



City of
Valparaiso, Indiana

“Central Park” Comes to Valpo

Downtown Park will Take Shape in 2009

It won't be shadowed by skyscrapers, but “Central Park” is coming to Valparaiso. The new downtown park, located at the intersection of Indiana Avenue and Lafayette Street, will be a community green space where residents and visitors of all ages can enjoy year-round activities, such as summer evening movies, autumn noontime concerts, and winter holiday light displays.

“We’re excited about having a downtown spot to gather and host events,” said Mayor Jon Costas. “The excellent location and amenities will add vitality to our downtown,” he said. Preliminary plans include an interactive water feature, brick plaza and walkways, community comfort station (bathrooms), and landscaped seating areas. Other possible upgrades could include an outdoor performance pavilion, surround sound, and decorative lighting.

The Parks Department has been enlisting the public in the design process, presenting designs in four public forums, as well as online. “People have really responded to the idea of a downtown park. We’re excited to have the community participate in the design process,” said Steve Doniger, Valpo’s Director of Parks and Recreation. The drawings are currently being fine tuned to reflect community wishes, and construction plans and cost estimates will be available early in 2009. “We’re thinking that we’ll be building in phases – as funding is available,” said Doniger. Construction is expected to begin in summer 2009.

Central Park will be funded through a public/private partnership. The first \$20,000 has already been donated – a gift from the Mayor Jon Costas’ annual charity ball event. The Parks Department will also pursue any available grants for additional funding. To view preliminary plans for Central Park or get involved in fundraising, visit www.valparaisoparks.org.

CITY TALK

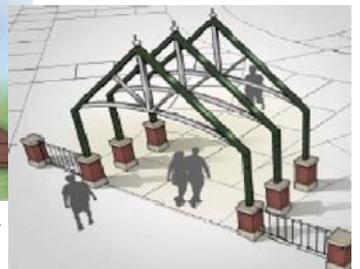
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The community is reviewing plans for a new Central Park to be located downtown at the intersection of Indiana Avenue and Lafayette Street. Preliminary plans include an interactive water feature, brick plaza and walkways, community comfort station (bathrooms), and landscaped seating areas. Other possible upgrades could include an outdoor performance pavilion, surround sound, and decorative lighting. The project will be a public/private partnership, jump started with a gift from Mayor Costas’ annual charity ball.



To view preliminary plans for Central Park, visit www.valparaisoparks.org.

Dear Citizens:

These cold days of winter are a great opportunity to plan and dream about what's to come this year. We're definitely dreaming of warmer days ahead as we plan our new downtown park. We're so excited to see this take shape at the corner of Indiana Ave. and Lafayette St. What was once a vacant building will be

Visit www.valpo.us for upcoming City Talk Live dates.

transformed into a green space for the community to enjoy. We're picturing an interactive water feature and lots of spots to host events like the Farmer's Market, summer movie nights, and winter light displays.



We're also continuing to plan transformations along East Lincolnway and Calumet Avenue. It's been a lot of work,

but just seeing the buried utilities and clean streetscapes makes it all worthwhile. Watch it continue to take shape in 2009.

I know it's cold outside, but take a ride out to one of our parks with sledding hills and join in the fun. If golf is more your style, consider a tee time at our indoor interactive golf facility at Creekside Golf Course. Winter is a great time to take advantage of the wonders we have right here at home.

Sincerely,

Jon Costas

Jon Costas,
Mayor

ChicaGo Dash Delivers Express Bus Service Continues to Grow

Valpo's own ChicaGo Dash is cruising along as the express bus service to Chicago continues to grow in ridership and customer satisfaction. "I have noticed that I am arriving at work in a better mood. I know this is due to the peace and quiet I am experiencing on the bus," said one rider. Another appreciates the convenience of express service, saying "I leave Chicago at the same time now as I did on the train – 5:00 pm. I get home 45 minutes earlier – 6:15 instead of 7:00. I am now actually eating dinner with my family on weeknights, and it is because of the bus."

