



# Valpo NEXT

Your ideas. Our city's future.

Citywide Vision Plan  
Draft November 2014



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insert council resolution here

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On behalf of the ValpoNEXT Steering Committee, we want to thank the hundreds of citizens of Valparaiso who, through their time, ideas, and participation in ValpoNEXT, have come together to make our community even better in the future.

We understood that our charge to generate ideas for the future would be challenging, as Valparaiso is already a nationally noted community with a legacy of thoughtful planning and a great deal of positive momentum. We were concerned that some might be satisfied, and that satisfaction might bring complacency. However, through a careful process of public dialogue and discernment, with expert guidance from planningNext, Valparaiso citizens identified many important issues and needs, which led us to concrete and identifiable opportunities for our future.

Throughout the 16 month process, the citizens of Valparaiso were asked to contribute thousands of hours of their time in a myriad of ways. We started with a city staff and consultant group seeking to understand the issues and provide a representative sample of input. Then, we united a volunteer steering committee of local business and community leaders of various ages and backgrounds. Next, we compiled a fantastically cooperative and driven facilitator group for the community outreach and data gathering. All of these contributors would help bring to the table, and to an online discussion group, hundreds of citizen participants at various locations around our city.

Overall, the processes of organization and leadership, understanding and discovery, compilation and reporting, led to this, our final vision document which shall serve as a blueprint for improvement for our beloved city.

After all, together we've gone from good to great. Now let's go from great to even better in our hometown "Vale of Paradise," Valparaiso, Indiana.

Truly Appreciative,

Matt Evans  
Co-Chair

Elizabeth Lynn  
Co-Chair

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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**ValpoNEXT would like to give a special shout out to Cory Muro, owner of the Tomato Bar, who generously supplied pizza for the committee meetings throughout the process which kept the committee happy and well nourished!**

# CONTENTS

<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>THE ACTION AGENDA</b> .....	<b>28</b>
Initiative 1: Engaging our Citizens	
Initiative 2: Nurturing our Young People	
Initiative 3: Embracing our Diversity	
Initiative 4: Connecting our Community	
Initiative 5: Protecting our Natural Resources	
Initiative 6: Fostering our Economic Competitiveness	
Initiative 7: Expanding our Cultural and Recreational Offerings	
Initiative 8: Strengthening our Sense of Place	
Initiative 9: Sustaining our Local Government	
<b>IMPLEMENTATION PLAN</b> .....	<b>48</b>
<i>UNDER SEPARATE COVER</i>	
<b>APPENDIX A: SNAPSHOT REPORT</b>	
<b>APPENDIX B: PUBLIC INPUT DATABASES</b>	
<i>ECONOMIC REPORTS (UNDER SEPARATE COVER)</i>	
<b>BASELINE ECONOMIC ANALYSIS</b>	
<b>ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES ASSESSMENT</b>	
<b>HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES</b>	
<b>STRATEGIC ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	

# EXECUTIVE



**Introduction** .....10  
Motivation.....  
Organization.....  
Key Findings.....  
**Visioning Plan Process**..... 16  
**Collaboration** .....22

# SUMMARY



# WHAT'S NEXT FOR VALPO?

ValpoNEXT was a community-driven process to prepare a long-term vision plan for the City of Valparaiso that encompasses many aspects of community life. The once-in-a-generation opportunity gave the citizens of Valparaiso the opportunity to think creatively, act boldly, and ensure that Valpo remains a leading place to live, work and play. The city charged the planning team, Steering Committee and members of the community to think BIG about Valpo's future. This Vision Plan is a long-range visioning document looking out 20-30 years to answer the question, "what's next for Valpo?"

## MOTIVATION FOR THE VISION PLAN

Valparaiso has a long legacy of thoughtful planning and tradition of commitment to following through on those plans. The community has earned a well-deserved reputation as a vibrant and prosperous place. The ValpoNEXT visioning process provided the opportunity to build on that success and make Valpo even better.

### ORGANIZATION OF THE VISION PLAN

The Vision Plan is structured in two parts: an overarching vision statement and an action agenda. The vision statement captures the aspiration for the future of the Valparaiso community and directs the action agenda as a whole. The action agenda contains 43 actions--defined as policies, programs or projects--that serve as the specific recommendations of the Plan. These 43 actions are organized into nine initiative areas. Each initiative area also has a corresponding value statement that intends to capture the key beliefs the community holds about the topic.

# INTRODUCTION

# VISION

The following statement captures the vision for the future of the Valparaiso community and frames the action agenda.

## Valparaiso aspires to be... the most civically engaged city of its size.

The Valparaiso community will be a place where people take care of one another and are highly involved in local community organizations and efforts. Active and progressive, with a strong sense of place and environmental ethic, it will honor authenticity and uniqueness in culture and business initiatives and seek the wellbeing of its people.

# ACTION AGENDA

Nine initiative areas organize 43 actions—projects, programs or policies—that will advance the community. Each Initiative includes a value statement that captures the key beliefs the community holds about the topic.

- 1. Engaging our Citizens...** through meaningful opportunities to lead and serve in the community, understand public institutions and participate actively in local governance.
- 2. Nurturing our Young People...** with excellent schools and teachers and expanded youth development initiatives.
- 3. Embracing our Diversity...** as a truly welcoming city with affordable housing, high quality health care, excellent education and living wages.
- 4. Connecting our Community...** with a variety of transportation options for moving within and to and from our city.
- 5. Protecting our Natural Resources...** with measures to increase green space, clean energy, good water quality, recycling, and fossil fuel alternatives.
- 6. Fostering our Economic Competitiveness...** through a diversified local economy which nurtures existing businesses and incubates new ones, offering residents a wide range of ways to advance their financial standing.
- 7. Expanding our Cultural and Recreational Offerings...** with programs, partnerships and settings that draw people together, encourage creativity and enhance well-being.
- 8. Strengthening our Sense of Place...** with identifiable neighborhoods that are safe, walkable, connected, and offer a range of housing choices.
- 9. Sustaining our Local Government...** through measures to ensure strong fiscal health and responsibility, in order to continue to provide high quality infrastructure and services to the community.

