

Valparaiso Introduces Transformative Downtown Developments

The City of Valparaiso has announced transformative projects for the city's downtown, adding housing, parking, retail space and job opportunities. The \$37 million development includes new apartment housing, retail and restaurant space, and the construction of a public parking structure, accomplishing several of the city's longtime goals for downtown. "These new additions advance the City's downtown plan, which has served as a blueprint for more than 20 years. This new step will be as positive and transformative as the introduction of our downtown park, Central Park Plaza, was a decade ago," said Mayor Matt Murphy. "The project will complement and enhance the special nature of our iconic downtown," he said.

Introducing The Linc

The Linc is a mixed-use development located on the north side of Lincolnway between Michigan Avenue and Morgan Boulevard. Part of the property, currently home to Round the Clock restaurant, was purchased by Hageman, a real estate investment and development company based in Indiana. Plans include three separate four-story buildings with



a total of 121 modern apartment homes and retail space on the ground floor facing Lincolnway.

Designed to complement the historic architecture of downtown Valparaiso, The Linc will offer studios to three-bedroom options, with spacious open floor plans and high ceilings, modern kitchens, in-unit laundry and community amenities like a fitness center, outdoor patio and pet washing stations.

"Repeated market studies and downtown plans have all indicated a demand for more downtown housing, added parking and opportunities for business downtown. We're very pleased that an outstanding developer has chosen Valparaiso for a project that fits so well with the community's shared priorities," said Murphy.

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valpo for all generations

Valpo for All Generations is a bold new plan to advance opportunities for residents and visitors of all ages – for this generation and those who come after us. To learn more about the plan, access the web page using the QR code.

Watch for more details and opportunities to get involved.





Dear Neighbors,

As we head into March Madness, basketball is a great analogy to many of the pieces we're sharing in this issue. Winning takes strategy and planning. And the City of Valparaiso has been doing just that. We've researched best practices, studied existing plans, gathered community input. And now it's time to shoot.

For decades, our city has distinguished itself by looking forward. In 2002, the City focused on plans to advance our downtown. Since then, our downtown has come alive, thanks to planning: liquor licenses to create a dining destination, facade grants, streetscaping, music, a downtown park, and signature events. As planned, the next pieces are enhanced housing and parking options to advance the success and sustainability of our downtown.

The Linc mixed-use development and Lincoln Highway Garage are these next steps. They will be as positive and transformative for our downtown as our dining district and Central Park Plaza. Likewise, welcoming Journeyman to our downtown adds further vitality, elevating an abandoned factory into a destination and source of jobs.

In typical fashion, Valparaiso is aiming high – in public safety, in infrastructure, in the very quality of life we share, long-term. With planning in place, we're looking forward to many great seasons to come.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Matthew R. Murphy". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Mayor Matt Murphy

City of Valparaiso Looks to Solar Power for City Facilities

The City of Valparaiso is planning to install solar panels to assist powering several City facilities, saving more than \$130,000 annually in electrical costs and simultaneously creating clean energy, according to Valparaiso City Services Director Steve Poulos. "We have had our sights on solar for years. Now that wattage for solar panels has increased over time, and prices have stabilized, solar makes financial and environmental sense for the City," said Poulos.

The plan calls for solar panels to be installed in five locations, including the City's three treatment plants, the City Services building on Joliet Road and City Hall on Lincolnway. "Utility costs have long been some of the City of Valparaiso's largest expenses, so we're very pleased to find ways of offsetting these costs," said Mayor Matt Murphy. "We're pleased to find renewable energy options and reduce our dependence on non-renewable energy. We also appreciate that our City Hall may be more than 100 years old, but it will be powered with the latest in solar technology," he said, noting that the solar panels will not be visible from the street view, preserving the historic appearance of the building.

Energy efficiency has long been a priority for Valparaiso City Services, which includes both the utilities and public works divisions. "Over the past 10 years, the city has been investing in energy efficient equipment and systems so that we could hold our electrical use steady while adding significant services for a growing customer base," said Poulos. "While Valparaiso City Utilities has continued to pay more per kilowatt hour and expand services to more residents and businesses, our electrical cost per gallon of use has remained fairly stable due to our ongoing efforts in energy efficiency. The introduction of solar will further advance these energy efficiency goals."

