

# Valparaiso citytalk

2016, Vol 2.

A CITY OF VALPARAISO QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

## MOVING IN

### Downtown housing and business spaces are in demand

It was bound to happen. Valpo's magnetic downtown has drawn shoppers, diners, skaters...and now residents and workers. "Not only do people want to do business downtown, but we're also seeing a big demand for housing in the downtown area," said Planning Director Tyler Kent.

Pockets of downtown are transforming into living spaces. Two lots formerly owned by the city will be home for four townhome units by the end of the summer and another townhome unit of six units is proposed at the corner of Morgan Boulevard and Indiana Avenue. In addition, several historic buildings within the central business district are renovating their upper floors into more than a dozen apartments.

"We liked the idea of being able to walk to shops, to dinner, and entertainment," said Chris Schneidt. Schneidt and her husband, Art, are currently building one of the four townhome units on Chicago Street. "We thought of renovating an existing building into a home and jumped at this opportunity to build new," she said.

Likewise, more businesses are seeking downtown space. The design firm Abonmarche is preparing to move to the former Comcast building at 17 N. Washington Street in coming weeks, bringing 10 employees with plans to hire five more. "The downtown mix of business and restaurants played a big role in our decision. We like how Valpo's downtown has been revitalized over the last 15 years and saw this as a great opportunity for us," said Matt Keiser, Office Director for Abonmarche.

## Creative District Takes Shape

Valpo continues to move ahead with plans to develop a Creative District downtown, winning an additional \$25,000 award from America's Best Communities to advance plans. Located along Indiana Avenue, between Napoleon Street and Morgan Boulevard, the Creative District will be a hub of activity focusing on arts and culture, including space for exhibitions, performances, and lessons. "The Creative District will spark creativity and culture as it provides a new space for the community to gather and added opportunities for businesses to grow," said Mayor Jon Costas.

### How the idea grew

The idea of a Creative District sprouted from the ValpoNEXT Citywide Vision Plan. "Out of the hundreds of ideas submitted by the community, a Creative District was a favorite that rose to the top in so many public gatherings," said Tyler Kent, Valpo's Planning Director. The Creative District plan was crafted throughout a 3-month planning process that involved three public events, stakeholder interviews, and online activities resulting in more than 2,000 pieces of input.

### How ABC Helped

The America's Best Communities competition challenged cities nationwide to submit plans to add vitality to their communities. Valpo advanced to the semi-final round and was named one of the top 15 communities in the nation. With this distinction came \$65,000 in funding to tweak implementation plans.

"We gained so much, because of the ABC competition. It pushed us forward and assembled a fantastic team. My own involvement happened as a result of that outreach," said Jessica Corral, Flint Lake

Elementary Art Teacher. Corral was part of the team who presented Valpo's plan to the ABC judges in Durham, NC. "We've also greatly benefited from the interaction with other communities, becoming not just competitors, but also comrades," she said.



**Valpo's Creative District Plan has generated much excitement and community support. The America's Best Communities panel awarded the plan with an additional \$25,000 and a nonprofit organization is currently forming to focus on implementing the community's ideas.**

### What's next for Valpo?

Valpo is currently working to establish a 501 (c) 3 nonprofit organization to take the Creative District to the next level, according to Kent. The city is also working to launch a Better Block project in the Creative District, implementing the community's ideas for streetscaping as further ideas come together. "We're fired up and the community is behind the idea of a Creative District. The same enthusiasm and planning that led us so far in the ABC competition will ensure that the plans become reality," said Kent.

**D**ear Citizens:

Here comes the sun! How fantastic that we have so many great places in Valparaiso to enjoy this season. Our Splash Pad is a favorite, but have you been to Ogden Gardens lately? Or strolled along our 15+ miles of pathways? We're thrilled to have the Urschel Pavilion this year to host our Central Park Market under a roof this year.

Visit [www.valpo.us](http://www.valpo.us) for City News, Announcements & Events

There are so many projects to celebrate in Valparaiso this season. The new pathway that extends Vale Park Road west of the high school

is currently under construction, connecting to more than 700 homes and providing another beautiful linear parkway. We're also excited to complete intersection improvements at Burlington Beach Road

and Calumet, and pathways along Calumet and Burlington Beach. You really can get further on foot these days in Valparaiso and this is an excellent season to explore.

These pages include just a few of the highlights of projects and happenings for this season. We hope you'll take advantage of all your hometown has to offer.

Sincerely,

**Jon Costas**

Jon Costas, Mayor

## Get the app!

Valpo has a FREE app that keeps you informed of all downtown events and even where to find parking or an ATM.