# KEY FINDINGS

## PEOPLE

**The population is growing at twice the rate of the state, four times the rate of the Chicago MSA.**

The 2010 Census recorded 31,730 residents in Valparaiso, which is a 16 percent increase from 2000. In comparison, Porter County grew by 12 percent between 2000-2010, while the Chicago MSA grew four percent and the State of Indiana grew by seven percent.



CHANGE IN POPULATION, 2000-2010



**VU's students make up a significant proportion of the city's population.**

Valparaiso University (VU) is home to approximately 3,000 undergraduate students and 1,000 law and graduate students. Generally, students are counted by the Census in the place they live for most of the year and so are usually included in the population of the community where they attend school (even though their permanent address may be elsewhere). If all of VU's students were counted as city residents, they would make up approximately 13 percent of the city's population.



**A younger population, aging more slowly.**

Valparaiso's population is somewhat younger compared to Indiana overall. In 2010, the median age in Valparaiso was 33.4 years versus 37.0 for Indiana. Between the year 2000 and 2010, Valparaiso's median age increased by less than one year, while the median age in Indiana increased by nearly three years.



**Large proportion of single person households.**

There is a relatively higher proportion of people living alone in Valparaiso. Approximately 35 percent of Valparaiso households (in 2010) are single-person households, compared to 23 percent in the county and 27 percent in the state.



**The city is becoming more racially and ethnically diverse.**

Valparaiso's population is predominantly Caucasian (white), but there has been a notable increase in diversity since the year 2000. In that year, people who identified themselves as African American or Asian each made up 1.5 percent of the population. In 2010, these groups made up four percent and three percent of the population respectively. Similarly, Hispanics (of any race) made up about eight percent of the population in 2010.

# GS

## PLACE

### A legacy of planning.

Valparaiso has a legacy of planning for the future and of following through on those plans. The city was the first community in Indiana to adopt a comprehensive plan (1925 Master Plan), which has been maintained and periodically updated, most recently in 2013. This page shows major plans and policy documents between 2009 and the creation of the ValpoNEXT Vision Plan.

#### Mayor's Strategic Plan

Specific action plan for the city to implement over a five-year horizon.

#### Parks and Open Space Master Plan / Pathways and Greenways Master Plan

Recommends improvements to the city's parks, open space, trails and greenways.

#### Unified Development Ordinance

Major revision to the city's zoning code, subdivision, and other development regulations.

#### Elderstyle Strategic Plan

Provides a framework for coordination of service delivery for older adults.

#### ADA Transition Plan

Prioritizes improvements to city infrastructure compatible with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

#### Stormwater Master Plan

Capital improvements plan to manage stormwater and sewer overflows (in response to flooding in 2008).

#### Downtown Parking Study

Recommends a range of short- and medium-term solutions to improving parking downtown.

#### Comprehensive Plan Update

Long-term city-wide vision and policy guide, primarily dealing with physical growth and land development.

#### U.S. 30 Corridor Master Plan

Long-term vision and plan for the U.S. 30 corridor.

#### SR 49 Corridor Plan

Long-term vision and plan for the SR 49 corridor.

#### Airport Zone Master Plan

Long-term plan for the Airport vicinity.

2009

2010

2011

2012

2013

2014

# KEY FINDINGS



## **Diversity in housing types, ages, and types of neighborhoods.**

Unlike many suburban communities surrounding Chicago that have developed large expanses of homogenous tract housing, Valparaiso has a relatively diverse housing stock that developed gradually over the city's history. The community's neighborhoods differ in the era in which they were developed, architectural character, and density. However, this diversity means that the housing stock is somewhat older. Approximately 88 percent of homes are over 20 years old, which means they tend to have higher maintenance costs compared to newer homes. Also, rental housing in Valparaiso is generally older than owner-occupied housing.

## **Relatively large amount of rental housing.**

Typical of towns with significant university communities, there is a large proportion of rental housing in Valparaiso. Approximately 45 percent of housing in Valparaiso is renter-occupied (30% in Indiana, 35% nationwide). In similar communities, the proportion of renter-occupied housing is between 40 and 50 percent.



## **The city has undertaken balanced transportation improvements (road network and alternatives modes) with an emphasis on street character.**

The city is actively implementing its thoroughfare plan with street and intersection improvements to improve capacity and safety. Sidewalks are present along most streets and connect residential areas. The bikeway system includes lanes within street right-of-way and off-street paths through natural areas. The city's local bus, the "V-line," includes five routes and links Valparaiso University with Downtown, employment and shopping areas and residential areas.



## **A distinctive and memorable place.**

While communities in Indiana and the Chicago area have struggled to maintain their traditional downtowns and older neighborhoods in the face of suburban development, Valparaiso has managed to create a vibrant downtown and maintain a variety of distinctive neighborhoods, both new and old.



## **An enviable parks system.**

Like its pedestrian and bike trails system, Valparaiso is known for a strong parks system. The city has 539 acres of developed parks on 18 sites. In addition to the existing park space, there are 144 acres of undeveloped land owned by the parks system that could become future parkland. Further, the city offers extensive programming for all ages.

