

# Jon Costas

Mayor, Valparaiso, Indiana

February 2009

Dear Citizens:

Almost five years ago we adopted the first comprehensive strategic plan for the City of Valparaiso. The purpose of the plan was to unite the mayor's office, the city council, and the citizens around a clear set of priorities and projects. The goals of the plan were ambitious and required creativity, collaboration, persistence and a strong resolve to simply get things done.

Today, I am pleased to report that many of the visionary initiatives in our Strategic Plan have been accomplished and the city is much stronger as a result. Indeed the results are all around us. Our roads are in better repair, our downtown is the envy of other communities, our aging business districts have been remade, our restaurants are smoke-free, and our public transportation choices have increased. A more thorough list of the progress and accomplishments over the last five years -- since I was elected mayor -- can be found at [www.ci.valparaiso.in.us/accomplishments/index.htm](http://www.ci.valparaiso.in.us/accomplishments/index.htm)

We have invested nearly \$40 Million in our infrastructure over the last five years. Almost 75% of those funds have been state and federal grants which we have worked very hard to secure. Our financial condition is very strong. We have minimal debt for a city our size and we created a rainy day fund four years ago that has a balance of just under \$2 million. Sharon Swihart, our dedicated Clerk-Treasurer, and I have worked closely together to budget carefully and forge a bright economic future for Valparaiso.

While we are pleased with progress to date, much more needs to be done to ensure that Valparaiso remains one of the jewels of Indiana communities. To that end, we present to you the 2009 City of Valparaiso Strategic Plan. This Plan is the result of much deliberation and citizen input and will serve as the compass for our efforts and investment of tax dollars over the next five years and beyond. You will note that, due to the fact virtually all of the large projects set forth in our first strategic plan are complete, and that we are facing lean economic times, this plan is more about fine tuning, attention to detail, improved operations and efficiency.

I want to thank you, our citizens, for supporting the necessary changes in our community and for being open to new ideas (like the roundabout). Public officials cannot create progressive changes without the support and confidence of the citizenry.

We must pursue excellence in all areas to arrive at our destination of becoming one of the most progressive and vibrant cities in the entire Midwest. So let us together paint a masterpiece of a community using bold colors and deliberate strokes. Let us proceed with the creativity of Picasso, the passion of Monet and the determination of Michelangelo as we portray and fashion a community that our children will be proud to call home.

With gratitude,

Jon Costas, Mayor

## I. Our City : Our Values

Values form the bedrock of all families, organizations and communities. Shared values unite and define us. Values never become outdated or irrelevant. While change is all around us, our values remain constant, giving us continuity and a strong sense of shared community.

The Valparaiso City Administration and City Council have identified the following core values which serve as the compass for all our decisions:

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

## II. A Vision for Tomorrow's Valparaiso

While every citizen has his or her own unique visions and aspirations for Valparaiso's future, allow me to describe some of the colors and scenes that I sense the majority of our citizens see in the enduring masterpiece we call Valparaiso.

1. A progressive city that makes decisions for the next generation; not the next election.
2. A city that invests generously and often in its roads, sidewalks, streetscapes, parks, infrastructure, buildings and people.
3. A city that makes economic development a priority so that high quality jobs become plentiful and so that our young people can find opportunity without having to leave our area.
4. A vibrant and beautiful historic downtown that is alive with activity, entertainment and commerce.
5. A healthy fit city that encourages its citizens to live well and stay active.
6. A compassionate city that meets vital human needs through strong nonprofit sector and a vibrant faith community.
7. A green city and a clean city that is committed to being good stewards of the environment and using energy wisely.

8. A welcoming city that sees growing diversity in its people as a strength and opportunity, and also shows hospitality to its visitors.
9. A city that celebrates a legacy of honest government and takes measures to ensure its integrity and good reputation.
10. A city that invests in older areas through infrastructure and development, but revitalizes those areas through effective infrastructure redevelopment and incentives.
11. A city that thinks regionally, knowing that certain goals such as transportation and economic development cannot be maximized without regional cooperation.
12. A safe city which promotes peaceful and responsible living in our neighborhoods, schools and public places.
13. A city that highly values education, cultural arts and has a spirit of lifelong learning.
14. A city that will act boldly and creatively and has the courage to dream out loud.

### III. Our Fiscal Future

Most cities are fighting fiscal challenges due to rising costs and limited resources. Valparaiso – while in better fiscal condition than many other cities – is no exception. Cities must be careful to find a healthy balance between frugality and investment. While it is prudent to keep government on a short fiscal chain, that chain can choke the life out of cities if it is too short to provide for proper reinvestment and service delivery. With limited funds, it's easy for city governments to get discouraged and not dream due to lack of resources. But that is not the Valparaiso way. We are living proof that cities can be transformed in a “creatively frugal manner.” Our simple recipe for success is:

1. Create a strong strategic plan to define priorities and projects.
2. Aggressively seek all available state and federal grants.
3. Forge partnerships with other governments and the private sector.
4. Budget carefully, and...
5. Execute well.

#### House Bill 1001

The enactment of House Bill 1001 (Property Tax Reform) in 2008 creates an additional challenge for Indiana cities. While that much-needed law ensures that your property tax bill will not exceed 1% of your assessed value, it will also reduce tax revenues to city governments. The city of Valparaiso (including TIF districts)

will see a yearly reduction in revenue of around \$1Million beginning in 2010 (out of \$17 Million in total tax revenues – a 9.5% decrease).

We are confident that we can meet this challenge without reducing services, laying off employees, or raising taxes. It will mean, however, that some capital and improvement projects may be delayed or not completed. Our 2009 budget was reduced by almost \$650K from what it normally would be. We are maintaining current staffing levels and not adding new positions, and are looking for efficiencies to reduce costs. Rest assured that we will find our way over this fiscal hurdle and come out stronger and leaner than ever.

### Economic Concerns

The United States is currently experiencing an economic crisis of great proportion, which is testing every branch and unit of government. A prolonged recession is possible and we must take measures to maintain our high level of services despite increasing costs and declining revenues. This will require a strong resolve to pursue efficiency in every task and a willingness to think “out of the box” to maintain our strong fiscal position.

### 2005 Plan Progress

Despite the constant challenge of untimely and uncertain tax revenue receipts, the city is in stronger financial condition than it was five years ago. We have passed a balanced budget every year and spent less than budgeted amounts. In 2004 we embarked on our cash flow recovery plan by creating a Rainy Day Fund to assist with our cash flow in lean times. The current balance is \$1.6 Million. Our goal of \$3.1 Million in unbudgeted reserves by 2012 is clearly within our reach. Our health insurance plan has performed better than budgeted over the last 3 years and is solvent. We have prepared a long term capital plan and completed and implemented the compensation and benefits study (which was updated in 2008). The Clerk’s office, under the direction of veteran Clerk-Treasurer Sharon Swihart, has implemented a number of cost saving initiatives including direct deposit of payroll checks, the recodification of our ordinances, expansion of our website capability, and the conversion of old records to electronic data files.