Simply search

"Valparaiso downtown" in your app store.

# Getting Around Town

Roads and Pathways are expanding, improving

Over the past decade, Valpo's roads have been a top priority. A Road Recovery Plan in 2006 provided a way for the city to maintain its 155 miles of roadway, spending \$14.8 million in road repairs since 2006. "We are consistently complimented by road experts for our use of maintenance and preservation techniques like crack sealing which can significantly prolong a road's useful life," said Matt Evans, Public Works Director. "Throughout the state and nation, road conditions are deteriorating and Valpo is no different. While we try to increase the number of miles we address each year, it's clear that we'll need to expand efforts," he said.

This year the city has marked \$2.4 million for resurfacing, road preservation, and reconstruction, which will include 18 to 22 miles of roadway. The city is updating its Asset Management Plan, which assesses each road, segment by segment, based on condition and usage, creating a 5-year plan to maximize roadways. "So far, what we're seeing indicates that we need to be allocating \$3 to \$3.5 million each year to our roadway program in order to outpace the deterioration of our entire network," said Evans.

## Construction Ahead

In addition to maintaining existing roadways, the city is launching projects this season, which will improve traffic flow, drainage and pedestrian travel. These projects are in addition to the road maintenance budget, and are largely funded through grants. Here's what you'll see this season:

### Burlington Beach Road & Calumet Avenue

Changes at the intersection of Calumet Avenue and Burlington Beach Road include new signals, widening for turn lanes, the addition of curbs and gutters, and drainage improvements. A half-mile long pedestrian pathway will also be added along the north side of Burlington Beach from Calumet to Silhavy Road.

### Burlington Beach Road & Ind. 49

To accommodate planned development on the east side of Ind. 49, this project creates designated through and turning lanes on Burlington Beach Road on both the east and west sides of Ind. 49 as it improves drainage for the roadway.

These two projects will happen concurrently, beginning in May and expecting to conclude in November. The cost for both projects is \$2.2 million, funded through a federal surface transportation grant with a 20 percent local match coming from the Valparaiso Redevelopment Commission.



In addition to reconstructing or resurfacing up to 22 miles of roadway this season, the city is improving intersections along Burlington Beach Road, adding more than a mile of pathways, and installing upgrades to the east side of Calumet Avenue.

### Calumet Avenue from the 5-points roundabout to Bullseye Lake Road

This high profile project will add curbs and gutters, decorative lighting and landscaping, as well as add an additional half mile of pathway along the east side of Calumet Avenue. "We did the west side of the roadway a few years back and now we'll upgrade the east side to match," said Tim Burkman, Director of Engineering. This project will be \$530,000 and is funded by the Valparaiso Redevelopment Commission. It is expected to conclude in October.

## Parks Embarks on a new Master Plan

Community encouraged to share ideas



Valpo Parks is working on a new Master Plan for the next five years. Central Park and its recent expansion grew from former Master Plans.

**V**alpo Parks may already be the envy of the Midwest, but they're not content to coast. The Parks Department is creating a new Master Plan for the next five years. "We look at the best practices in the country and the world and then we scale them for our city. That's how you create a Central Park Plaza or a ValPlayso," said Valpo Parks Director John Seibert.

Building on the success of the ValPlayso, The Next Generation campaign, the Master Planning process is called Valpo Parks, The Next Generation. "We're not just talking about building a park system for the next generation of users, but also creating leaders who are shaping that future," said Seibert. The Master Plan will ultimately include a blueprint for facilities as well as programs.

### Public Engagement is Key

To gather the best ideas, Parks has held dozens of focus groups with diverse audiences, from 60 8th graders at Thomas Jefferson Middle School to advocates of the ElderStyle initiative. Parks has invited the community to weigh in on an electronic survey available at [valpoparks.org](http://valpoparks.org), followed by a mailed survey to randomly selected homes. Finally, Parks hosted a public forum on June 1 to encourage more ideas. "We're also giving people an opportunity to contribute thoughts about our pathways as we are updating that Master Plan as well," said Seibert.

### Fresh Eyes

PROS Consulting of Indianapolis, a firm that specializes in services to government and nonprofit organizations, will combine the community's ideas with a complete analysis of properties and programs. PROS has contributed to the success of parks systems throughout the nation, from San Francisco to Arlington, VA, to Carmel, Indiana. "We're eager to have PROS share their expertise in all markets and to look at Valparaiso with fresh eyes," said Seibert.