## PROSPERITY

### The city has much of which to be proud.

During their first meeting the ValpoNEXT steering committee was asked to share their thoughts about Valparaiso and what they were most proud of (i.e. community accomplishments, assets or other sources of pride). Their responses covered the following themes:

- 1. Parks.** Valparaiso's park system is generally outstanding, particularly Central Park Plaza.
- 2. Downtown.** Improvements to the downtown area offer more dining, entertainment and community events.
- 3. Philanthropy.** Valparaiso has a strong non-profit and philanthropic community, including churches. The city has a strong volunteer culture and is considered a very "giving" community.
- 4. Schools.** Valparaiso has a very good k-12 school system with a single high school.
- 5. Healthcare.** Porter County Medical Center, St. Mary Medical Center and other healthcare facilities have recently expanded.
- 6. Government Services.** The city has strong leadership, maintains good services and has done well at managing growth.
- 7. Businesses/Jobs.** The community has an award-winning chamber of commerce, growing businesses and job opportunities, and a good mix of local independent businesses and national companies.
- 8. Institutions.** Valparaiso is home to a variety of quality institutions that enhance the city's quality of life including YMCA, Porter County Museum, Memorial Opera House, Valparaiso University, and the Taltree Arboretum.



### The city's share of the county's (and region's) total employment is increasing.

VALPARAISO'S SHARE OF PORTER COUNTY'S TOTAL JOBS, 2002-2007



### Several organizations promote economic development in Valparaiso, but there is no common, overall vision or strategic plan uniting their efforts.

Valparaiso-area economic development efforts are carried out by at least six agencies and organizations in Valparaiso, Porter County, and the Northwest Indiana region. While these organizations have many impressive efforts and accomplishments, there is no strategic plan that establishes accountability for funding and investment at the local level.



### High rate of educational attainment.

Approximately 34 percent of Valparaiso residents over the age of 25 have a bachelor's degree or higher. That level of educational attainment is above the national average (28%) and much higher than Porter County (26%) and Indiana (23%) overall.

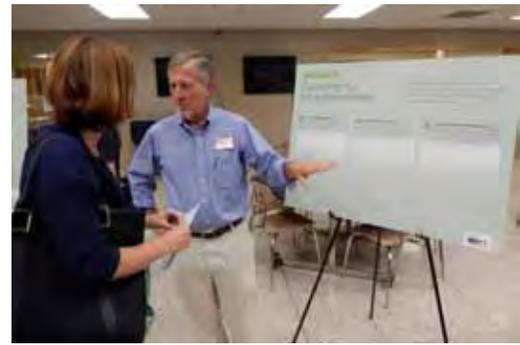
### High performing school system.

Valparaiso Community Schools are highly regarded. Achievement at the district's elementary and middle schools consistently meets and often exceeds state standards. Valparaiso High School's latest report card shows that it exceeds state averages and is continuing to improve.

# THE PROCESS

The ValpoNEXT process was inclusive and transparent and driven by the community's insight and aspirations. There were multiple face-to-face public workshops as well as online activities throughout the year-long process. The planning team, along with citizen Steering Committee, worked tirelessly to ensure all members of the community knew they had a choice to participate in the process.

**in an effort to be truly inclusive, the first Big Idea Workshop had a small group facilitated in Spanish — a first for the city.**





1  
**GENERATING IDEAS**

2  
**ANALYZING**

3  
**AFFIRMING THE VISION**

**880+** → **2090** → **43**  
 PEOPLE → PIECES OF INPUT → ACTIONS

# BIG IDEA WORKSHOPS

FEBRUARY 24,25,26, 2014

The Big Idea Workshops were the official public kick-off for the ValpoNEXT planning process and gathered input from the community through both individual work and small group brainstorming.

The Big Idea Workshops took place across three evenings in late February at different locations and at different times of the day in order to make the meetings as convenient as possible. The Workshops had three distinct parts:

- 1. Setting the Stage:** Participants were given a brief introduction to the ValpoNEXT planning process and project timeline. Participants were also asked to share what they would want the news headlines for Valparaiso to be in 20-30 years.
- 2. Small Group Work:** Participants worked in small groups with a trained facilitator to identify major issues within the community, and then each participant voted with sticker dots for their top three issues. The table facilitator tallied up the dots and then the group worked together to brainstorm big ideas in response to the top 5 issues identified.
- 3. Reporting out:** At the end of the meeting, a handful of groups shared their top issues and big ideas generated during the small group work.



**in an effort to be truly inclusive, the first Big Idea Workshop had a small group facilitated in Spanish — a first for the city of Valparaiso!**

## MAJOR OUTCOMES

- 1. Over 300 people attended the workshops**
- 2. Roughly 560 issues were identified**
- 3. Roughly 900 ideas were generated**
- 4. Workshops had an impressively high satisfaction rate**
  - 100% of people felt comfortable working in their group
  - 99% felt their ideas were recorded accurately
  - 94% felt the meeting was the right length
  - 98% wanted to continue to participate in the process

## Key Topics

Transportation  
Place  
Economic Development  
Parks and Recreation  
Education  
City Services / Infrastructure  
Implementation  
Housing  
Social Services  
Health and Wellness



# SMALL GROUP MEETINGS

MARCH AND APRIL, 2014

The purpose of the small group meetings was to engage specific demographics within the community that were under-represented at the Big Idea Workshops.

The analysis of the exit questionnaires from each of the Big Idea Workshops revealed that two different but related populations were missing: young adults ages 18-34 and those with lower incomes and lower educational attainment. In order to gather input from those missing demographics, small group meetings were organized and facilitated by the Steering Committee and facilitator team.

The small group meetings were similar in format to the Big Idea Workshops in that participants worked together to identify issues within the community and then generate big ideas to address the issues.

