

# **VALPARAISO DOWNTOWN DISTRICT**

## **COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

**May 15, 1996**

In the constant evolution of our community, education, consensus building and understanding of common goals has resulted in a wonderful place to live and work. We believe this plan reflects those goals and hope those who continue the ongoing planning and implementation process find it a helpful tool.

The Valparaiso Downtown District Task Force is composed of the following members from City Government, the Downtown Valparaiso Business Association, the Chamber of Commerce, business owners and city residents.

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## CONTENTS

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Introduction .....	153
Mission Statement .....	158
Physical Improvement Plan .....	159
Downtown District Character .....	160
Building Facades Design Guidelines.....	168
Streetscape & Entrance Development.....	185
Streetscape Guidelines .....	188
Parking .....	189
Alleyways .....	192
Organization and Implementation Strategy .....	193
Financial Development Plan .....	194
Strategic Marketing Plan .....	195
Maintenance Plan .....	196
Action Plan .....	197
APPENDIX A	

## INTRODUCTION

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### A Brief History

Unlike downtowns in many other small cities, Valparaiso's has remained a viable government, retail and business center, with a healthy mix of residences, service businesses, retail shops, and restaurants. This is due to the efforts and concern of its citizens, City and County government, the Downtown Valparaiso Business Association, and the Chamber of Commerce (see Figure A). Through economic changes that have seen many downtowns lose their character, shrink, or vanish entirely, Valparaiso has changed with the times, so far, successfully. Downtown, with its distinctive turn-of-the-19th-century architecture, specialty shops, shaded sidewalks, and friendly character, is a unique and memorable place. Its style defines the city's image to the world, and, most importantly, to us and to future generations. Its character is what makes us uniquely Valparaiso, Indiana.

Valparaiso's citizens enjoy its small city character and feel strongly about maintaining it. To do this, the city must continue to attract a variety of employment opportunities, a wide range of housing choices, and an array of business, cultural and recreational activities. The city must also aggressively control new growth, particularly along the edges of the Downtown District to prevent it slipping into a series of sprawling suburban strips.

The Downtown District, which is anchored by the Porter County Courthouse, encompasses the 14-block area surrounding the courthouse square with boundaries on the north at Jefferson Street, on the east at Morgan Street, on the south at Monroe Street, and on the west at Napoleon Street.

It is important that the downtown retain its historical character, which is reflected in the scale and architecture of its buildings. Retaining businesses is also important. The Downtown District has lost not only large stores, but small specialty shops and significant buildings. The remaining landmarks are key elements in preserving the downtown's character (See Figure B).

This comprehensive plan draws on efforts made in the past, evaluates the present condition of the downtown, and provides guidelines for future groups who will inherit the stewardship of this area.

**Figure A**

<b>Downtown Improvement Efforts</b>	
<b>1981</b>	Ball State University students present design charette.  City formulates Downtown Improvement Strategy.
<b>1987</b>	State of Indiana creates Main Street Program; State Department of Commerce selects five pilot cities, including Valparaiso.  Valparaiso University students complete a community survey, downtown businesses are surveyed, and focus groups are held.  City hires a Main Street Program Director who establishes a board of directors to focus on organization, design, promotion, and economic restructuring (recruitment and retention of business).
<b>1995</b>	City establishes the Central Business District (Downtown District) Taskforce to update 1981 plan and provide guidelines for the future.

## Area Analysis

Being able to change with the times, while retaining its small city character has been a key force in the downtown's survival. Following are elements that affect the downtown now and will continue to have an impact in the future.

### □ People

The city's residents have an ongoing interest in the Downtown District. This has been expressed in surveys. The strongest indicator is the vitality, level of investment and strong property values. The early 1980's transition to resident owners made improvements easier to accomplish. This is based on new entrepreneurs, local accountability and simply "keeping up with your neighbors". Prospective residents and businesses frequently comment on the quality of character of the Downtown District, which reinforces both economic development and provides a source of community pride.

### □ Retail Sector

Past surveys and focus groups have shown that prices in other shopping areas are not always better than downtown, but that hours of operation and parking are. Two surveys of businesses downtown showed little interest in changing hours. Most were interested in promotions and quality service.