### 2009 Plan Fiscal Initiatives

1. Maintain current staffing levels in all departments. We plan on maintaining current staffing levels through at least the year 2010, and, if necessary, we may reduce staffing through attrition as long as it does not adversely affect level of service.
2. Continue to invest in technology and equipment that will allow us to operate more efficiently. Some examples would include: replacing older fleets with more efficient and cleaner operating vehicles, using LED lights in street lights and stop lights, expanding our E-Government initiative and improving intergovernmental communication through better technology.
3. Aggressively seek federal and state grants. Over the last five years we have achieved much success in securing state and federal grants to help rebuild our infrastructure. Effective grant research and grant writing

has enabled us to secure over \$27 Million in grants over the last five years. We must continue to seek and obtain governmental and private sector grants that help us further our strategic goals.

4. Engage the High Performance Government Group to conduct a city-wide survey of efficiency and responsiveness. This independent review will help us to streamline operations and become more responsive to our citizens.

5. Rainy Day Fund. Continue to increase our rainy day fund so that it reaches our goal of \$3.1 million by year end 2012. This will save the city at least \$45,000 per year.

### III. 2009 Strategic Plan Initiatives.

#### **A. Directing Growth Through Careful Planning and Ordinance Enforcement**

Valparaiso has experienced moderate but steady population growth for many decades. Our population grew from 24,414 in 1990 to 27,428 in 2000, and is estimated at 29,951 for 2007. Our 2010 population is estimated to exceed 32,000 due to natural growth and annexations. Thus, our growth rate is a healthy but sustainable 1 to 2% per year.

Being a county seat, and now an entrenched regional retail shopping center, our commercial growth has been more brisk than residential growth. This bodes well for our tax rate because it increases our assessed value. In 2004 our total assessed value was \$1.40 billion and in 2008 it was \$1.83 billion, an increase of 31% over 4 years.

Effective city planning involves not only the proper management of new growth, but also the vital redevelopment of existing buildings and real estate. A well-planned new commercial development cannot rectify the negative impact of a blighted one just miles away. Likewise, a beautiful new housing development does not ameliorate the negative effects of an older neighborhood that has been neglected or run down, and where property values have fallen. We are one city, and when one area suffers we all pay the price. Indeed, over the last four years we have invested most of our time and capital resources into *redevelopment*, rather than new development. It has been our highest priority. Redevelopment – improving what has become worn and ineffective -- is more difficult, but absolutely essential for a healthy city.

We met most of our annexation plan goals in the last term, bringing a number of areas into the city which now allows us to control our destiny. We still need to explore areas south and west of the city to determine if annexation is the best solution both for the city and their residents. The primary purpose of annexation is obtaining the ability to direct and manage the growth and maintenance of the land that is within or just contiguous to the city. Currently there are almost 400 undeveloped lots within the city limits, an estimated three-year supply. As such, it will remain a higher priority for us in the next five years to facilitate the construction of homes on those lots rather than adding many more through annexation of new residential developments.

This is also true for neighborhood commercial development. We have seen significant investment of commercial projects in Valparaiso over the last five years. Some of this is new development (north Calumet Avenue, and near the Valparaiso Marketplace) and some of it is part of our redevelopment plans (Cumberland

Crossing, central downtown and Eastgate). Unless persuaded otherwise by demographic data, we believe the best policy is to limit any significant expansion of neighborhood retail (through annexation or rezoning) in order to ensure that older commercial buildings are occupied and redeveloped with private funds. Our concern with significant expansions of both new commercial and residential developments is that existing housing and commercial stock would suffer. This is not intended to be a moratorium on new growth, just a statement that it must be regulated carefully to ensure a healthy balance.

#### 2005 Plan Progress.

1. Annexation. Thirteen annexations occurred in the last five years, increasing the geographical size of the city 30% (from 12 to 16 square miles) and the assessed value \$78 million at time of annexation and over \$842 million upon full build out of all areas proposed. The most significant annexations include the Westside, Northeast, and East annexations. Further action is needed regarding annexations on the south west side and a number of smaller unincorporated pockets within city limits.
2. Redevelopment of Declining Commercial Areas. The redevelopment of Eastgate is proceeding well with the construction of the roundabout and the improvements along Lincolnway from Roosevelt to the roundabout. The transformation of the blighted County Seat to Cumberland Crossing is approximately 80% complete. These ambitious projects have made a dramatic difference in the presentation of our city and are much appreciated by our citizens.
3. Vale Park Way. Completed in 2007, Vale Park Way has become a favorite auto route and pathway for our citizens, and recently was awarded the Governor's award for environmental excellence. It has been appropriately dubbed "The Two Minute Vacation."
4. Improve intersections and traffic flow. Four major intersections have been significantly improved over the last five years: (1) Sturdy and Lincolnway (roundabout), (2) Glendale and Calumet Avenue (3) Campbell and Bullseye Lake Road and (4) Silhavy and Evans. The intersections at Evans and Calumet Avenue and Glendale and Valparaiso Street are being improved as part of the Valparaiso Street Project. Also, all of the signal lights on Lincolnway through the downtown are being synchronized for better traffic flow with a \$550K grant received with a state transportation grant. Intersection needs are prioritized and more improvements are planned.
5. Housing Strategy. The 2003 strategic plan identified a need to improve the ratio between single family homes and apartments in Valparaiso. There have been very few new apartment units approved over the last five years (averaging less than 30 per year, considerably less than apartment growth in the 1980s and 1990s). This, coupled with the increase in single family units (450), has resulted in a higher percentage of owner-occupied homes in the city. This trend is expected to continue. New entry-level housing remains a challenge in Valparaiso. The city continues to partner with non profits to meet this need and encourages its developers to designate a portion of new housing developments to entry-level housing where appropriate.
6. Reevaluate Comprehensive Plan. In October 2008, we completed the first comprehensive overhaul and re-write of the city's land development regulations in the form of the new Unified Development ordinance. In addition, we completed a strategic plan and market analysis for our major roadway

corridors in the City which will serve as the basis for further enhancement of our major corridors such as US 30. We also adopted and began the process of implementing the Eastgate Plan including substantial improvements in the form of streetscape and façade improvements, and working with developers to approve the construction of a new mixed-use student housing development known as “Uptown East.”