## MAJOR OUTCOMES

1. Over 100 people participated in the small group meetings.
2. Six meetings were held with Valparaiso High School students, Valparaiso University students, Tomato Bar employees, Porter Starke employees, Mayor's Advisory Council on Disabilities, and the Human Relations Council.
3. An additional 164 issues were identified
4. An additional 320 ideas were generated

# ONLINE ACTIVITIES & DISCUSSION FORUM

The ValpoNEXT Online Discussion Forum, project website, and Facebook account were utilized throughout the process as an additional method of gathering public input. For those who weren't able to make it the face-to-face events, the web-based tools allowed for people to share their issues, ideas and feedback at all critical steps in the process. An online version of each of the public events--Big Idea Workshops, Community Summit and The Launch--was available for several weeks following each face-to-face event. The digital platform utilized surveys, open ended questions and multiple choice questions to gather input from the general public.



The ValpoNEXT Facebook page attracted over 3,020 followers throughout the process.

# COMMUNITY SUMMIT

MAY 28, 2014

The Community Summit was designed to share existing conditions affecting Valparaiso as a basis for evaluating previously collected input and understanding preferences for transformational ideas. The Community Summit gathered feedback on specific initiatives derived from the big ideas gathered at the Big Idea Workshop.

The Community Summit began with a brief presentation of existing conditions and trends related to the overall topics of people, place and prosperity. Following the presentation for each topic there was a round of key-pad polling which tested value statements and specific initiatives related to that topic. The use of an audience response system allowed for real time result tabulation and sharing so everyone in the room could see which options were the strongest among the participants.

## MAJOR OUTCOMES

1. Over 200 people attended the Community Summit.
2. Nine community value statements were tested and received high validation (on average 74% of people indicated that they strongly agreed or agreed with the statements).
3. Thirteen specific questions were asked which tested strategies and specific actions related to issues such as housing, sustainability, diversity, economic development, transportation and strengthening quality of place.





# THE LAUNCH

SEPTEMBER 24, 2014

The purpose of The Launch was to reveal the draft Vision Plan. The Launch was both a celebratory and momentum building event to begin the plan's implementation.

The format for the Launch event was an open house with display boards and a brief presentation to orient participants and share status of the project. Participants viewed the plan, talked with the ValpoNEXT team, voted on their top priority actions, shared comments and feedback on the actions and indicated how they wanted to get involved in the plan's implementation. The Steering Committee Members served as station agents for each of the initiative areas and fielded questions, assisted participants with the voting and commenting activities and encouraged people to get involved with implementation.

## MAJOR OUTCOMES

1. Over 100 people attended The Launch event.
2. There were 110 comments were collected.
3. Roughly half of the participants filled out an "I want to get involved" card where they indicated which specific actions they were interested in helping with to assist in implementing the Vision Plan. In total 36 of the 44 actions were identified by people as ones they wanted to get directly involved in implementing.

# THE VISION PLAN ROADSHOW

September 25 - October 12, 2014

The purpose of the roadshow was to extend the review and voting period for the draft vision plan from the one night event of The Launch so that more people could participate. The roadshow allowed for the vision plan to be out and about in the community for an additional 11 days. The Vision Plan Roadshow took advantage of three diverse and heavily trafficked community locations (City Hall, YMCA and Valparaiso University) where people could easily engage with the boards to vote on priority actions and share their comments. The boards were overseen by the reception or lobby desk attendants at each location.

**Roughly 100 people directly engaged with the boards by voting for their top priority actions and many more were exposed to the boards coming and going from the locations because of the high visibility of the placement of the boards.**

# COLLABORATION

The steering committee worked to synthesize thousands of pieces of input to prepare a recommended vision for the Valparaiso community. It should be recognized that many participants in the process believe “this is a moment” for the community, especially as it relates to the relationship of the city and Valparaiso University. Furthermore, this process—ValpoNEXT—is widely recognized as being pro-active and positive.

**ValpoNEXT has set a new standard for engaging the public in meaningful dialogue about issues facing the community and has been referenced numerous times as the new benchmark for how to inclusively and thoughtfully confront tough matters facing the community.**

## STEERING COMMITTEE

The city appointed a diverse 40-member citizen steering committee to guide ValpoNEXT. This committee, which represented the diversity of Valparaiso, was a working group that served as advocates for ValpoNEXT and helped to make recommendations about the process and substance of the vision. The group met nine times over the 12 month planning process, conducted outreach and publicity, participated in the public meetings and events and provided feedback at every step in the process.

## FACILITATORS

Through an open call on social media and recommendations from steering committee members, a group of facilitators were assembled to help throughout the process. This group received workshop-specific training prior to the Big Idea Workshop and then served as table facilitators for the workshops. They were also called upon to serve as table leaders at the Community Summit and helped to facilitate the small group meetings that were held as a follow up to the Big Idea Workshops. This group was instrumental in achieving the high satisfaction rates at the Big Idea Workshop and in the quality feedback and input received.



# WHO'S WHO IN ValpoNEXT

## Steering Committee

PROJECT LEADERSHIP

The steering committee was a diverse group of community members appointed by the city to serve as community advocates for the vision, to provide guidance and direction regarding the vision process and substance, and to serve as stewards of the vision once it is completed.

## Stakeholders

TARGETED INPUT

Various stakeholder groups were convened to inform specific aspects of the vision. These groups included business leaders, neighborhood associations, real estate professionals and developers, education professionals, students, and young professionals, among others.

## Public

INPUT AND FEEDBACK

Widespread public involvement was vital to ValpoNEXT's success. Various in-person workshops and online tools offered more ways for citizens to give input throughout the entire process.

## City Staff

PROJECT LEADERSHIP

City staff supported and helped to coordinate the work of all other groups with local knowledge and expertise.