During the 1970's and 1980's, downtown offered something for shoppers of every income level. Department stores such as Montgomery Ward, J.C. Penney, Harveys, Sears and Lowenstines (later, Highland Department Store) did a flourishing trade. Most stores were open in the evenings. In the mid 1980's, these stores, following a national trend, closed or moved to suburban shopping centers. The one exception was Highland Department Store, which closed in the early 1990's and was later destroyed by fire. The Downtown District lost its identity as a "shopping center for everyone", as retail business went to shopping centers and large retail outlets such as K-Mart and Walmart. Each time there was a closing and concern elevated, the overall Downtown District vitality and strength resulted in an economically viable option or alternative use.

As part of the Main Street program, a \$400,000 grant provided funding for new sidewalks and streetscape. The grant was contingent upon downtown property owners creating at least 70 new jobs and investing at least \$500,000 in facade renovation. Sidewalks were remodeled with brick insets, planters, tree wells (wired for holiday lighting), and trees. Some facades were also improved with exterior renovations consistent with the character of the Downtown District.

Today, department stores have given way to antique stores, restaurants, and shops specializing in narrowly defined merchandise lines with a strong emphasis on personalized customer service. Stores are not typically open in the evening, but a diverse and expanding restaurant market has created a nightlife for downtown.



**□ Government Sector**

The city has been successful in maintaining and investing in both Porter County and City Government facilities in the Downtown District. This is critical to the overall vitality and community perception of the governments commitment to the Downtown District.

The relocation of City Hall to the Post Office building (Lincolnway and Napoleon), saved an architectural asset and reinforced the northwest section of the Downtown District. The City Police Department was able to expand on the south side of the Courthouse Square, which helped to maintain both real and perceived security. The addition in 1993 of the Porter County Government Center and parking garage (Indiana and Lafayette) anchored what was a deteriorating area in the southwest section of the Downtown District. This facility relocated jobs to the city and relieved some parking shortages. In 1995, the Porter County Courthouse became a judicial center through a renovation that restored its original character and gave this city landmark an active and functional role.

The Porter County Jail and Sheriff's facility requires renovation, addition, and/or replacement. Retaining the location of this facility in the Downtown District will be the next issue of critical importance.

**Figure B**

<b>Downtown Valparaiso - Summary of Buildings/Retail Use</b>	
<p><b>Major Retail Chains Closed or Moved</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>J.C. Penney</li> <li>Sears</li> <li>Montgomery Ward</li> </ul>	<p><b>Key Landmarks</b> (Former use, when known, in parenthesis)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Porter County Courthouse (1883)</li> <li>Valparaiso City Hall (Old Post Office) (1917)</li> <li>Memorial Opera House (1892)</li> <li>Old County Jail (1871)</li> <li>First State Bank (FNB)</li> <li>NBD (Farmers State Bank)</li> <li>Business Block buildings on Lincolnway</li> </ul>
<p><b>Buildings Torn Down or Destroyed</b> (Date of construction/dedication in parenthesis)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Premiere Theater (1921)</li> <li>The Christian Hospital (1898)</li> <li>The Lembke Hotel (1919)</li> <li>Valparaiso Library (1916)</li> <li>Highland Department Store/Lowenstines (1898)</li> </ul>	

**□ Quasi-Public Institutions, the Residential Sector, and the Downtown District's Edges**

In 1993, the Valparaiso Library, a significant architectural asset, was demolished to make room for the expansion and renovation of the Porter County Public Library. While the loss of the original building was regrettable, the demolition made it possible for the library itself to remain downtown and to offer expanded services to residents.

Within the downtown area, apartments are located in second and third floor redeveloped space above businesses and shops. Demand for apartments downtown currently exceeds availability.



The YMCA, churches, schools and small apartment buildings form an attractive transition border for the Downtown District, which helps to maintain its distinct edges and provide a buffer to single family homes near downtown. It should be clear to drivers and to walkers where the downtown ends and the transitional areas begin, another key element in preserving the integrity of the downtown. Part of this preservation involves attention to the entrances to the Downtown District located at Washington and Monroe in the south, Morgan and Lincolnway in the east, and Napoleon and Lincolnway in the west.

#### ❑ **Business and Professional Offices**

Financial institutions continue to invest heavily with large full-service offices. This trend may have peaked as this industry focuses on branches and ATMs and is further affected by mergers and acquisitions. Two bank headquarters are located downtown: First National Bank of Valparaiso on Indiana Street and Indiana Federal Bank for Savings on Washington Street.