To ensure the most efficient placement of solar opportunities, the City is working with a design engineer, Telamon of Indianapolis. Based on recommendations, approximately **870 solar panels**, will be installed throughout the five City of Valparaiso locations, costing approximately \$740,000 in total. At that cost, with a savings of approximately \$130,000 annually, the panels will pay for themselves in 8.2 years. Further, the total savings over the life of the solar panels is estimated to be **\$4.6 million**, plus future net metering credits from NIPSCO.

Once design is complete for the solar panel project, Valparaiso City Services and the City of Valparaiso will seek bids for qualified contractors for construction in 2022. To learn more about the City of Valparaiso, visit Valpo.us.

VPD Launches Wellness Program

The Valparaiso Police Department has launched a new Wellness Program designed to better serve the community by strengthening social outreach, along with the wellness of officers serving the community.

“We are working to be proactive to support our community and officers to be stronger, preventing problems before they happen,”

said Valparaiso Police Chief Jeff Balon.

The Valparaiso Wellness Program includes three key components:

1. **Adding a social worker** to support community interaction
2. **Enhancing mental and spiritual health support** for officers
3. **Strengthening the physical fitness** of officers

The VPD’s new social worker is Samantha Burgett, who has earned her master’s degree in social work and has a background in nonprofit work, case management, program development and facilitation within the criminal justice system. “Our social worker assists the police in situations related to mental health, substance dependencies and other challenges, helping us to reduce crime and repeat calls for service by connecting people with the resources for long-term solutions,” said Balon. The VPD’s social worker is funded by



Samantha Burgett, MSW, has joined the Valparaiso Police Department as the department’s first social worker. She is part of an overall Wellness Program that supports community policing through mental, spiritual and physical wellness. She is pictured with Police Chief Jeff Balon.

HealthLinc, a partner in other programs related to mental health and substance dependencies community wide. Her hiring was inspired by interaction between the VPD and Valparaiso University’s Social Work Department, led by Assistant Professor Caroline Ban.

In addition to the social worker, the VPD’s wellness program has added the services of Dr. Dennis Shelby, who has a background in law enforcement. He will assist in supported VPD officers, reinforcing the mental health needs of officers confronted with traumatic job-related stress. The department has also restored the Chaplain Program, assisting officers and citizens by offering a spiritual component, upon request. “Providing mental and spiritual support is another way of ensuring that our department offers the very best in community policing,” said Chief Balon. To further enhance overall wellness,

the VPD will strengthen its priority of physical fitness. “Studies show that officers who are more mentally prepared and physically fit go into stressful situations with a calmer and more confident demeanor, which has shown to result in more positive and less aggressive resolutions, along with a reduced risk for the community and officers themselves,” said Balon.

“The additional wellness initiatives further strengthen our police department, making the VPD a better resource for our community,” said Valparaiso Mayor Matt Murphy. “The VPD continues to hold itself to the very highest standards, including accreditation by the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Academies (CALEA), which puts the VPD among just 15 departments in Indiana and less than 800 nationwide,” said Murphy.

Valparaiso Welcomes Journeyman



Journeyman Distillery has officially broken ground on a historic restoration project, transforming the formerly abandoned Anco windshield wiper factory into a 140,000-square foot destination which includes plans for a distillery, brewery, whiskey garden, American fare restaurant and steakhouse, cigar room, karaoke, and event spaces, where memories will be made.

Journeyman Owner and Operator Bill Welter is the third generation of his family to operate in the Valparaiso community since the early 1970s. "As a city, we recognized the potential of this property with its proximity to our historic downtown," said Mayor Matt Murphy who was a member of the Valparaiso Redevelopment Commission in 2017 when the commission acquired the brownfield property that included the factory.

"The Valparaiso Journeyman Distillery will elevate this property to a true destination and provide further development opportunities for this excellent location adjacent to our downtown, including hundreds of jobs,"

said Murphy. Further, part of the development will house the City's Transit Center and the shared parking lot will also serve passengers of the City's Dash commuter bus service.

To prepare the location for development, the City of Valparaiso has invested in necessary environmental cleanup, preserved the historic water tower, and made infrastructure improvements, including aligning the street. "Today this property offers new promise to Valparaiso. Our vision for the future is being realized and we're very pleased to welcome Journeyman," said Murphy. Journeyman has begun construction, with plans to open in stages, beginning early in 2023.

Many organizations have come together to make the Journeyman project possible, including the Valparaiso Redevelopment Commission, Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority (RDA), Northern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC), and the Indiana Economic Development Commission (IEDC).