## Elected Officials

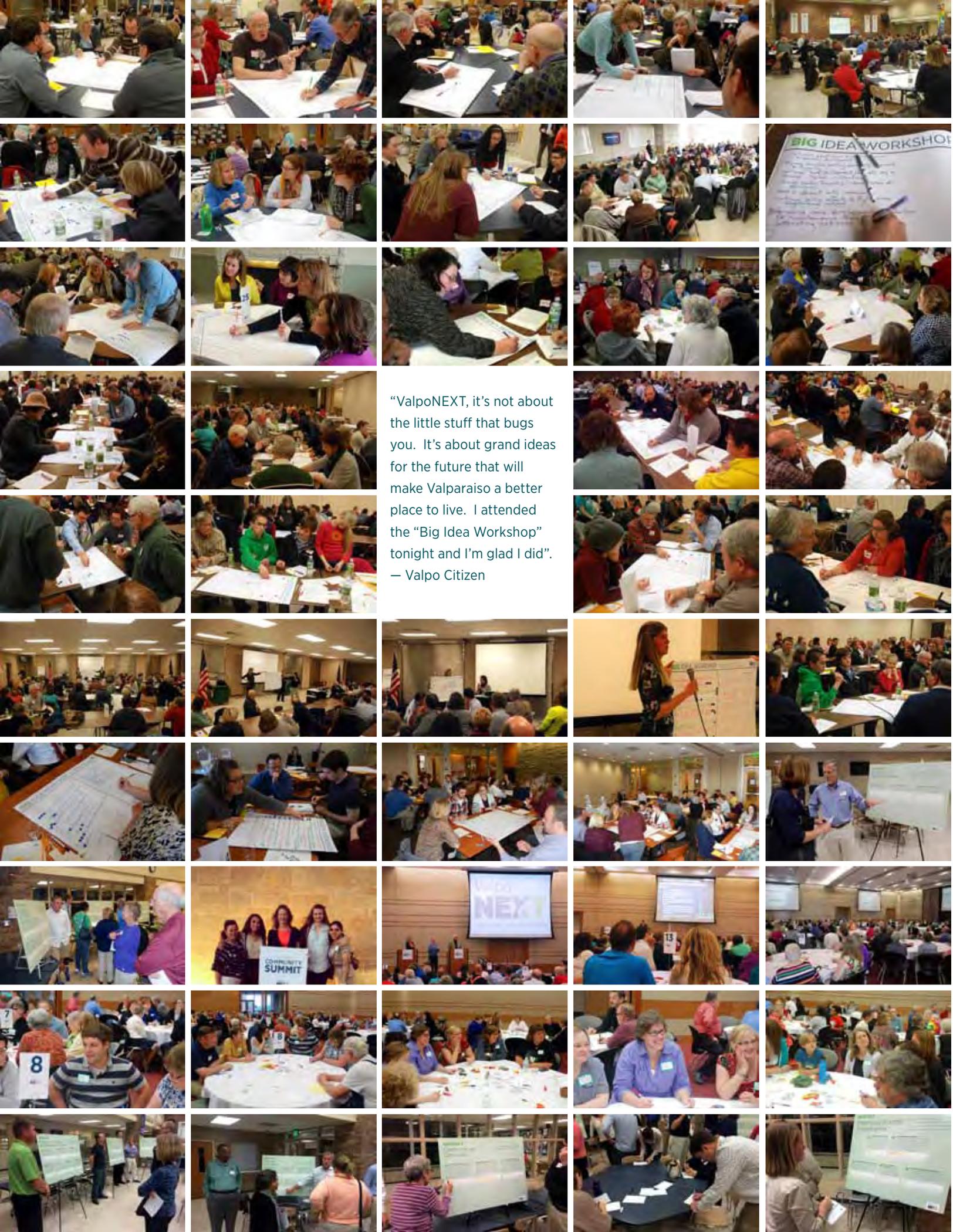
MONITOR

Mayor and Council monitored the Valpo Next process and the resulting community vision, recognizing that success should be independent of the city's elected leadership.

## Consultants

PROCESS LEADERSHIP,  
EXPERTISE

Planning NEXT facilitated the process and shared experience from other successful communities. Randall Gross of Development Economics provided economic expertise.



“ValpoNEXT, it’s not about the little stuff that bugs you. It’s about grand ideas for the future that will make Valparaiso a better place to live. I attended the “Big Idea Workshop” tonight and I’m glad I did”.  
— Valpo Citizen





“What a wonderful opportunity for community members to connect, meet one another and invest in their city” — Valpo Citizen

“One of the marvelous things about community is that it enables us to welcome and help people in a way we couldn’t as individuals.” — Jean Vanier, humanitarian

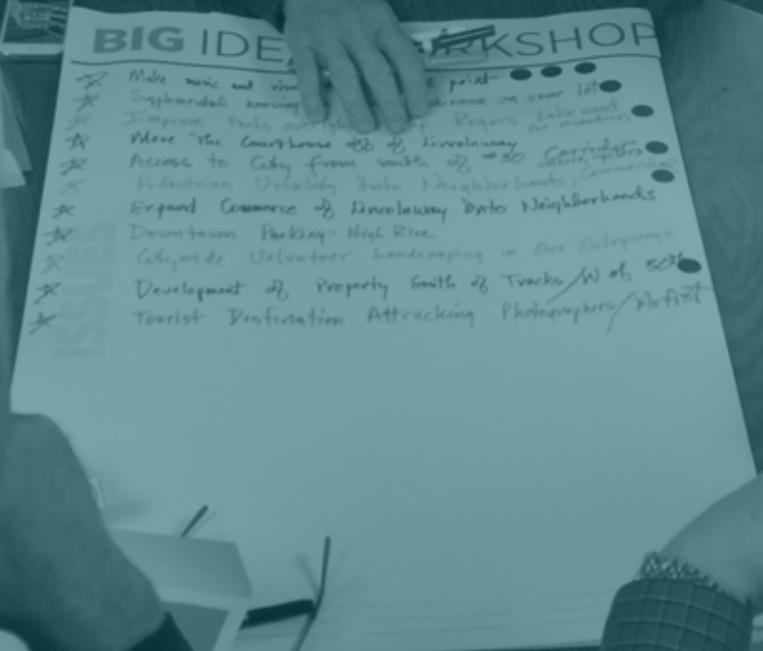


ACTION

# AGENDA

## INITIATIVE 1

# ENGAGING our Citizens



*...through meaningful opportunities  
to lead and serve in the community,  
understand public institutions and  
participate actively in local governance.*