The building that once housed Harveys was renovated into 150 Lincoln Square, a multi-tenant office building. On the southwest side of Lincolnway, deteriorating storefronts were combined and renovated to create Napoleon Center. These are examples of buildings renovated to suit modern needs while still retaining the scale and character of their turn-of-the-century ancestors.

#### ❑ **Parking**

Valparaiso's parking problems are both real and perceived. On-street parking is limited to two hours to preserve use of these spaces for shoppers and business clients. City perimeter lots, with both metered and permit parking, and the Porter County Government Center garage have improved the situation, but parking in some cases remains a problem.

Use of the Government Center garage by shoppers appears to be limited. This may be due to any of the following: inadequate signage designating the garage as a place to park for shoppers, the fact that shoppers cannot see their destination from the garage, or a perception that the garage is too far from the downtown. Some suggested solutions include incorporating "Park & Shop" signage; placing downtown walking maps in acrylic containers in the Government Center garage; or having downtown merchants provide parking maps of the Downtown District at their business.

Since the character of the Downtown District is dependent on its density and massing of buildings, demolition for parking lots destroys what we are trying to preserve. Parking lot development requires thorough planning analysis. A large part of the solution will depend on our ability to provide incentives and to promote consideration and cooperation among businesses and residents affected.



□ **Streetscapes & Entrances**

The mainstreet program provided resources to improve a significant number of streetscapes/sidewalks with matching funds from property owners. After the program ended, improvements are being completed in additional areas by the city or property owners as funds are available. Completion of the streetscapes is a high priority.

Maintenance of the streetscapes and landscape has been provided by the city. Removal of old parking meter posts and review of other sidewalk elements is required. In general, the streetscape details need review and formalization into a guideline.

Entrances, as defined in the Ball State Study, have not been developed. Clear entrance definition, combined with the streetscape improvement elements, enhance and bind together the Downtown District to create our "**sense of place**".



## MISSION STATEMENT

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The Valparaiso Downtown District Comprehensive Plan is a guideline to achieve continuous development through Strategic Marketing, Financial Resource Development, Physical Improvements, and Maintenance to preserve our unique character and insure our long term value and vitality within the D.D.

### **Physical Improvement Plan**

Goal: To provide a guideline to preserve and enhance our unique and valuable character as we continuously develop and change.

### **Organization & Implementation Strategy**

Goal: To provide the leadership structure and staffing to continuously implement comprehensive plan goals.

### **Financial Development Plan**

Goal: To research and define options for resource development to continually implement Strategic Marketing, Physical Improvement, and Maintenance Long Range Plans.

### **Strategic Marketing Plan**

Goal: To define an appropriate and viable mix of downtown district tenants and develop recruitment, retention, promotion, and special event programs to accomplish it.

### **Maintenance Plan**

Goal: To provide a maintenance guideline and implementation options to enhance the marketability and value of public and private assets within the D.D.

## PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

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**Goal:** To provide a guideline to preserve and enhance our unique and valuable character as we continuously develop and change.

## PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN DOWNTOWN DISTRICT CHARACTER

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**Goal:** Preservation of the turn-of-the-century character of the downtown district based on planning (organization, circulation, density and edges) and architectural landmarks (key buildings and spaces).

### Architectural Landmarks

The ten building or building groups defined in the following “Courthouse Square Valparaiso 1987 Architectural Guide” continue to define the character of the downtown district. The following are recommendations for their preservation and use.

- Demolition** should not be permitted.
- Exterior facades** should be preserved and restored. Any modifications or maintenance, if “demonstrated” to be necessary should be based on historical research and/or the facade guidelines.
- Interior architectural elements** which are historically significant should be preserved, if possible. Interior renovation must allow flexibility to maintain use or alternative reuse of the building.

Work which in any way modifies the exterior appearance should require city **design**, review and approval.

- Organization** of the Downtown District is on a rectilinear grid with the courthouse square at its center. This grid of blocks should be maintained. It provides the simple organization, scale and flexibility consistent with a turn-of-the century downtown.
- Lowenstine Building** (Krafft Site)

The original Lowenstine building was destroyed by fire during the development of this comprehensive plan. As a key community landmark located east of the Courthouse, its replacement is critical.