### 2009 Plan Initiatives

1. Sidewalk Improvement Plan. The condition of our sidewalks and gaps in the system has been identified as a primary concern that needs to be addressed now. In 2009, the Planning and Public Works Departments will assess the condition of existing sidewalks and identify missing links in the citywide pedestrian network. We will work to seek funding sources to make necessary improvements and install new sections where needed in order to provide a safer, more complete pedestrian network throughout the City. A written long-term plan and a yearly budget of at least \$500,000 for sidewalk improvements are necessary to accomplish this goal.
2. Comprehensive Plan Re-write. A great deal of change and growth has taken place since the last comprehensive plan and growth management document was written in 2000 and 2003. Now that the Unified Development Ordinance has been adopted, and due to a lack of a comprehensive plan for the development and redevelopment of the land inside City limits, we need to focus efforts in 2010 on the complete re-evaluation and re-write of the City’s comprehensive land use plan. We will also revisit the City’s sign standards in 2009.
3. US 30/Morthland Drive Corridor Enhancement Strategies. The 2006 Strategic Plan and Market Analysis for Commercial Corridors identified a number of issues that deserve our attention in the next few years. As part of the implementation of the 2006 plan, in late 2009 we will initiate the development of a strategy for reinvestment, redevelopment, and enhancement of the US 30/Morthland Drive Corridor. Elements of this strategy will include recommendations for design standards, streetscape and signage improvements, and an overall enhancement of the aesthetic quality of the corridor which is the most heavily traveled by visitors and citizens alike.
4. Airport Zone Master Plan. Now that funding has been secured, in early 2009 we will begin work with our many project partners to draft the Airport Zone Master Plan. The plan has an economic development focus, centered on and around the Porter County Municipal Airport. Elements of the plan will include a market analysis, suggested land use and zoning policies and ordinances, transportation and infrastructure assessments, and identification of potential “shovel-ready” economic development sites as well as a set of implementation tools to carry out the plan.
5. Rental Registration. With a large number of rental properties in the City, it is becoming increasingly important for the City to ensure that these units will not become a detriment to the neighborhoods in which they are located. Working in concert with the Fire and Code Enforcement Department, we will investigate and develop a rental registration and inspection program in the City. After an initial investment to kick off the program, it should be self-sustaining, drawing necessary financial resources from inspection fees generated annually by the program.

6. Plan to redevelop abandoned gas stations. In 2009, we will identify abandoned and at-risk gas stations throughout the City and seek possible funding sources to environmentally clean-up and redevelop these sites into uses that will benefit the community. A strategy to encourage the redevelopment of these sites by private investors will be developed and undertaken.
7. Attainable housing initiative. The provision of affordable and attainable housing for our community workforce and seniors continues to be a challenge. In 2010 in partnership with our local housing providers and Valparaiso University we will create a plan to encourage the development of housing for our growing senior population and the workforce that keeps our community vital. We will explore opportunities for the redevelopment of infill sites and neighborhoods areas with adequate services and transportation options in the city to fulfill this need.
8. Develop a new comprehensive 5-year annexation strategy plan in 2009. In late 2009 the city will conduct a comprehensive study of annexation goals and priorities. The analysis will include a look at areas currently served by Valparaiso Utilities yet not in the city limits, island and peninsula areas around the city, as well as strategic areas for future economic development. The study will consider issues associated with annexation as well as pros and cons of annexing/not annexing certain areas and certain land use types. The impacts of HEA 1001 on annexation will be explored in a case study format. Finally, the 2005 Annexation Policy will be reviewed and suggestions made regarding possible revisions, if warranted.

## **B. A Vibrant Valparaiso Downtown**

Our historic downtown is vital to the reputation and vibrancy of the entire city. It is more than the central hub of Valparaiso, it is a symbol of how serious we are about remaking our city to better adapt to changing needs and living patterns. A city that invests in its downtown is a city that preserves its history while embracing its future.

This city administration is determined to complete a Renaissance to Historic downtown Valparaiso, with the goal of making it one of the premier destination spots in Northwest Indiana for food, entertainment and specialty shopping. We have invested over \$4 Million in streetscape improvements, markedly improving its ambiance and functionality. Our restaurants are flourishing and our generous façade grant program is helping downtown property owners to transform their building fronts to meet our heightened specifications. With more events, shops, restaurants and commerce happening in the downtown, it is quickly becoming the place to be. The new downtown park, planned for construction in 2009 will further beautify the area and provide a special place for events and gatherings, or just relaxing. No longer called a stepchild to new commercial developments, the downtown in Valparaiso is attracting more patrons and investment everyday.

### 2005 Plan Progress.

1. Implementation of Hyett-Palma Plan. Many aspects of the Hyett-Palma plan have been completed in the last five years including (1) Restoration of entire streetscape along Lincolnway (2) Passage of a bill allowing three-way liquor licenses to downtown eateries at minimal expense (3) Implementation in 2006 of a generous façade grant program (4) expansion and beautification of various downtown parking lots (5) creation of a full-time position for downtown special events and (6) adding a transit

oriented development area to the near west side. An attempt was made to create a Business Improvement District, and, although not successful, was supported by many downtown merchants and business owners, and ultimately led to the hiring of the downtown special events director.

2. Encourage more residential. The city encouraged developers to consider high density condo development in the near downtown. One project was completed: St. Andrews Square, which was the transformation of an empty historic church building into a condominium development. More buildings are target for this type of renovation as the demand for it increases.
3. Increase Downtown Activities. A full-time position of Downtown Special Events Director was created and funded in 2008 and has resulted in many new activities and events in the downtown. More are planned in the coming years.
4. Attract Additional Restaurants and Specialty Retail. Three new restaurants have come to the downtown in the last several years and others are expanding. At least two more restaurants are planning on opening in the downtown in 2009. Specialty retail shops have been added, but more opportunities need to be explored to enhance the downtown retail milieu.
5. Popcorn Festival. Prepare a plan to re-invent and re-invigorate Valparaiso's Popcorn Festival to better appeal to our citizens and our festival visitors.

#### 2009 Plan Initiatives.

1. Hyett-Palma Phase II. With much of the recommendations from the initial study complete, we will engage Hyett-Palma in 2009 to conduct a thorough review of our downtown to make recommendations to take it to the next level. Implementation of the Hyett-Palma Phase II plan will begin in 2010.
2. Downtown Park. In 2008 the city purchased the aging Lafayette Center building at the corner of Lafayette and Indiana Streets with the intention of creating a vibrant downtown park. The building was demolished and a planning firm, SEH, was hired to assist the city in designing the new park. The design will be completed in early 2009 with construction of the park occurring during 2009. The new downtown park will be a green showcase for our beautiful downtown and will be designed to accommodate many different types of events and gatherings. Primary funding will be Major Moves funds and private donations.
3. Redevelopment of existing buildings. With the downtown streetscape renovations complete, the redevelopment focus will shift to redevelopment and reuse of buildings. Generally, the private sector will drive these projects, but the city should provide the proper planning and incentives to achieve its goals. The city should identify the buildings that have opportunity for redevelopment and assist building owners and investors in bringing about improvements. This could mean use transitions such as commercial to condo developments or older commercial building to mixed use. Encouraging high density housing in the near downtown area will be a priority as more residents living in the downtown will fuel its economic vibrancy.

4. The façade grant program enacted in 2006 has been very popular and successful, and should be continued as funds are available to encourage downtown building owners to improve their façades consistent with our elevated standards.
5. Downtown Beautiful Initiative. As the centerpiece of Valparaiso and a symbol of the city's spirit, our downtown should have the highest standards in cleanliness, maintenance and visual appeal. A renewed effort by the city, in partnership with the building owners and merchants, to attain the highest level of aesthetic appeal and conditions is now needed to take our downtown reputation to the next level. The city will embark upon a plan to set and achieve these goals, further strengthening the economic future of our wonderful downtown.
6. Downtown Parking Plan. In 2009 we will develop a comprehensive downtown parking plan to insure that our parking rules and enforcement are customer and visitor friendly.