Safety First

Valpo Fire upgrades with 3 new pieces of frontline equipment and 6 new firefighters

The Valparaiso Fire Department continues to lead in fire safety, upgrading both equipment and staffing over the past year. The new equipment includes three new frontline pieces, including two Sutphen Engines and a Spartan ladder truck. These shiny upgrades complete the plan of replacing every piece of firefighting equipment in the city's fleet since 2016, ensuring lasting, quality service to the city. The more than \$2.2 million in equipment upgrades were funded through an equipment replacement fund, established by the Valparaiso City Council in 2020, plus additional support from the Valparaiso Redevelopment Commission.

In addition to the new equipment, the VFD added six new firefighters to the team since 2020, including five new firefighters in 2021, thanks to a SAFER grant through FEMA. These additional team members make Valparaiso safer by making it possible to put four firefighters on each engine for emergencies. This staff level places the Valparaiso Fire Department in the top 20 percent nationwide for departments our size.

This superior equipment and team have led to Valparaiso's superior Class 2 rating by the National Insurance Service Office, or ISO. The VFD is one of just 10 departments in Indiana to earn a Class 2 rating, which adds substantial savings for Valparaiso homeowners when it comes to insurance rates.



The Valparaiso Fire Department has recently replaced three pieces of frontline equipment, including two new Sutphen engines and a ladder truck. The shiny new equipment is put into service in a traditional wetting and push-in ceremony in which the firefighters push the equipment into the bay by hand. Mayor Murphy assisted with the push-in dedication.

Committee Studies Trash & Recycling Options

The City of Valparaiso has established a committee to review current trash and recycling services to sustain a quality solid waste and recycling program into the future. "Like all solid waste and recycling programs nationwide, the City of Valparaiso is reviewing operations to ensure we're providing the best service and value for our community," said City Services Director Steve Poulos.

Nationwide, trash and recycling services are seeing substantial increases in the price of fuel, labor and landfill costs, along with labor shortages. At the same time, the recycling market continues to be volatile, and funds generated by selling recycled waste have plunged. In fact, the same loads of recycling that once generated revenue for communities are now being turned away by transfer stations or costing more to collect than the credits the city once received. "There is still an environmental value to recycling but the reality is that the financial return is no longer there," said Poulos.

The committee studying the service is tasked with reviewing operations to ensure that the city is working efficiently, analyzing challenges, comparing Valparaiso to other similar communities and investigating options for private vs public services. "Currently residents pay \$12 monthly for solid waste and recycling services. The City has held this rate at a constant since 2012, a rate that is substantially lower than neighboring communities. Our goal is to continue providing residents with the very best service at the most reasonable rate," said Poulos.

The committee will report its findings over the coming months.

Mayor Murphy Shares Valparaiso Strategic Plan

The City of Valparaiso recently completed a new strategic plan as a roadmap to move the city forward, presented by Mayor Matt Murphy. "I look forward to navigating the road ahead with this map to guide us on the journey." The plan was created after reviewing previous plans and studies and then reaching out to the community for input through interactive Zoom meetings and an online survey, inspiring 560 community-wide responses.

From this input, seven priorities emerged, including Public Safety, Infrastructure, Quality of Life, Recreation, Fiscal Health, Operational Improvements, and Business. The plan includes action steps to address these priorities. The public can view a PowerPoint overview of the plan as well as the entire plan on Mayor Murphy's page on the City of Valparaiso website at Valpo.us.

Shop Valpo Promotes Local



The City of Valparaiso has teamed up with Valparaiso Events and the Valpo Chamber to promote local businesses through a Shop Valpo campaign, launched before the holidays. "Our local businesses are the backbone of our community, and they offer unique goods and experiences you won't find anywhere else," said Mayor Matt Murphy. "I'd encourage everyone to think Valpo first and support your neighbors," he said.

The Shop Valpo campaign gathered local retailers, restaurants and service

businesses into a single website at Valpo.in, allowing them to offer special discounts or offers throughout the season. The campaign was highlighted in window clings promoting the website and social media posts with contests to encourage shoppers to think locally.

Added Parking to Make it Easier to Shop Valpo

To further support businesses, the City of Valparaiso also teamed up with Porter County to add free parking at the Porter County Parking Garage, located at the corner of Lafayette and

Monroe streets in the evenings and on weekends, when the Porter County Administrative Center is closed.

Businesses Invited to Join Shop Valpo

More than 50 businesses joined in the holiday Shop Valpo effort and were pleased with the added support. Shop Valpo will continue with opportunities for businesses to support specials for Mother's Day, Back to School and Holiday 2022. If your business is interested in participating, reach out to Valparaiso Events at info@ValparaisoEvents.com.