This parcel of land is inappropriate for a grade level parking lot. It would break the building massing of the Downtown District and continuity of pedestrian traffic and vitality.

A replacement building should be similar in height and scale to the adjacent buildings and conform to the design guidelines. Imitation of the original structure is not necessary.

## Planning

- ❑ **Density and building massing** define the downtown district. Demolition of buildings should be avoided. This would both destroy the character and diminish the vitality. This applies even to the development of parking lots, which should be located on the perimeter of the downtown district. Parking lots should be screened from pedestrian and vehicular traffic with landscape material.
- ❑ **Vehicular and pedestrian circulation** should be maintained and combined, avoiding restriction of vehicular traffic which limits visibility, exposure and orientation of users and customers. The increased activity level results in greater security and vitality.
- ❑ **Edges** are critical to the definition of the downtown district. Residential buildings edge the northwest, north, east and southeast, while light industrial and commercial buildings edge the south and southwest. The residential buildings visually define the downtown district and provide customers in close proximity. The residential scale and type of buildings on Lincolnway east and west of the downtown district should be maintained, even if used for commercial functions.



## **PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

### **BUILDING FACADES GUIDELINES**

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**Goal:** To preserve the architectural character of the downtown district which defines our unique image.

All buildings within the downtown district should be reviewed for compliance with the **Design Guidelines** before issuing a building permit.

All signage in the downtown district should comply with the Valparaiso sign ordinance. This committee worked with the signage task force to develop the specific downtown district requirements.



## PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN STREETSCAPE & ENTRANCE DEVELOPMENT

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**Goal:** To visually enhance the downtown district, make it more marketable and desirable for businesses, staff and customers.

To connect the downtown district with consistent physical elements to reinforce its definition and sense of place.

To provide entrances, which are a gateway visually reinforcing a sense of arrival.

To define the edges and limits of the downtown district.

The city of Valparaiso developed streetscape guidelines which were implemented on several blocks beginning in 1985. The continuation and completion of this is a **high priority** of the physical improvement plan.

The following maps show a priority plan and actual improvements required.

Individual design will be required for each entrance and block to take existing conditions into account.

## **PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN STREETSCAPE GUIDELINES**

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The city of Valparaiso design and quality standards for the following streetscape elements should be incorporated in this plan.

**Sidewalks** - Refer to Streetscape & Entrance Development, page 35 and subsequent maps

- Without Parkway
- With Parkway
- Paving Details
- Intersection Details

### **Intersection**

- Entrance to Downtown District - Refer to Streetscape & Entrance Development, page 35
- Typical Intersection

**Planters** - Refer to Appendix A

**Light Fixtures and Electrical Power** - Refer to Appendix A

**Benches** - Undefined

**Waste Receptacles** - Undefined

### **Landscape Standards**

- Streetscape
- Parking Lots

A 1985 Downtown Taskforce developed the existing standards. The overall impact has been excellent, but the standards need review by a design professional to improve some resulting maintenance issues without losing the visual advantages. Entrances and intersections also need to be designed.

## PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

### PARKING

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**Goal:** To provide parking which is as convenient as possible without destroying the character or building massing of the downtown district.

To provide adequate parking lots along the parking loop focused on staff and long term use.

To develop parking lots which are safe and visually screened from vehicular and pedestrian traffic with landscaping.

To provide short-term parking on the street.

To develop a signage system for easy access to parking.

To provide lighting for safety and aesthetics using streetscape standard fixtures or low brightness cut-off fixtures, eliminating telephone pole lighting with widespread heads.

**Parking** continues to be a significant issue in the D.D. In some cases it is a very real problem and in many others it is a perception problem. Meter removal, Perimeter City parking lots, and the Porter County parking garage have improved the situation. Since the character of the D.D. is dependent on its density and massing of buildings, demolition for parking destroys what we are trying to preserve. The development of each new lot requires thorough planning analysis. A large part of the solution will depend our ability to provide incentives and promote consideration and cooperation between the goods and service providers to the benefit of the customer of the D.D. Since most of the providers can also be customers the understanding is there. The hard part is changing the habits.

The 1981 downtown improvement strategy defined a developed parking loop around the perimeter of the downtown district. Parking lots have been added to this loop since that time. This parking loop continues to be consistent with urban parking planning recommendations for long term parking and should continue to be developed.