### **C. Continuing our Investment in City Infrastructure.**

When the first city strategic plan was adopted, it identified the urgent need to reinvest in our infrastructure. The plan called for a renewed commitment to improve our roads, streetscapes, sidewalks, sewers, parks and other vital infrastructure. The city administration embarked upon an ambitious plan to accomplish this goal and has achieved a high level of success. Many important projects were planned and completed, and much of it funded with over \$27 million in state and federal grants. This commitment to infrastructure investment is encouraging private investment, evidenced by significant private investment and steady increases in our city-wide assessed value. Good planning and investment in infrastructure by government generally results in private investment and economic vitality. This is happening all over our city.

#### 2005 Plan Progress.

1. Capital Plan. The city completed a five year capital plan to steer its efforts. Many of the major plan initiatives were accomplished, including the (1) Road recovery Plan (2) Construction of a New Police Facility (3) Downtown streetscape renovations (4) County Seat Redevelopment (5) Eastgate Improvements, with roundabout (6) Vale Park Extension (7) New Salt Storage Building (8) Valparaiso Street Project (9) Over 4 miles of city pathways, and (10) City Hall Interior Improvements. In addition, the city made significant improvements to its equipment needs including, (1) a new garbage collection system, (2) 37 new police squad cars (3) three ambulances and many other vehicles and equipment designed to increase our efficiency and reduce maintenance costs. An updated five-year capital plan is now in order to better identify our priorities for the next five years.
2. Road Recovery Plan. Identified in the 2003 Plan as the city's most pressing need, improving the condition of our roads was our highest priority. We implemented a Road Recovery Plan in 2004, and have invested around \$2 Million per year in improving our existing roads (compared to about \$300,000 per year prior to then). Partly funded by a \$9/per household garbage fee that was fully committed by ordinance to road repair, coupled with additional funds from our budget, we have paved over 47 miles of roads in the last four years (those in the worst condition), representing approximately one-third of our total roads. This has saved our citizens considerable dollars in car repairs and has made travel much easier all over town. While funds are in place now to keep pace with resurfacing our streets every 15 years, the large increase in asphalt prices due to spikes in crude oil is a concern

looking to the future.

3. Sidewalks. While some sidewalk improvements have occurred over the last five years (mainly in the downtown area), we have not delivered on sidewalk improvements to the degree we have on other infrastructure needs. The condition of many sidewalks in town is poor and there are a number of missing sidewalk sections that are important for school, park and shopping pedestrian travel. A comprehensive sidewalk plan and necessary funding must be a key component of the 2009 Strategic Plan.
4. Redevelopment Commission Projects. Our Redevelopment Commission had a banner five years, overseeing the most of the city's major infrastructure projects. In addition to significant state and federal grants, it supplied much of the funds to complete those projects. With the completion of many projects in 2008, the Commission has budgeted a number of projects over the next five years. See page 11, below for a complete listing.
5. Storm Water Plans. On September 12-15, 2008 the city experienced the largest single rainfall in recorded weather history – approximately 12 inches of rain in a 36 hour period caused by Hurricane Ike. The city experienced much flooding in streets, homes, businesses and parks. While no storm water system can handle 12 inch rains without any flooding, this event has identified certain weak areas in our system and has motivated us to accelerate our efforts to improve the overall system. To that end, we are collecting data from that rain event, and using it to update our 10-year storm water plan. That plan will be rolled out to the public in early 2009 for further input before it is implemented. The current \$3 monthly storm water fee has not been increased since its inception 10 years ago, and it must be reviewed to determine if it needs to be increased slightly in order to fund the new plan.
6. Facility Improvements. Two of the three facility needs set forth in the 2003 Plan were accomplished. A new modern police facility was completed in a visible downtown location in 2007 at a budgeted cost of \$4 Million. City Hall was given a complete interior facelift and some exterior improvements will be completed in 2009. However, improvements to our aging public works campus did not occur (other than the construction of our salt storage building). Rebuilding or relocating the campus is necessary to better protect our fleet and equipment and to allow our employees to work safely and efficiently. It now remains as our most pressing facility need and must be addressed in the next few years.

#### 2009 Plan Goals.

1. Continue Road Recovery Program. We must repave approximately 10 miles per year in order to ensure a maximum 15 year rotation for over 143 miles of city paved roads. The necessary funding must be allocated to achieve this goal notwithstanding the increase in asphalt prices. We must also place a higher priority on curb replacement in areas where it has become dysfunctional due to deterioration.
2. Sidewalk Repair Plan. Sidewalk repair and extension is one of the major priorities of our 2003 Plan that was not adequately met. The city shall develop a 5 year sidewalk improvement plan and allocated the necessary funds to achieve significant sidewalk and curb repair and extensions where most needed.

3. Capital Equipment Plan. The 5-year capital equipment plan completed in 2005 will be updated in 2009 in order to identify specific equipment needs and available funding options.
4. Public Works Campus. The renovation or relocation of our outdated public works campus is our highest facility need for the 2009 Strategic Plan. By the end of 2009 a plan should be adopted to construct and fund a modern and efficient public works campus capable of meeting the city's needs for at least the next 30 years.
5. Major Infrastructure Projects. The following major infrastructure projects are planned for the next five year period. These will be funded with TIF funds, state and federal grants and existing city funding sources. No new taxes will be required to complete the following projects.
  1. Phase IV of Eastgate - Laporte Avenue (2010)
  2. Calumet Avenue Streetcape improvements (2009)
    - between Bullseye Lake Road and five points, west side of road
    - Wall street to Glendale Blvd.
  3. Roundabout at Silhavy and Vale Park Road (2011)
  4. Five Points Roundabout (2011)
  5. Burlington Beach Road Improvements (2012)
    - Calumet Avenue to Rt. 49
  6. Calumet Avenue Reconstruction (2012)      \*Projects 5 and 6 are contingent upon the Medical Office Technology redevelopment area.
    - Bullseye Lake North to Burlington Beach Road
  7. Downtown Traffic Signal retrofits (2009)
  8. Lincolnway Lighting (2010)
    - Napoleon west to Joliet
    - Morgan east to Roosevelt
  9. Neighborhood Park Investment – Identify and prioritize replacement and repair needs for existing parks to keep them safe, inviting, and vibrant. Annual investments will address shelters, playgrounds, restrooms, playfields, accessibility issues, parking areas, landscape, and utilities.
  10. Hyett-Palma update on downtown (2009)

11. Roundabout Area Landscaping (2009)
12. Transit Oriented Development (2009)
13. Silhavy Road reconstruction, Phase II (2011)
14. Speculative Industrial Park (2009)
15. Union Street Storm Sewer (2009)
16. Morgan and Lincolnway Intersection (2009)

6. Storm Water Plan Revised and Reenergized. In 2008 we continued our consolidation of city functions by merging the storm water board into the utility board. As a result, the utility board now directs our water, sewer and storm water efforts for the entire city. This has facilitated a more holistic and integrated approach to these related functions and created more efficiencies and better coordination of service. By mid 2009, we will complete and adopt a new 10 year storm water plan in order to take our storm water system to the next level and reduce flooding in very significant rain events.