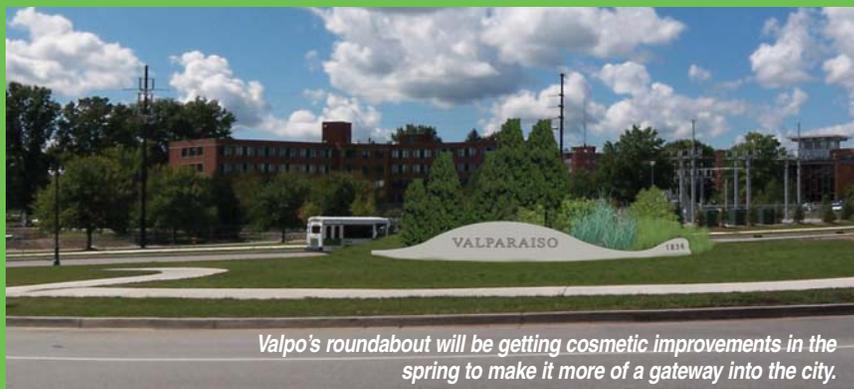


ChicaGo Dash offers roomy, airplane-style seats, Wi-Fi internet service, and free parking at Valpo's Village Station – all for just \$7.50 per ride. The city added a Cultural Excursion Express bus on Saturdays through the holidays.

Weekday service continues to grow, departing from Valparaiso's new Village Station, located adjacent to the Franklin House at 58 South Campbell Street. ChicaGo Dash offers two daily departures from Valparaiso – at 5:45 am and 6:15 am, with three stops – at Congress & Financial, LaSalle & Wacker, and Michigan & Randolph. Buses depart from Chicago daily at 4:45 pm and 5:15 pm.

To guarantee a seat, purchase tickets online at www.chicagodash.com. Any available tickets may also be purchased from the kiosk in the Village Station 30 minutes prior to departure.

For more information, call 1-877-7GO-DASH.



Valpo's roundabout will be getting cosmetic improvements in the spring to make it more of a gateway into the city.

Valpo “Ahead of the Curve” on Roundabouts

Valparaiso has rounded the learning curve on roundabouts since the city's first traffic circle opened to traffic last September. Replacing the city's awkward triangle intersection at LaPorte Avenue/Sturdy Road/Lincolnway has reduced accidents at the site by more than 66% -- down from 21 in 2006 to just seven accidents this year. “Without a doubt, the roundabout allows traffic to move more quickly and safely through that area,” said Mike Grennes, Public Information Officer for the Valparaiso Police Department.

While Valpo's roundabout may have been the first in the region – and the first on an Indiana state road – roundabouts are gaining in popularity nationwide as a smart and safe way to move traffic. “Not only do roundabouts reduce accidents, but they also reduce the severity of accidents,” said Tim Burkman, Valpo's City Engineer. “Intersections with traffic lights make horrific accidents possible when someone blows a light. But when rare accidents do happen at roundabouts, they're minor fender benders because of the lower speeds,” he said. “Not only are roundabouts the way to go for public safety, but they're popular because they're a ‘greener’ alternative. Roundabouts reduce emissions because they reduce idling time,” he said.

Roundabouts have become so popular that the Indiana Bureau of Motor Vehicles added a “how to drive a roundabout” section to the state's newly updated driving manual. “There are enough roundabouts in our state and surrounding areas that we now cover it in our basic driving manual,” said Dennis Rosebrough, Director of Communications for the Bureau of Motor Vehicles. (See “How to Drive a Roundabout” on this page).

“Although we've gotten phone calls about rumored problems with emergency rigs or school buses, the truth is that even the city's largest fire engines and school buses are navigating well in the roundabout,” said Mayor Jon Costas. “With accidents down and efficiency up, we're truly paving the way for a better way of moving traffic,” he said.