\* Indicates action was identified by the public and citizen steering committee as a community priority. For more details please see Implementation Matrix.

- \* 1a Build Platform for Citizen Action and Input.** As seen in the vision statement, it is important to the community to provide ongoing opportunities for meaningful civic engagement. ValpoNEXT has established itself as a neutral convener of diverse people. The success should now be leveraged to provide both a forum to support ongoing citizen input into city planning and a resource center to support citizens interested in proposing and organizing new community programs and solutions. The community has a vibrant intellectual life that could be better nurtured through an innovative structure in the form of a civic incubator.
- \* 1b Embed Civic Education and Engagement in Schools.** A partnership between the city and Valparaiso Community Schools should be created to educate and motivate young people toward robust civic engagement. The intention is to be more deliberate in strengthening a culture of “learning, serving, giving and doing” and to start with the youngest members of the community. The partnership would include curriculum, mentoring, programs and recognition.
- 1c Establish Civic Corps.** A Valpo Civic Corps should be established (or an expansion of the current AmeriCorps program) to engage young people in service to others (if modeled after AmeriCorps, could provide an education award to go toward higher education or loans in exchange for a certain amount of community service hours). This program would provide benefits to the individuals participating in the program through service and leadership opportunities. The community would also receive direct benefit from the contributions of additional civic capacity.
- 1d Establish a Coordinated Service Network.** The community should organize the various social and human service organizations to assist residents impacted by unforeseen circumstances, e.g. flooding. The coordinated service network could be established for routine needs, but be invaluable in times of disaster. The community has extensive support organizations, but they could be better coordinated.
- 1e Evaluate Public Communication.** An audit of public communication should be undertaken at all levels of municipal government for increased clarity, transparency, and hospitality. The community is diverse and channels need to be diverse. The vision process revealed that many community members are not aware of initiatives, programs and projects underway.

INITIATIVE 2

# NURTURING our Young People

*...with excellent schools and teachers and  
expanded youth development initiatives.*



**\* 2a Invest in Community Schools.** The existing schools—many located in neighborhoods but serving a larger area—are important to many community members. The schools are in need of physical improvements and there should be an effort to advocate for maintaining and upgrading elementary schools. [Note: The leadership of Valparaiso Community Schools (VCS) is on a parallel track to evaluate options for addressing facility needs and cost implications.]

**\* 2b Evaluate School Governance.** A commission should be created to evaluate the current governance of VCS. The focus would be on identifying and advocating for enhancements to the VCS governance model. A key goal is increasing City-School cooperation and citizen support and engagement.

**\* 2c Create Teacher Excellence Program.** A community incentive program should be explored that would focus on attracting and retaining the best teachers for the Valparaiso Community Schools (VCS). This program could be funded by businesses that have a keen interest in stronger education outcomes, including graduates that are ready for post high school opportunities. [Note: The VCS Foundation does provide some small grants based on merit of teachers.]

**\* 2d Create a Student Readiness Program.** A program should be developed to assist all students to be better prepared for post-high school life, regardless of their path forward, e.g. work force, four-year college, etc. The program would include schools (including technical education institutions), businesses and not-for-profit organizations that provide life skills, college preparation skills and/or job skills that prepare them to be engaged and successful citizens. This program would include an internship with opportunities for students to engage with a wide range of businesses and institutions.

**2e Prepare School Master Plan.** A visionary, long-term strategic plan should be created for VCS that looks at curriculum, teachers, after-school opportunities, and school facilities. The planning process should be inclusive, innovative and fiscally responsible. VCS should work closely with the city to leverage opportunities for making the community more attractive for existing and future residents and businesses.

**2f Encourage Public Engagement in Schools.** Create a citizen advisory group to build support for VCS through regular dialogue and sharing of key information about the opportunities and challenges of providing education to young people in the community.

**2f Create a Student Readiness Program.** A program should be developed to assist all students be better prepared

**\* Indicates action was identified by the public and citizen steering committee as a community priority. For more details please see Implementation Matrix.**

INITIATIVE 3

# EMBRACING our Diversity

*...as a truly welcoming city with  
affordable housing, high quality health  
care, excellent education and living  
wages.*



- \* 3a Ensure Affordable Shelter.** Welcome all (not only in word but in deed), by ensuring affordable housing for disabled and minimum wage workers in Valparaiso, through a joint initiative of the city and non-profit sector. This will require the city to develop a housing strategy and staff resources to implement.
- \* 3b Create a Commission on Diversity and Inclusion.** Establish, staff and fund a City-University Commission charged with creating a welcoming community for all. This entity would build directly on work begun by the City's Human Relations Council and the University's Diversity and Inclusion Initiative, starting with a Dignity and Respect Campaign to encourage behavioral change in individuals, schools, and businesses.
- 3c Coordinate Social Services.** A one-stop shop should be developed to better support residents seeking health care and other services. Many challenges to receiving social services could be mitigated with a better coordinated delivery.
- 3d Explore a Living Wage Law.** Establishment of wage standards for businesses that receive contracts or subsidies from the local government should be explored. The intent of this exploration is to ensure that public dollars generate quality jobs for local residents. [Note: 1) Porter County is investigating this issue and 2) the city would only be able to apply this to their own vendors and therefore would not be impactful to the larger community].
- 3e Celebrate Diversity.** Diversity should be celebrated in society through the arts, festivals, lectures and other community programs. While some of this celebration can take place at the individual level, a coordinated effort would be more impactful. The more coordinated effort should be inclusive of a variety of inputs and ideas.