The parking loop needs to be visually reinforced with a visible signage system which does not detract from the character of the downtown district. Maps should also be distributed through merchants, businesses and the city.

Short-term street parking needs continued enforcement and higher fines, as long as long-term parking is available.

## ALLEYWAYS

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**Goal:** To provide service corridors as required for the downtown district.

To provide secondary pedestrian and vehicular circulation which is safe, well illuminated and maintained.

To provide additional development of businesses increasing building frontage and allowing for outdoor pedestrian spaces.

The safety and maintenance of alleyways is a shared responsibility of all building owners and tenants requiring little cost, only adequate lighting and continuous conscientious maintenance.

The maintenance and improvement of infrastructure roadways, sewers, etc. is based on resources available. Frequently needed improvements are put off, due to low visibility.

Development is a factor of multiple issues which need thorough evaluation in each location.

- Need for Serviceway
- Utility Exposure
- Visual Desirability
- Usability of Adjacent Buildings
- Vacation
- Cost

Development will be based on the economics of a certain opportunity or a long term planning goal to improve a specific area and the development of resources to do it.

A survey of alleys requiring additional lighting should be conducted by the Downtown Valparaiso Business Association and incorporated into this plan.

## ORGANIZATION & IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

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**Goal:** To provide the leadership, structure and staffing to continuously implement comprehensive plan goals.

### **The City of Valparaiso**

The city organized this task force to refocus attention on downtown district needs. The city instituted programs and grants like Mainstreet to provide resources for improvements when available. They have worked with county, federal government and the private sector to maintain downtown locations and development. They have maintained streets and landscaping through their own forces.

Without additional tax resources such as (C.O.I.T.), the city's resources are severely limited for new capital and maintenance projects which tend to focus on infrastructure and safety. But quality of environment is a key factor of quality of life and we believe the city needs to continue and improve its role of **leadership** in setting and **clearly defining** physical improvement overall goals and seed funding of project design to control quality and quantity.

### **Downtown Valparaiso Business Association**

In recent years, this organization has been retail focused. This is a key component of the downtown district, but to develop a leadership role, its membership needs to be more diversified, including property owners, commercial and professional business sectors. Its goals, staffing, and financial resources would also require significant expansion.

### **Property Owners**

The property owners who share the greatest investment, risk and benefit could develop a separate group which would work with both the city and Downtown Valparaiso Business Association in developing and implementing long term goals. This would require leadership, staffing and financial resources. It would also require coordination to avoid duplication of efforts.

### **Staffing**

Regardless of the leadership composition, full-time staff is critical to ongoing implementation. This allows volunteer commitment to be cycled and not burned out. Staff provide the continuity, organization and simple manpower not always available on a volunteer basis, as well as a vested interest in success. This was shown during the initial main street program years. Funding will be the critical issue.



## FINANCIAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

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**Goal:** To research and define options for resource development to continually implement Strategic Marketing, Physical Improvement, and Maintenance Long Range Plans.

The downtown district will continue to change. Significant investment will be required on an ongoing basis for capital improvements and maintenance projects, as well as operations and general maintenance.

In the past, the city has funded physical improvement projects with their own resources and grants. To some degree, this will continue, but with greater and greater limitations. In addition, when the mainstreet project was done, owners needed to participate or their frontage was not included. Some did not and this left some gaping holes in the streetscape improvements and diminished the overall impact.

As city resources continue to be strained, responsibility can be shifted to the individual property owners. Unfortunately, as in the past, some will participate and some will not. The overall downtown district property values will diminish in time and the ability for the downtown district to lobby for basic infrastructure improvements without investment sharing and organization will be severely limited.

More uniform development could be accomplished with a C.O.I.T. or Downtown Tax District. The problem with a C.O.I.T. is the ability to actually pass it on a county wide basis and subsequently how many funds would actually trickle down to the Valparaiso Downtown District. The Downtown Tax District would provide ongoing resources for projects, maintenance, etc. It benefits all of those who have to pay, due to improved property values and the ability to define and prioritize the use of the funds themselves.

Low interest loans have been and can be developed within the district by the local financial institutions as a stimulus for private development, either individually or in joint cooperation.