How to Drive a Roundabout:

In a roundabout, all traffic flows in a single, clockwise direction. Here's how it works:

- 1** *Drivers are not required to stop before entering the roundabout, but must yield to traffic already circulating in the roundabout. As you approach the roundabout, be prepared to stop and wait for a gap in the circulating traffic.*
- 2** *To enter the roundabout, move forward into the circle, turning right.*
- 3** *Once inside the roundabout, continue moving until you reach your exit. Do not stop while inside the roundabout, but continue to flow with the traffic.*
- 4** *Before exiting the roundabout, use your right turn signal to inform other drivers of your right turn from the roundabout.*
- 5** *The general rule is, “yield and turn right.”*
- 6** *Always yield to pedestrians.*

To view an animated example of how to drive a roundabout, visit the Valparaiso Police Department's web site at www.valparaisopolice.org and click on “News and Community Information.”

Construction Ahead

Valpo's current roundabout will be getting cosmetic improvements beginning in the spring of 2009. The enhanced landscaping will include perennial plantings and an Indiana tree grove – all using native plantings that are both salt and drought tolerant. The improvements will also include a sculptural element to punctuate the east side's gateway into the city. Funding for the project will be a combination of public and private funding with 80% funded through a federal grant. Valparaiso's Rotary Club has also committed \$10,000 to the project.

Two additional roundabouts are planned for Valparaiso: at Silhavy Road and Vale Park Road in 2010; and at the five-points intersection of Calumet Ave. (Calumet Ave., Vale Park Road, Roosevelt Road) in 2011. “The Silhavy/Vale Park intersection is an ideal site for a roundabout. The intersection sees a high volume of traffic that's only increasing; it's a natural gateway to the city, and there's room to the east for construction of a roundabout,” said Burkman. The Silhavy/Vale Park roundabout will be substantially funded through a Surface Transportation Program grant.

The five-point roundabout at Calumet/Vale Park/Roosevelt was chosen because of the high number of accidents using the current configuration. According to Burkman, the intersection sees an average of 38,000 vehicles daily and is near the top of the city's list of accident sites. Because of these numbers, the location qualifies for a special Highway Safety Improvement Program grant that will cover 90% of construction costs for the new roundabout.



Valpo Goes “Low Sodium”

City Looks to Maximize Safety, Minimize Salt Usage

The city of Valparaiso will be on a “low-sodium” diet this winter due to a nationwide shortage in road salt supply and a desire to be more efficient and environmentally friendly. “We’ll be using a more conservative approach to road salting this year. By spot treating the roadways, we can keep the streets safe while using less salt and respecting the environment,” said Bill Oeding, Director of Public Works. The low-salt strategy means that intersections, hills, curves, stopping zones, and other treacherous areas will be salted while other areas will simply be plowed.



With reduced supplies and increased costs for transportation, the price of a ton of salt has doubled and even tripled in some areas nationwide. Many local departments – including Porter County -- have been unable to purchase road salt at any price. Valparaiso is more fortunate. Because of an early decision to try a new Cargill product, the city was able to purchase 2,000 tons of “Clear Lane,” a mixture of road salt, magnesium chloride (so it works at a lower temperature), and molasses (to help it stick to the roadway). The Clear Lane has been shown to work faster and go farther than traditional road salt.

Even with the supply of Clear Lane, the city’s salt supply is far less than was used last year. “Last year was an exceptional winter with 66 inches of snow – easily twice the normal average,” said Oeding. The harsh winter, coupled with the city’s traditionally aggressive salting regimen, added up to 6,000 tons of road salt used last year. This year’s supply is just 2,500 tons. “We used to salt the entire roadway, striving for a completely clear surface. Not only does that take a lot of salt, but it’s hard on the environment as the runoff reaches waterways, surrounding soils, and lawns,” said Oeding. “We can all drive safely on snow pack. It’s just going back to a more conservative approach to salting and driving,” he said. While Valparaiso and surrounding communities adjust to lower salt supplies, motorists should practice safe driving skills. Posted speed limits are maximums under ideal conditions. Snowy weather calls for lower speeds.

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