\* Indicates action was identified by the public and citizen steering committee as a community priority. For more details please see Implementation Matrix.

INITIATIVE 4

# CONNECTING our Community

*...with a variety of transportation options  
for moving within and to and from our  
city.*



\* Indicates action was identified by the public and citizen steering committee as a community priority. For more details please see Implementation Matrix.

- \* **4a Build Streets for People.** The city should implement a “complete streets” program. This will require conducting a walking and biking audit of the city streets as the basis for a plan that commits to complete streets for the city. With every street having a sidewalk, all major intersections having crosswalks and developing protected bike lanes on certain streets the community will be better connected for all types of modes and accessible for all types of people. [Note: The State of Indiana has a Complete Streets initiative.]
  
- \* **4b Advocate for Expanded Transit.** The community should continue to advocate for greater investment in passenger rail and other forms of transit. Greater transit choices would better connect people and places within the community and provide greater choices for connecting externally to the community. As the Chicago region—physically and economically—continues to expand, the community will be better positioned with expanded transit. [Note: The city is currently working with Northwest Indiana Passenger Rail to address part of this action.]
  
- \* **4c Build a Multimodal Transportation Hub.** A downtown multimodal transportation hub should be built to support passenger rail and include infrastructure for bikes, cars and pedestrians and spur transit-oriented development. For the downtown and TOD project to achieve their potential, smart transportation investments need to be made in an integrated manner (land use, development and transportation) [Note: City has requested RDA funding for this.]

INITIATIVE 5

# PROTECTING

## our Natural Resources

*...with measures to increase green space, clean energy, good water quality, recycling and fossil fuel use alternatives.*



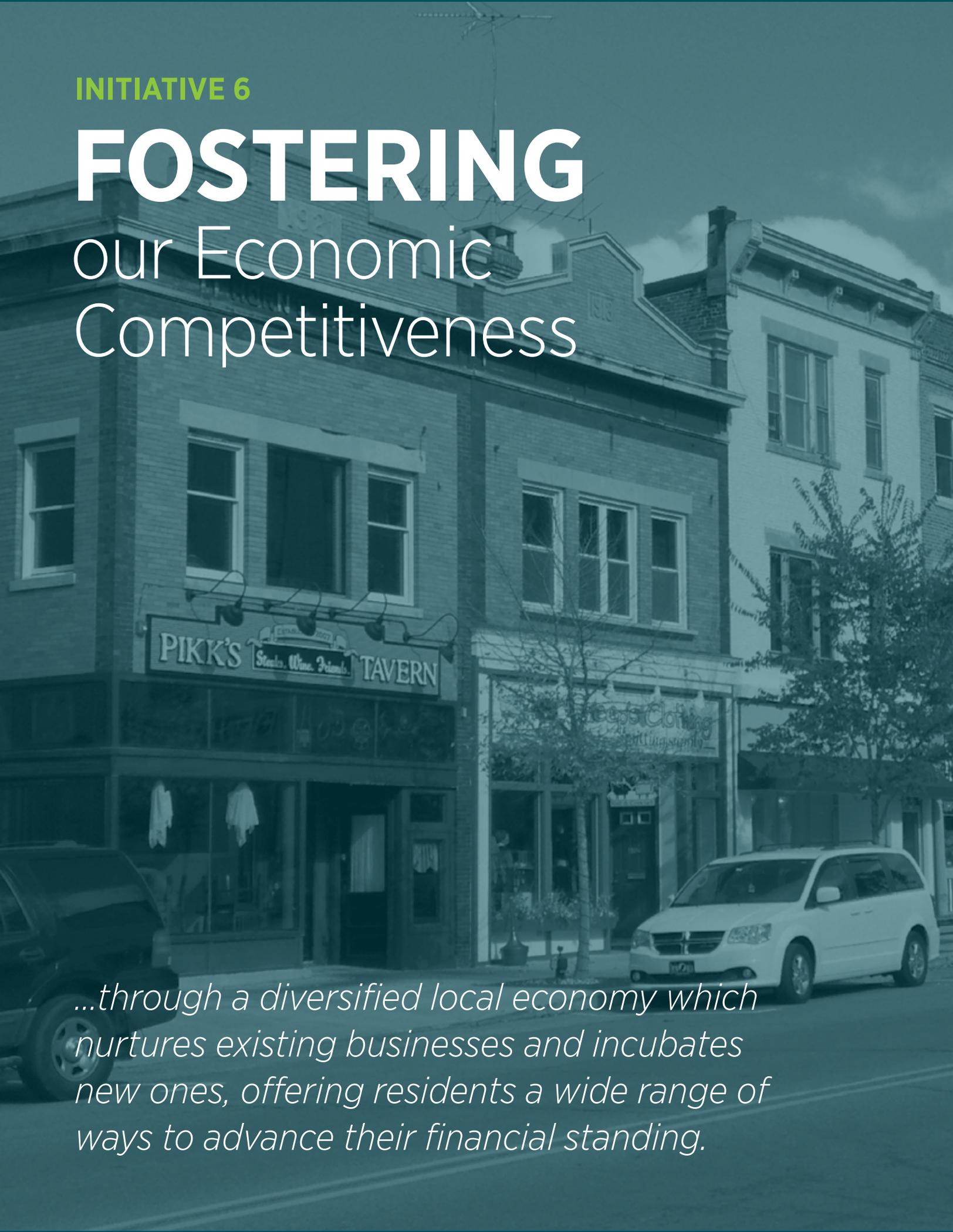
\* Indicates action was identified by the public and citizen steering committee as a community priority. For more details please see Implementation Matrix.