### The Results

The analysis and ideas will all culminate in a draft and recommendations to be presented to the public by this autumn with the goal of finalizing the plan by the end of 2016. "We are thankful for the legacy of the past and more optimistic than ever about the future of our community and its parks," said Seibert. To follow along with the plan and learn of opportunities to participate, visit [ValpoParks.org](http://ValpoParks.org).

## The Missing Link

Vale Park Pathway to Unite East and West sides of City

**T**he city has broken ground on a new pedestrian pathway, which will extend Vale Park Road west of Valparaiso High School, ultimately connecting more than 700 homes via a 10-foot wide paved pathway. "This scenic pathway will also feature a 200-foot long wooden bridge, as well as some nice stopping points with benches and a water fountain," said Engineering Director Tim Burkman.

The new pathway will be about a half mile in length, connecting to the city's existing 16-miles of paved pathways and bike lanes, in addition to more than 200 miles of sidewalks. The project will cost \$1.6 million, including land acquisition, engineering, and construction. It is funded through a federal grant from the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ) program, with a 20 percent match coming from Valparaiso's Redevelopment Commission. Valpo will also add pathways along Burlington Beach and Calumet this season.

"We've made a real commitment to pathways in Valparaiso. This new link, along with the pathways we're adding this year along the east side of Calumet Avenue and the north side of Burlington Beach Road brings our pathways and bike lanes to nearly 18 miles by the end of 2016," said Mayor Jon Costas. (For more on the Calumet and Burlington Beach pathways, see the Construction story in this issue).

The city expects to open the new Vale Park link to pedestrian and pedal traffic this fall. Maps of the city's pathways are available on the city's website [Valpo.us](http://Valpo.us) by clicking "Parks" and searching for "walking routes" or at the Parks offices at 3210 Campbell St.



This rendering depicts the city's new pathway, extending Vale Park Road west of Valparaiso High School. The new pathway will ultimately connect more than 700 homes to the city's pathway network, which will be nearly 18 miles long by the end of 2016.

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## Upcoming EVENTS

### Eat Up Wine Down

5–10 pm • 1st Thursday  
of EVERY Month

\$5 Specials at Valpo Dining Restaurants the First Thursday of EVERY Month. Come out and taste downtown's finest restaurants.

### Valparaiso Market

Tuesdays • 8 am – 2 pm  
Saturdays • 8 am – Noon

June 2 through October 13

Visit the market weekly to shop for fresh local produce, handmade products, and beautiful plants and flowers.

### Outdoor Movies

Tuesdays

June 21, 28; July 5, 12, 19, 26

Central Park Plaza. Movies start at dusk. Bring your own chairs or blanket. Admission is FREE. Visit [valparaisoevents.com](http://valparaisoevents.com) for features.

### Summer Rhapsody Music Festival

Thursdays • 7 pm

Thursdays: July 14, 21, 28; August 4, 11 at Central Park Plaza. The Summer Rhapsody Music Festival features a variety of music from classical to jazz. Bring your picnic, blanket, and chairs and relax in the park with this concert series. Admission is FREE. Visit [valparaisoevents.com](http://valparaisoevents.com) for featured musicians.

## Valpo Moving Forward with Fiber Network

Later this year, Valparaiso will join more than 180 other communities nationwide in investing in publicly owned fiber optic connections. Valparaiso will be the first in Northwest Indiana to take this important step said Patrick Lyp, Valpo's Economic Development Director.



Fiber optics is technology that uses glass threads (fibers) to transmit data— anything from an email, a streaming video or a high-resolution medical image. Fiber optic cables can carry immense amounts of data quickly. This benefits both commercial and residential users. When fiber is transmitting data, it is considered “lit.” Dark fiber is a

strand of “unlit” or unused fiber. Valparaiso intends to make dark fiber available and allow users to either light the fiber themselves or partner with an Internet Service Provider (ISP).

“In many ways, having access to affordable fiber is no different than having access to roads or a sewer/water line,” said Lyp. “Internet connectivity is no longer a luxury and communities will grow based on its availability,” he said.

Initially Valparaiso's network or “backbone” will focus on commercial corridors along State Road 49, State Road 30, and Calumet Avenue, serving businesses in that area. “Business application is only the tip of the iceberg. It is reasonable to expect future applications that could have residential aspects,” said Lyp.

“We spent almost two years talking to local businesses, and this was an identified need. We also talk with companies looking for new locations and they're no longer just thinking about land costs, water supply or transportation issues. Fiber availability is now a key requirement,” said Lyp. Including design, engineering, and installation, the fiber network will cost \$2.5 million and is funded through the Valparaiso Redevelopment Commission.



**Check us out!**

Use this code with your smartphone to access the city's new site or visit [www.valpo.us](http://www.valpo.us)



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