build and equip the station

coming from the trustee's office. The city conducted a feasibility study for a new police station in 2004 which confirmed the obvious need for an updated station. In 2005, we will complete the station plans, secure funding and begin construction of the much needed facility. In 2004, both the police and fire departments identified their equipment needs through 2007. Part of these needs will be met by the new capital fund created by the Redevelopment Commission and others through department budgets and grants. Our safety departments secured grants totaling \$427K (\$127K for police and \$300K for fire) and both will continue to aggressively research and pursue federal, state and private grants for equipment and training in 2005 and beyond.

5. Personnel. In 2004, our fire and police included leadership training to increase the effectiveness of management, and this will continue in 2005. The first minority police officer was hired in 2005 and we will continue to work towards increasing diversity in our safety departments over the next three years. Both departments modernized their hiring practices in 2004 and began making improvements to their policy manuals which will continue in 2005. In early 2005 we will complete a comprehensive compensation and benefits study for our safety personnel to ensure that they receive competitive compensation and benefits in order to keep our current employees and attract high level candidates in the future.

G. Enhancing our Parks and Recreation Programs.

An active city that values the importance of recreation and leisure activities is a healthy and prosperous city. The city administration will take a holistic approach to recreation and wellness. Valparaiso has extensive park and recreational facilities and has earned a reputation as having one of the region's very best park systems. We must have a recreation plan that is inclusive of all citizens regardless of the age or ability and that motivates each person to take the next step toward a more active and healthy lifestyle.

Park Initiatives

1. Pathway/Bikeway System. Our highest priority over the next four years will be to plan and construct a citywide system of safe paths and routes throughout the city for running, walking and biking. We will complete a pathway master plan by the end of 2004 and begin construction in 2005.

2. Master plans for Creekside and Foundation Meadows. Master plans for these parks will be completed by February 2005, and implementation will begin thereafter as funds allow. Also, in 2005 we will seek the state park accreditation process.

3. Fit City Initiative. In 2005 we will launch the city's first "Fit City Initiative", a comprehensive program aimed at motivating our citizens to pursue healthy and more active lifestyles. We will also seek additional opportunities to enhance the fitness and health curricula in our schools with after school and summer programs. Finally, we will look for ways to promote more athletic competitions in Valparaiso such as regional AAU

tournaments and similar youth league competitions. We will take every opportunity to promote Valparaiso as a healthy and vibrant city in which wellness and active living are natural elements of community.

4. Park Facilities. In 2005, we will develop a five-year park master plan. In addition we will compile an infrastructure maintenance plan. We will also seek to develop an “adopt a park” initiative to help defray the cost of maintaining our neighborhood parks. In 2005 we will also unveil a Masterpiece park bench program to raise funds and an awareness of our park programs.

H. Guaranteeing Clean Water and a Healthy Environment

Water is the essence of life. Clean pure water is our most essential natural resource. The city must take great care in protecting its water supply and making sure that there is an ample supply for many years to come. We must show respect for the environment and be good stewards of our natural resources.

Utility Initiatives

1. Complete merger of utilities. Complete the merger of the water and water reclamation utilities pursuant to the written plan submitted by Utilities Director John Hardwick. Complete the reengineering plan for cross training employees by December 2005.

2. Water Supply and Hardness Analysis. Conduct a comprehensive analysis to explore the issues of long-term supply and hardness of our water supply. The analysis should consider all viable options and alternatives including partnerships with other entities to meet the objectives of the study. This study will be completed by end of 2005.

3. CSO Prevention. Continue to aggressively implement our long-term control plan to reduce our combined sewer overflows. Evaluate the viability and expense of prohibiting all combined sewer overflows by the year 2013.

4. Phase II of Water Reclamation Plan Expansion. In 2005, we will complete engineering and begin Phase II of the water reclamation plan expansion. This will include a co-generation project as an alternate power source, providing additional treatment to CSO (by disinfection) and improving our Biosolids Program.

5. Complete 2002 Bond issue Projects. These include plant upgrades, a new water tower on the north east side of the city (2006 construction) Valparaiso Street Water Main, Joliet Road Water main and Profitt’s Dam Spillway.

6. Environmental Friendly Planning. Use planning authority to encourage green spaces and environmentally friendly water management in new developments as well as redevelopment projects.

I. Communication: Improving Our Dialogue with Citizens.

Effective communication is an essential ingredient for progress. The city needs to develop new tools for improving two-way communication with the residents of the city. In addition, the various city departments, commissions and boards need to have more meaningful dialogue so that a common vision and a spirit of cooperation can emerge.

Communication Initiatives

1. Website. Use the city website more effectively to communicate with residents. In 2005 weekly city email newsletters and a user-friendly chat room for ideas and complaints will be developed. In addition, we will create a web-based neighborhood communication program where neighbors can connect electronically to address neighborhood issues and events.

2. Policy Dialogue. In 2005 we will continue to increase opportunities for dialogue between the city administration, city council members and the various boards and commissions for the purpose of establishing common vision and policy. Continue the “Coffee with the Council” as bi-monthly meetings and use regular city council meetings to address city issues in a proactive way. Use workshops or common strategic planning sessions between the various boards and commissions to discuss policy and planning. Regularly update and revisit our strategic plan and establish written policy jointly with the council and boards so that a common vision for the city will continue to emerge and evolve. Also, in 2005, we will develop a new citizen newsletter and distribute via email and implement a communication alert email system for residents. Finally we will create a new format for our employee newsletter making it a more effective tool for internal communications.