Miles of Progress

Multiple projects add efficiency and extend the life of Valparaiso roadways

The City of Valparaiso made significant progress on roadway projects in 2021, wrapping up 2021 the year with a total of more than 17 lane miles of paving, including some of the city's most traveled roadways. "We thank the community for the patience as road construction can be inconvenient. Where possible, we tried to accomplish a lot in overnight hours to minimize the disruption," said Valparaiso Engineering Director Mike Jabo.

"Ultimately, these projects have added years of life to miles of roadway in main traffic areas as well as in neighborhoods,"

- Engineering Director Mike Jabo

The roadway projects included a multi-mile project that paved portions of Roosevelt Road, Calumet Avenue and Morgan Boulevard. In addition, Vale Park Road between Campbell Street and Valparaiso Street was milled and resurfaced, with traffic-calming speed tables replaced for safety. A number

of neighborhood streets were also enhanced, extending roadway life.

"Our efforts this year have focused on resurfacing and enhancing safety features for motorists and pedestrians alike," said Jabo. "Safety is our first priority, and we continue to advance efforts to make travel throughout Valparaiso safer and more efficient."

Silhavy Project Resumes in 2022

One of the city's most ambitious projects is the improvement of Silhavy Road, which will resume in the spring of 2022, completing work south of the Canadian National railroad crossing. Once complete, the project will add efficiency for this well-traveled stretch, from

Evans Avenue south to LaPorte Avenue, including new curbs, gutter, storm sewers, plus a new signal and added turn lanes at the intersection of Silhavy Road and Evans Avenue.

Bulbouts Add Safety for Pedestrians

To enhance safety for pedestrians, the City of Valparaiso has constructed "bulbouts" along selected intersections on Morgan Boulevard. These bulbouts are curb extensions that reduce the crossing distance across Morgan Boulevard as they also narrow the roadway and reduce vehicle speeds. The bulbouts are designed to provide safer pedestrian travel, helping to unite neighborhoods.

Spring Cleanup Event April 30th

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Susie Hord Named Good Neighbor

Mayor Murphy named Susie Hord as Valparaiso's Good Neighbor for 2021. Hord has been serving children, families, education, the elderly, and her neighborhood for decades as a volunteer for organizations, including Immanuel Lutheran, the Valparaiso Family YMCA, and the College Hill Neighborhood, among others.

"The annual Good Neighbor recognition is an opportunity for us to shed a light on the contributions of individuals like Susie and highlight the good works happening each day in Valparaiso," said Mayor Matt Murphy. The recognition takes place annually at the city's holiday tree lighting celebration. For more information about the award and how to nominate someone for 2022, visit the Community Engagement page at Valpo.us.



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Downtown Businesses Support Project

Round the Clock's co-owner John Christodoulakis supports the Linc project. "I think this development is going to be a very good thing for Valparaiso," he said. Round the Clock has operated at its current Valparaiso location since his father, Dino Christodoulakis, opened the restaurant in 1979. "We look forward to serving the community in a different location," he said of the company's sale of their current property. The Round the Clock will remain open until construction begins, late in summer, 2022.

Other longtime business owners agree. "As a downtown business since the 1950's, I'm really excited about this project, the people it will bring, and we've needed a parking garage for a long time,"

said Tony Gengo, owner of Tony's Place on Lincolnway.

Lincoln Highway Garage Will Add Parking

In addition to the approximate \$19.5 million investment in the housing and retail development, developers of The Linc will also support construction and maintenance of a new multi-level parking garage at 301-309 Lincolnway. Known as the Lincoln Highway Garage, the structure will be located at the northeast corner of Lincolnway and Morgan Boulevard. It will include parking to support the new housing as well as expanded opportunities for surrounding businesses. The Redevelopment Commission has authorized a study by WGI to determine the best size for the garage, based on community needs.

The Linc project received significant support from the Indiana Economic Development Commission in the form of \$5.6 million in redevelopment tax credits. Valparaiso's Redevelopment Commission has also provided tax increment financing (TIF) assistance. "A thriving downtown is a key component to the City of Valparaiso's long-term sustainability and prosperity. We're excited about these new opportunities, increasing housing and opportunities to succeed for residents and businesses," said Murphy.

Construction on The Linc and the Lincoln Highway Garage is expected to begin in late 2022, with occupancy beginning in late 2023.