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

A vibrant and healthy community must first be a safe community. Our citizens deserve and expect state of the art police and fire departments and rely upon them for this most fundamental need. We strive to set the standard for professionalism, specialized training, use of modern technology and equipment and cooperation with other governmental units and the private sector.

2005 Plan Progress

1. Community Approach. The 2005 plan emphasis on community policing has brought a new level of cooperation between our citizens and the men and women who keep their neighborhoods, schools and businesses safe. Many new programs were created to further this goal including: National Night Out, Project Safeway, Volunteers in Police Service (VIPS), Valpo Alert System and Bike and Foot Patrols.
2. Training and Accreditation. Advanced leadership training has taken place in both the fire and police departments. Over 20 officers graduated from PELA (Police Executive Leadership Academy), and four administrators graduated from the Northwestern University Center for Public Safety and Command. Police accreditation under CALEA began in 2005 and is expected to be attained in 2010. In 2008, our fire department and water department earned a lower ISO rating (from 6 to 3) which will result in reduced insurance costs to businesses and residents.
3. Intergovernmental Cooperation. In 2007, we merged our 911 dispatching service with the county resulting in a savings to city taxpayers in excess of \$250,000 per year. Also, in 2008, our Fire Department began providing ambulance service to most city and Center Township residents which has resulted in faster response times and a more efficient and economical ambulance system, due to the

fact that much of the personnel and equipment needed to provide the service already exists within the department. We have enhanced our presence in the Valparaiso School system by continuing the Police Resource Officer program and by creating a new Adopt a School program where each school is assigned an officer for regular meetings and presentations. Finally, our police department was partnered with local police agencies from Lake and Porter Counties and is part of the Northwest Indiana Major Crimes Task Force.

4. Facility and Equipment. The new police facility was completed in 2007 and serves as an exemplary model of efficiency and cost effectiveness. Our officers are much better equipped and now more efficient with our new in-fleet Electronic Ticketing System. We have added 37 replacement police cars to our fleet in the last five years, four ambulances and various other vital pieces of equipment. Our new third fire house, being built without debt in partnership with the Center Township Trustee, is under construction and will be in operation in 2009.
5. Personnel. In 2005 we completed a comprehensive compensation and benefits study. The results of that study revealed that we needed into increase the base pay of our fire and police personnel in order to attract and retain the most qualified and talented officers. In 2006 through 2008, we made those upward adjustments through careful budgeting, and as a result our officers are paid more fairly and we have been able to attract highly qualified candidates and retain our current officers. This has been especially important for the fire department as it relates to the delivery of ALS Transport Service. Every new hire has joined the force with the EMT-Paramedic Certification – a requirement of running a transport service.

#### 2009 Plan Goals.

1. Drug Task Force. Illegal drug use is a serious and growing problem in our county. In late 2008 we added an additional officer to the County Drug Task Force and will continue to support the task force with manpower, information and other resources. More initiatives and resources will be set forth in 2009 to address this community-wide problem.
2. Complete CALEA certification. The police department will complete the four year CALEA (Commission on Accreditation of Law Enforcement Agencies) certification requirements by summer of 2010. This certification process will improve our professional standards and officer development and will designate us as an elite police department.
3. Fire Territory. Explore the opportunities to collaborate with other governmental entities to create a fire territory or similar concept to extend the service to adjacent areas in an efficient and effective manner.
4. Emergency Planning In 2008, city personnel fulfilled federally mandated NIMS training (National Incident Management System). This certification requirement must be maintained by the city for continued eligibility of federal grants. The NIMS training will also serve as the fundamental Citywide “command structure” in dealing with larger scale unexpected emergencies. In conjunction with NIMS

training, a citywide emergency plan will be completed by late summer 2009. The emergency plan will be a formal document outlining departmental responsibilities in the mitigation of any type of emergency that may arise. The emergency plan will focus on shared resources and inter-departmental cooperation and will serve the City's needs for years to come.

#### E. Parks and Recreation: A Valparaiso Legacy.

Valparaiso enjoys a legacy of Parks and Recreation that is the envy of other communities. Our extensive park lands and recreational facilities and programs are a reflection of our desire to live healthy, active and balanced lives. Careful maintenance of these resources and a constant attention to the changing needs of our citizens is required to ensure excellence and promote active lifestyles.

#### 2005 Plan Progress.

1. Pathways/Bikeways. As our highest priority for the 2005, we are pleased to report that after creating a pathway master plan we added almost 4 miles of pathways within the city. The pathway incorporated into the Vale Park Way, is a new linear park that connects the Campbell Street Pathway to our new loop around the "Urschel Field." While much progress has been made, we must continue to commit available funds each year to complete our pathway plan to connect parks, schools and neighborhoods. In addition, we must continue to add more bike paths along key city streets.
2. Master Plans. Master plans for Creekside Park and Foundation Meadows Park were completed in 2006. An additional 68 acres of land next to Creekside was purchased for future development and a new and innovative children's playground "Butterfly Park" was constructed at Foundation Meadows. In 2005 the city adopted an impact fee ordinance which provides revenue from newly constructed homes for park development maintenance to serve those homes.
3. Fit City Initiative. We created the Fit City Initiative in 2005 and it continues to provide our citizens with new programs and ideas. In 2007, we created Elder Styles in partnership with Pines Village to augment our services to seniors at our Banta Senior Center and beyond. In 2007, the City Council passed a non smoking ordinance, the first in Northwest Indiana.
4. Park Facilities. See [www.valparaisoparks.org](http://www.valparaisoparks.org) for a complete listing of park department accomplishments and accolades.
5. Impact Fees. In 2005 a Park Impact Fee was approved by the Park Board and by City Council to provide significant capital funding for new Park infrastructure to serve the growing needs of the city. The fee has been used to provide critical funding for Pathways and for playgrounds.

#### 2009 Plan Goals

1. Downtown Park. Complete, by early 2009, the conceptual planning of the new downtown park to be situated at the corner of Indiana and Lafayette, and construct the initial primary phase in early 2009.

2. Infrastructure Improvements. Identify and prioritize replacement and repair needs for existing parks to keep them safe, inviting, and vibrant. Five year annual investments will address shelters, playgrounds, restrooms, playfields, accessibility issues, parking areas, landscape, and utilities. Strategies will also address maintenance equipment and personnel critical to sustain ongoing investments. Fulfill the Creekside Master Plan with the Park Foundation-led final private fund payments for the adjacent 75-acre Vitoux property.
3. Pathways and Bike Lanes. Continue the completion of our pathway master plan by adding over 5 miles of pathways and bike lanes by year end 2012.
4. Program Development. Introduce new programs that meet community needs and national trends. Expand Valpo's Fit City Initiative, Elderstyle Partnerships, and opportunities to host state and regional tournaments and competitions.
5. Green Parks. Establish "green environment" best practices throughout our park system, including such practices as "no mow" areas, restoration of open space, tree plantings, ground water and energy conservation and recycling.
6. Re-certification of Impact Fees. By 2010 the Park Board and City Council will consider re-certification of Impact Fees. This allows some share cost of growing infrastructure needs to new development that helps offset impacts to current tax payers and facility users.