3. Media. In 2004, we created an “available upon demand” relationship with the media to better communicate city initiatives. Our responsive and open door policies with the media will continue in 2005 and beyond. In 2004, we also changed our meeting protocol to communicate more effectively and regularly with the media. In 2005, we will continue the WVLP weekly radio call in program to discuss city issues.

4. Accessible to citizens. The mayor, city council, and City Leadership Team must remain accessible and be “surprisingly responsive” to citizens. We will continue to explore new ways to make it easy for our citizens to learn of city initiatives, to communicate with city leadership and to become involved in the process of local government.

5. Community Survey. In December 2004, a new city survey was created and mailed to 2,400 city households. This citywide survey project was a partnership with the research center at Valparaiso University to conduct a citywide to assess the needs and desires of our citizens as they relate to the operation of city government and the

expenditure of city funds. The results of the survey will be tabulated by February 2005 and will be part of our ongoing quest to be responsive to the opinions and ideas of the citizens we serve.

J. Transportation: Finding Viable Alternatives.

As Valparaiso grows, we must explore new modes of transportation that meet the varied needs of our citizens and use resources wisely. In 2004, the council, under the leadership of councilman Chuck Williams, created a transportation committee to study the issue of public transportation and make a recommendation regarding a citywide trolley system. The city administration also supported the proposed new regional commuter rail system to Chicago.

Transportation Initiatives

1. New Commuter Rail System to Chicago. Our highest public transportation priority is to support Congressman Visclosky's efforts to bring a new commuter rail line from Chicago to Valparaiso. In February 2004, the city, along with Portage and Porter County, joined the Lake County RTA. In April, 2004, the city council approved Congressman Visclosky's request of a two-year grant of approximately \$60,000 to fund the city's fair share of a required joint study to provide the rail service. The city administration will continue to support all reasonable efforts to bring this new rail service to Valparaiso.
2. City Trolley Service. In 2005, the city, in concert with the direction of the transportation committee, will analyze the potential of a limited trolley service to meet the needs of city residents and to encourage the use of mass transit. The committee is expected to make its formal recommendation by summer 2005.
3. Support Gary/Chicago Regional Airport. The mayor will strongly support the expansion of the Gary/Chicago airport to bring economic development to the region and convenience to our citizens who travel by air.

K. Information Technology: Creating efficiencies through innovation.

Using technology to manage and utilize information is essential for success in the public as well as the private sector. Efficiencies created by the effective use of technology will help us provide a high level of service to our citizens and at the same time keep the cost of local government reasonable and affordable. Each city department will seek out new innovation in machinery and processes to increase efficiency in service delivery. A good example of this is our new garbage collection system which will use one man mechanized trucks with robot arms to replace three-person manual trucks. This new system -- which will be implemented in May, 2005, will reduce costs and work-related injuries.

Information Technology Initiatives

1. City-wide IT Strategic Plan. Because IT is having an increasing greater impact of every city department, we will develop the city's first city-wide information technology strategic plan in 2005. This plan will take a big picture approach to improving our IT delivery and will involve identifying application and data needs in each department and the systems needed to meet those needs.

2. Long term IT and GIS Needs. In 2005, the city will determine its mid and long term band width issues, Phone PBX needs, including quality and quantity. In addition, the city will revisit its GIS plan and update it and seek a funding source for implementing the plan.

3. Internal Communication. Improve the city's internal communications by centralizing email and schedule sharing and establishing a true city intranet system. Explore creating a work order management system. Increase the city's web presence, on-line web hosting and data base entry.

L. Strong Schools for Valparaiso

Educating our children is the foundation for our future. Although the city administration has no formal authority over the public school system, it must unswervingly support quality education. We will work closely with the school administration and individual educators to ensure that our schools are safe learning environments so that we can continue our exceptional record on education. We must also celebrate and fully support the concept of lifelong learning, so that education is embraced by all citizens and seen as a journey, not a destination.

Education Initiatives

1. Regular communication. Meet at least bi-monthly with the Superintendent of Valparaiso Schools of his or her designee to discuss school and city issues and explore areas of cooperation and opportunity. Increase regular communication with Valparaiso University, other local universities and parochial schools.

2. School resource officers. Support and enhance the concept of school resource officers in the high school and middle schools. Seek federal funding grants available through the city in support of such services.

3. Parental involvement. Seek the active involvement of parents in the dialogue to support excellence in education. A program that limits the discussion to administrators, educators and students ignores parents whose daily contact with students qualify them best to be full working partners in this initiative.

4. Lifelong Learning. Support lifelong learning and lead by example. Encourage community efforts to encourage reading, discussion, education and communication. The mayor and city administration should celebrate the joy of learning so that young and old are encouraged to embrace it.

V. Our Charge.

Let us follow the Nike Slogan: Life is Short, Play Hard. We must continue to foster a strong sense of urgency in our administration. We must execute our plan methodically, effectively and with great resolve. It is time to act and act decisively on behalf of our citizens. We shall proceed with the wisdom of Lincoln, the courage of Martin Luther King and the tenacity of Churchill. Together we can and together we will.