## STRATEGIC MARKETING PLAN

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**Goal:** To define an appropriate and viable mix of downtown district tenants and develop recruitment, retention, promotion, and special event programs to accomplish it.

The financial security of the downtown district is based on its vitality. Our existing vitality is based on internal and external forces which will constantly shift. Retention of those government, quasi-government, financial, not-for-profit, retail, commercial and professional owners and tenants is critical. Professional staff or consultants can define a healthy mix, based on our unique character, and provide a strategy to either maintain present or achieve our future goals.

Promotion and special event programs are a continuous stimulus to the downtown district. This requires joint effort with the Downtown Association, Popcorn Festival and city.

## MAINTENANCE PLAN

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**Goal:** To provide a maintenance guideline and implementation options to enhance the marketability and value of public and private assets within the downtown district.

### **Property Owners/Tenants Maintenance Projects and Operations**

Maintenance and improvement of private property is the financial responsibility of individual property owners. The facade guidelines can be voluntarily implemented, but require both a distribution and an education process. Maintenance standards should be outlined, but implementation often fails, unless each person understands their responsibilities. The best solution is aggressive peer pressure through example. Sometimes direct comment or city involvement becomes necessary and should be utilized to protect all of our property values.

### **Public Property Maintenance Projects and Operations**

Roads, sidewalks, streetlights, landscaping, snow removal, etc. will require ongoing maintenance. This maintenance needs to be defined and scheduled by the operational staff of the downtown district and the city. These costs also need to be defined and scheduled to allow the related parties to define their scope of physical and financial responsibilities.

## **ACTION PLAN**

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### **ORGANIZATION AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY**

Pg 193

Expand the DVBA to include strong representation from the property owners or develop a Property Owners Association.

Define roles and responsibilities of the organization(s) for each of the following actions items.

Develop funding strategy for full time staffing.

### **PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

#### **Building Facade Guidelines**

Pg 168

Pass D.D. Signage Ordinance.

Define process of distributing guidelines to property owners and tenants.

Incorporate design guidelines in city site review process.

#### **Streetscape and Entrance Development**

Pg 185

Define capital budgets for the entrances and each priority level of streetscape work.

Design typical entrance development.

#### **Streetscape Guidelines**

Pg 188

Incorporate existing and design additional required city of Valparaiso Streetscape Guidelines.

#### **Parking**

Pg 189

Develop distribution system of parking maps to educate patrons.

Raise city lot permit parking fees to market value.

Raise street parking fines to deter employee use.

Investigate partnering possibilities and financial feasibility of parking garage options.

#### **Alleyways**

Pg 192

Develop survey to determine alleys with inadequate lighting.

**MAINTENANCE PLAN**

Pg 196

Define maintenance plan.

Define responsibilities for maintenance between the city and property owners.

Develop maintenance budget.

**STRATEGIC MARKETING PLAN**

Pg 195

Determine if a consultant would be appropriate to develop strategic marketing plan and define fees.

**FINANCIAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

Pg 194

Define Budget

Capital costs

Ongoing maintenance

Operational costs (staff, office, etc.)

Determine and implement most appropriate long term funding mechanism.

APPENDIX A

## PART 2 - PRODUCTS

## 2.1 MATERIALS

## A. Ultralok Paver Stones

1. Paver stones shall be: Hollandstone and Cobblestone, as manufactured on multi-layer equipment. Paver stone color shall be: Terra-cotta with a thickness of 6 cm. Laying pattern shall be in a herringbone pattern as shown on the plans.

## B. Lighting units shall be as follows:

1. Ornamental Lighting Units shall consist of a Spring City Electrical Manufacturing Co. Style Villa U-fitter, 24 inch diameter poly carbonate ball globe, cast aluminum base, painted finish, 175 Watt Metal Halide H.I.D. lamp, 240 Volt high power factor lantern mounted on an Edgewater, 12'-0" cast iron lamp post with one piece, heavy wall cast iron construction per A.S.T.M. A48-83, Class 30, prime paint finish, access door in base, and anchor bolts.
2. Direct Burial Lighting units shall be Greenlee Landscape Lighting Manufacturing Co. Series 303B 100 MH-IT-240-F-DLB-CGM with 100 Watt metal halide lamp. Unit shall be of cast brass and be equipped with brass directional louver and concrete grout mask.