F. Economic Development: Creating a Climate That Cultivates Business and Employment Opportunity in Valparaiso.

The economic vitality of our city is dependent upon the strength of its employers and the job opportunities within the Northwest Indiana and Chicagoland regions. The three over arching goals are to (1) help our current businesses and nonprofit employers grow (2) expand job opportunities by attracting new business to Valparaiso and incubating new business here, and (3) Improve our ability to connect to business and employment prospects of the Chicago world class economy. Government does not create jobs. It can, however, help create an entrepreneurial climate and the proper incentives to encourage business development concomitant job creation. Proper planning by government and serious infrastructure investment creates a positive business climate. Enlarging commuting and communication options to facilitate easier access to job opportunities in Chicago and Lake County can also add to Valparaiso's economic vitality. One thing is certain; we cannot afford inaction when it comes to economic development.

2005 Plan Progress.

1. Partnerships. Job retention, creation and attraction are a team effort. The City must continue to cultivate key partnerships with the Valparaiso Economic Development Corporation, the Chamber of Commerce, Valparaiso University, Ivy Tech and Purdue University North Central. Most notably the Redevelopment Commission is a key partner in the economic vitality of our city with their investment in infrastructure. The recently created Downtown Dining Marketing Committee and the Valparaiso Committee on Festivals and Events are critical to enhancing the quality of life for our citizens by

strengthening our historic downtown.

2. Business Incubator. Creating an “entrepreneurial environment” has been a key goal of this administration from the outset. With the opening of the Entech Innovation Center in 2009, the City will be home to its first business incubation program. With major investments from the Valparaiso Economic Development Corporation, and partnering with renowned incubator developer Pittsburgh-Gateways, Entech will begin its mission of “fostering an environment of entrepreneurship, innovation, creativity, and a wealth of essential business resources to accelerate growth.”
3. Technology Park. The City will have the application for the Certified Technology Park completed and ready for submission by March 15<sup>th</sup> 2009. Essentially, designation as a Certified Tech Park allows the city to recapture certain state and local tax revenue which can be invested in the development of the park. The recent expansion plans for Livemercial (purchase of dome on Mariposa Drive) and the Entech Innovation Center grand opening strengthen our application. Key investment priorities for the Certified Technology park will be technology infrastructure i.e. fiber, that will assist in attracting high paying technology jobs, and most importantly, help to protect our existing technology positions.
4. Education. Continue support of school system and its drive for excellence, recognizing that our school system is vital to economic development. Companies want to locate in communities with superior schools like those in Valparaiso. Purdue North Central has announced plans for expansion in our city because a high percentage of their students live and work in Valparaiso. This expansion strengthens our higher education footprint along with our other four-year institution, Valparaiso University. Ivy Tech’s new 185,000-square foot campus built in Eastport Centre marks a major investment (\$38 million) in public post-secondary education and they will be a key partner for employers in the Valparaiso region with respect to workforce development and training.

#### 2009 Plan Goals

1. Entech Incubator. See above item #2.
2. Assisting Our Existing Employers. This objective will primarily occur through the support of the Valparaiso Economic Development Corporation by the City. The VEDC will continue to support existing employers in a variety of ways, including but not limited to hosting quarterly educational seminars on an assortment of business issues. The gathering and recording of quality and credible market data is essential for successful investment in Valparaiso. The VEDC will remain the community's data bank for market critical information that supports and sustains investment. This information will be accessed through links to regional and state websites. The VEDC will continuously seek to form and participate in collaborative efforts to advance regional economic development.
3. Infrastructure. As stated above, the government does not create jobs. However, this administration believes that government does play a role in creating an environment in which job retention, expansion and creation take place. Moreover, we believe that public investments in infrastructure are essential

and a responsibility of government in order to promote economic development.

- (a) We will continue to promote the need for “shovel ready” sites, primarily on the southeastern border of our city. Our largest business park, Eastport Centre, has been very successful and is nearly sold out. Increasing our inventory of shovel ready sites will be a goal for 2009.
- (b) The Valparaiso Economic Development Corporation has led in the creation of the Porter County Airport Development Taskforce to develop a strategic economic development plan for the airport and surrounding vicinity. The funding for this study has been secured and will commence in spring of 2009. The Airport is an economic engine of its own and the City is committed to working to maximize its potential.
- (c) With our low taxes, high quality of life and superb schools, Valparaiso is positioned nicely as an ideal place for those who work in Chicago but want to raise a family in a suburb. The expansion of the South Shore Rail line from Chicago to Valparaiso is a key infrastructure investment from which Valparaiso, Northwest Indiana and the State will all benefit. In addition to having a solid base of employers, the added benefit of being near a world class city like Chicago is a huge competitive advantage for Valparaiso. We will continue to advocate expansion of the South Shore.

#### G. Green City Valparaiso: Good Stewards of our Environment.

Valparaiso citizens have a high regard for their environment and expect their city officials to use effective and innovative environmental stewardship practices as they carry out the duties of their office. This includes reducing the environmental impact of service delivery, employing energy conservation measures, and setting an example for exploring and implementing sound environmental practices in all aspects of city services.

Valparaiso has a legacy of good environmental stewardship including a comprehensive recycling program that diverts almost 50% of its waste through recycling and an award winning wellhead protection plan that protects our drinking water supply. However, we must strive to expand our efforts to protect our environment and implement sustainable practices throughout our city departments. Our goal is to be viewed as an innovative leader in environmental stewardship.

#### 2005 Plan Progress.

1. In 2006, the city created an Energy Task Force Commission to advise the mayor and city administration on how to reduce energy consumption and reduce the impact of energy use on our environment. In 2007, the Commission completed a report of its findings which is has been used to improve our efforts. (the full report can be found at [www.valpo.us](http://www.valpo.us)) The Commission continues to meet monthly and make recommendations to the mayor. Some of the changes already implemented include:
  - Completion of an energy audit on City Hall
  - Adoption of bio fuels in most city fleets
  - Reduction in the size and model of police fleet to improve gas mileage

- Expanded recycling efforts with large bins and comingling
- Use of energy efficient LED street lights, and roundabouts
- Creation of public transportation system with V-Line and Chicago Dash
- Implementation of the Save A Light Program (compact fluorescent)

2. Adoption of Environmentally Friendly Practices. Our planning and engineering departments have welcomed new ideas such as bio swales and rain gardens. Our public works department is taking measures to reduce the amount of salt released into the environment during winter months. Some other examples are as follows:

- We have installed one roundabout and are planning more, which have been proven to reduce vehicle emissions by eliminating the time cars sit idling at standard stop/signalized intersections. They also eliminate energy consumption by not having to power a signal.
- We will be installing LED street lights which use a fraction of the energy required by standard lamps. Also, we've been working to change out traffic signals from incandescent to LED.
- We look to reduce pavement widths wherever possible on roadways and in parking lots, which reduces the amount of impervious surfaces throughout the city, thereby reducing runoff and urban heat.
- We have emphasized pedestrian/bicycle pathways in new projects.
- We are looking to implement a tree planting program as part of the EPA's storm water quality management program.
- The city has responded to the CLEAN Communities Challenge. City employees through an Indiana Department of Environmental Management has developed a plan to address storm water management, sustainable landscape initiatives, water conservation, waste reduction, and improved recycling -- including the recycling of light bulbs containing mercury, , The utility department has created a Water Conservation Task Force which is developing a conservation plan.

### 2009 Plan Initiatives.

1. 70% Recycling Goal by 2011. Implement a comprehensive plan in 2009 to increase our diversion to recycling from 50% to 70% by the end of 2011.
2. Reduce gasoline and Fuel Consumption in city vehicles by 5% by 2011. This can be accomplished by employing the recommendations of the Energy Commission including adopting anti-idling policies, reducing the number of trips through efficiency and accelerating the conversion to alternative and more efficient vehicles.
3. Reduce the 2007 aggregate energy use of city buildings and structures by 10% by the year 2011. Energy Commission suggestions to attain this goal include an energy efficient purchasing program, careful management of exterior and interior lighting, ensuring that all buildings have comprehensive preventative maintenance plans and efficient HVAC systems, and conducting energy audits on buildings where appropriate.

4. Create an Environmentally Friendly and Energy Conscious Employee and City Culture. Implementing good stewardship practices starts at the top but must be embraced by all city employees and citizens to make a significant impact. We must welcome constructive criticism and alternative practices to ensure that we are not held captive to old ways of doing things. The city must use its communication resources and its community pulpit to promote good stewardship attitudes and principles and to implement these priorities in every department.
5. Continue to Expand Public Transportation Alternatives. See section below.

#### H. Expanding Public Transportation Alternatives.

As Valparaiso and the region continue to grow, so must public transportation alternatives. However, it is essential that public transportation be efficient, affordable and responsive to the needs of citizens. In addition, the need to expand mass transportation options to the city of Chicago is a must. A tremendous economic engine, Chicago is a city that offers world class employment, business and cultural activities. Valparaiso must connect to those opportunities in every feasible and cost-effective way.

#### 2005 Plan Progress.

1. New Commuter Rail to Valparaiso. The mayor and his administration made every effort to support the proposed West Lake Corridor Rail from Valparaiso to Chicago. While much progress has been made, the new line is not funded. Recent information suggests that the first phase to southern Lake County is most viable for federal funding at this time. Hopefully, the funding will be approved in 2009 for that phase, which may well improve the chances of the line to Valparaiso in the near future. The mayor has taken the position that the Westlake line is good for Valparaiso and the entire region and will continue to support its implementation.

In late 2008, the City began operation of a commuter coach bus service into the Chicago Loop for the benefit of area commuters. This is proving to be a very popular alternative to the South Shore and is growing in ridership. Currently the service averages about 40 commuters per day and growing. A \$1.7 Million grant was obtained from the Regional Development Authority for the construction of the commuter bus station in the near west side of Valparaiso's downtown area, resulting in continued redevelopment of our historic downtown.

6. City Bus Service. The bus service set forth in the 2003 strategic plan called for a modest city-wide bus service to meet the needs of Valpo citizens. That service began operation in September of 2007 and has already surpassed its initial ridership goal of 5,000 riders per month, now averaging almost 8,000 riders per month. A partnership with Valparaiso University was created to help fund the service and meet the transportation needs of students and faculty. The V-Line ridership continues to grow and is meeting the needs of residents including those with disabilities and lower incomes.
7. Support for Gary/Chicago Regional Airport. The mayor and his administration have supported one of the RDA's most pressing initiatives, the expansion of the Gary/Chicago Airport. Hopefully, in 2009 there will be significant progress on this undertaking.

## 2009 Initiatives.

1. V-Line Enhancement. Complete the creation of the V-Line City-Wide Transit System with the capital improvements, including shelters for stops with the highest ridership. Solidify the partnership with Valparaiso University with a long-term agreement in early 2009. Implement an innovative ridership marketing plan in 2009 to continue to build ridership. Ensure our local funding match through effective long term budgeting.
2. Chicago Dash. Build ridership on the Chicago Dash with continued marketing and promotions. Expand the service with additional buses and departure and arrival times to accommodate increased ridership. Explore partnerships with other cities to expanded routes and opportunities.
3. RDA Initiatives. Support the regional transportation and economic development opportunities of the primary RDA initiatives: Gary/Chicago Regional Airport, Marquette Plan and Westlake Corridor commuter train. Explore opportunities to partner with the Regional Bus Authority regarding V-Line and Chicago Dash.

## I. Water Supply and Management: Valparaiso Utilities.

All life depends on water; a clean, affordable and ample supply of water is a must for our citizens. Valparaiso is one of few Northwest Indiana cities that owns its own water utility. Over the last four years, the Valparaiso City Utilities (VCU) completed a consolidation of its water, water reclamation (sewer system and plant) and storm water functions to create a more efficient, integrated and coordinated water supply and management system.

## 2005 Plan Progress.

1. Merger of Water Functions. The merger of the water and water reclamation departments occurred in 2006 and the storm water function was merged into the Valparaiso Community Utilities in 2008.
2. Water Supply and Hardness Analysis. In 2007, the VCU engaged a firm to conduct a complete long term analysis of water supply options and hardness issues. Our current groundwater supply capacity was deemed more than adequate for the long term needs of the city. To view the entire study, go to [www.valparaisoutilities.org](http://www.valparaisoutilities.org).
3. Capital Projects. Phase II of the reclamation plant expansion will be completed in 2009. The projects set forth in the 2002 bond issue for water system upgrades were completed in 2007. A long term control plan for CSO remediation was approved by the state in 2007 and is being implemented.

## 2009 Plan Initiatives.

1. Work Management System. As a part of VCU's reengineering program begun in the late 1990s, the utility plans to fully implement a work management system (WMS). By the end of 2009, VCU will have the WMS in place and operational. The WMS could potentially include the Engineering Department for tracking of permits, documents and projects.
2. New Wellfield – As a part of VCU's long range plan, VCU plans to construct a new wellfield in the vicinity of the Airport Plant. This wellfield has the potential of supplying all of the city's raw water supply

for the next 50 years. In 2009, efforts will be made to further plan this project.

3. Water and Sewer Main Infrastructure Replacement Program. VCU will be seeking ways to fund an Infrastructure Replacement Program to begin replacing aged water and sewer mains in our system. The immediate goal is to raise \$500,000 per year for these upgrades.
4. Upgrade Biosolids Program. VCU is in the planning stages of improving our existing Biosolids Program (land application) to a Class A program, which will turn Biosolids into a compost. Through partnering efforts, WRD will be working with the Public Works Department, Parks Department and County Solid Waste Program to identify city-wide efficiencies and potential end users of the compost. In 2009, WRD will complete a business plan for this program.
5. Storm Water Plan Revised and Reenergized. By mid 2009, we will complete and adopt a new 10 year storm water plan in order to take our storm water system to the next level and reduce flooding in very significant rain events.
6. InWARN – Emergency preparedness is a priority for VCU. VCU continues its commitment to a state-wide network of water and wastewater utilities that stands ready to assist one another in case of a catastrophic disaster. Also, VCU plans to assist the city’s emergency and public works agencies in forming and implementing an emergency management system. In 2009, VCU will continue to assist InWARN in increasing the number of Indiana water and wastewater utilities joining the program.
7. Succession Planning – In planning for the future, an organization must identify emerging leadership to assure the plan is carried out. In 2009, VCU will identify and develop those emerging leaders.
8. Water Conservation Plan. Valparaiso City Utilities will begin the implementation of the Water Conservation Plan by starting a public awareness and education program.

#### J. Visual Valpo

It’s often the “little things” that make a city look clean, vibrant and progressive. Attention to detail is important for Valparaiso to look its best. Now that many of the major redevelopment projects of the first strategic plan are completed or near completion, we can turn our attention and resources in greater measure to smaller items that, together, can make a big difference in the health and vitality of our city.

Visual Valpo will require a stronger Code Enforcement effort to ensure that property is well maintained throughout the city. It will also require the focus and involvement of every city employee to report and correct conditions that are not acceptable. Finally, we want to involve all citizens in this effort as we take “Valpo Pride” to the next level.

#### 2005 Plan Progress.

1. Code Enforcement and “Visual Valpo.” In 2008 we added an additional part-time position in code enforcement to step up our enforcement efforts. Several significant enhancements have been made to the

City's code enforcement program, including the introduction of "TrakIT," our new complaint and case management software being used in the office as well as in the field by our recently hired part-time code enforcement inspector. Other code enforcement efforts have resulted in a better visual landscape in the city, including far less garbage, signage, and the removal of unsafe buildings.

2. Visual Valpo Program. In late 2008, the City began its formal Visual Valpo program to identify opportunities to improve specific conditions around the city. A specific email address and voice mail was created to make it easy to report a problem or poor condition and each employee was given a window shield sticker to remind them to observe as they travel around town and to make it easy to report problems. A system was set up to prioritize and correct the problems. In 2009 we plan to expand this opportunity to citizens for better coverage.

#### 2009 Plan Initiatives.

1. Code Enforcement. In addition to further efforts to continue to fine tune the code enforcement program, in 2009 and beyond we will continue to develop our relationship with non-profit and faith-based organizations to provide for "compassion-based code enforcement" opportunities and options. In 2010 we will also undertake the process of seeking funding for and the development of a rental registration program for the city in partnership with the Valparaiso Fire Department.
3. Visual Valpo Program. Fine tune the Visual Valpo Program created in 2008 and expand it in 2009 to allow and encourage citizens to report conditions that need attention. Create a desired sense of urgency to make Valpo look its very best and to set high standards for maintenance, cleanliness and order.

#### K. Communication and Information Technology.

Effective communication is essential for success. Communication strategy and vehicles have changed dramatically with technology in recent years. Governments must treat effective communication as a prerequisite for progress; not an afterthought. Also, communication must be two way: Citizens must be able to communicate with their elected officials as well. This is vital to ensuring that government is acting with the support of its citizens.

Much change has occurred in our city over the last five years. This change, though disrupting at times, found strong support among most citizens. We worked hard at communicating these changes to our citizens and seeking their input before taking action. This type of communication must continue to make sure that Valpo continues its progress.

#### 2005 Plan Progress.

1. Website. We have continued to expand our website over the last five years and it is generally regarded as one of the best and most comprehensive websites for a midsized city. It is updated on a daily basis and most all of the maintenance is done "in house." We have made it more interactive and helpful. As more citizens look to our website for information we will continue to expand it and make sure it is easy to use. In 2009 we will engage an outside consultant to critique our website and offer suggestions.

2. Newsletter. In 2006 we began publishing a quarterly newsletter “City Talk” which is mailed to each resident. This has been well received and a good tool for keeping residents informed.
3. Accessibility. Our “available on demand” policy with the media has created a very favorable relationship resulting in informative and regular reporting of city matters. Much information about city initiatives and projects can be found daily in our local newspapers. Also, in 2005 Mayor Costas started quarterly town hall meetings called “City Talk Live.” The city Leadership Team and employees strive in every way to be “surprisingly responsive” to citizen requests and look for new and effective ways to communicate with residents.
4. GIS Plan. In 2006 the city developed a comprehensive city-wide GIS Plan and Implementation Manual. Implementation of the Plan began in 2007, and a great deal of progress has been made in the development of the framework for the city-wide GIS as well as several important data layers including aerial photography, streets, utilities, zoning and more. We purchased GIS software, GPS units and several employees received training on the GIS and GPS systems.

#### 2009 Plan Initiatives

1. Website. Continue to expand website and make it more interactive. Engage a website expert in 2009 to critique our site and make recommendations to improve it.
2. City Talk Live. In 2009 we will reinvent “City Talk Live” to improve citizen attendance and make this event more interactive.
3. Community Survey. We will engage Valparaiso University again in 2009 to update our ongoing city survey to continue to monitor the needs and view of our citizens.
4. Information Technology Upgrades. Implement Microsoft Exchange server for email and calendar sharing city wide and complete Microsoft Exchange project for the VCU which is currently in progress. Find and implement less expensive and faster connectivity sources between city departments by using fiber optics and wireless bridge technologies. Create city department intranet for easier information retrieval and to avoid data redundancy. Continue to build connection redundancy between departments using secure VPN technology. Create citizen information kiosk at City Hall and possibly other locations in the city.
5. GIS. Ongoing development of the city-wide GIS will result in the development of several more significant data layers to serve various city departments, agencies, partners and the public. In 2009 we will work with the County to develop a data sharing agreement and work to integrate some of the county’s GIS data and auditor’s records including parcel mapping and property ownership and taxation information. A web portal will also be developed, ultimately providing shared access via intranet for city employees, and access to information for the public by way of an internet based mapping system.

## IV. Conclusion

Strategic Plans are about the future. Without a plan, a city administration tends to be reactive and complacent. The process of compiling this plan has required us to seek input from citizens, look objectively at ourselves, prioritize objectives and think deeply about the future of our city.

But a plan that is not methodically executed is like a song that is composed and never played. Our efforts now will be unified and focused on completing the goals set forth above – to ensure that Valparaiso continues to prosper and grow in a holistic and sustainable way.

JFK said “There can be no progress if people have no faith in tomorrow.” We, as citizens of Valparaiso, have good reason to be bullish about the future of our great city. For by the sweat, courage, compassion and persistence of our forefathers, we enjoy the benefits of our community, and our embrace of those values that will leave a city to our children no less resilient than that which we inherited.