\* **5a** **Develop a Greenway.** The city should develop a greenway through the community which increases passive green space and connects the existing parks and other significant areas of the city through a green corridor. The greenway should provide additional connectivity for the community for both functional trips as well as recreation. It also has the potential to improve environmental conditions, e.g. retention of stormwater runoff.

\* **5b** **Create a Clean Energy Initiative.** The community should research and initiate a community-wide effort to promote and implement clean energy use. Major partners, like Valparaiso University, should be a collaborative partner. As stated previously, many businesses (and individuals) have preferences for investing in places that have an obvious environmental ethic.

**5c** **Practice “Green” Operations.** The city should reduce the environmental footprint of city operations through green operations and management practices. The first step would be to audit the current operations to determine the extent of green operations. In many cases, green operations and practices have shown to positively impact the “bottom line.”

**5d** **Promote Green Building Practices.** The city should develop educational material and programs to promote green building practices that reduce the impact on natural resources (use of raw materials, water and water discharge). Many businesses (and individuals) have preferences for investing in places that have an obvious environmental ethic. In addition, design and building professionals are making strides to demonstrate the value of green building practices.



INITIATIVE 6

# FOSTERING

our Economic  
Competitiveness

*...through a diversified local economy which nurtures existing businesses and incubates new ones, offering residents a wide range of ways to advance their financial standing.*



\* Indicates action was identified by the public and citizen steering committee as a community priority. For more details please see Implementation Matrix.

- \* 6a Facilitate New Downtown Housing.** The city should facilitate the development of more market rate and affordable multifamily housing close to—or in— downtown that is accessible and attractive to a diverse population (young professional, senior citizens etc.) This will require some tools and or investment tax incentives, urban infrastructure, appropriate zoning, etc. To accomplish successfully, it may also need a pro-active developer recruitment program for these sites. [Note: City is working on this through it TOD plan.]
- 6b Manage Fiber Network Development.** The city should become more proactive in gaining control over development of a high-speed, high-capacity fiber network. This can become the centerpiece of a technology business recruitment effort.
- 6c Prepare a Downtown Amenities/Attraction Strategy.** The city should evaluate tourism attraction opportunities and determine the potential for key attractions, particularly in the downtown area. The city has been very successful in building the dining options, but a broader choice of amenities and attractions could add to the increasing vitality of the area.
- 6d Develop a Meeting and Conference Center.** The community should study the market potential and feasibility of developing a civic meeting and conference center, with associated lodging and amenities, perhaps as part of the broader TOD planning effort. It is also possible that it could be connected (visually) to the Arts District idea (Action 7a).
- 6e Create Airport Corporate Support Services.** Work with the County to examine the gradual development of high-quality corporate aviation support services and facilities. [Note: Currently there is interest from the redevelopment commissions of both Porter County and the City of Valparaiso to complete a joint project around the airport].

INITIATIVE 7

# EXPANDING

our Cultural and  
Recreational Offerings

*...with programs, partnerships and settings  
that draw people together, encourage  
creativity and enhance well-being.*



**\* 7a Create an Arts District.** An arts district should be created that extends from downtown to the University with easy pedestrian access. The district might focus on a “signature street” that will strengthen the identity of the community and also serve as a connector street between the University and the downtown.

**7b Enhance University-Community Collaboration.** Strengthen current “town-gown committee” to increase communication and collaboration between the city and Valparaiso University. This could take the form of two layers. 1) high level with Mayor and University President; and 2) a broader group that provides connectivity to larger networks.

**7c Expand Educational Offerings for Senior Citizens.** Lifelong learning opportunities for seniors should be enhanced. This can be done in collaboration with local educational institutions. This would be a robust effort that uses the Villages Movement as a model.

**7d Build a Civic Center.** Work with Valparaiso University to create a state of the art civic (visual and performing arts, education, recreation and cultural offerings) center which could be used by community groups, the schools and touring professional productions. The University’s Center for the Arts has program and capacity limitations and a new shared facility—with a larger auditorium—could serve the academic and community needs.

**7e Create a University-Community Calendar.** An easily accessible calendar should be developed for University programs and events and be promoted actively to city residents. The University’s recent work to create an “event pool” provides an opportunity for increased sharing of program information. This should be pursued to provide the community a more comprehensive resource.

**7f Enhance Community Festival and Event Offerings.** The community festivals and events group should be supported to convene, promote and develop more cultural and community events. This can help connect and bind community members in a way that strengthens civic pride.

**7g Create a Homecoming Event.** A new community Homecoming event (community wide block party or festival) which serves to welcome new residents to the community and invites back people who have moved away. The local Valparaiso University alumni could be a key partner and or resource for this action.

\* Indicates action was identified by the public and citizen steering committee as a community priority. For more details please see Implementation Matrix.

INITIATIVE 8

# STRENGTHENING

our Sense of Place

*...with identifiable neighborhoods that are safe, walkable, connected, and offer a range of housing choices.*



**\* 8a Create a Land Bank.** The city should create a land bank program to better deal with empty or vacant lots. These properties could be more easily transferred to an organization or individual to create community impacting spaces such as community gardens, dog parks, playgrounds etc. Could also be a joint effort with the county to create a countywide land bank program.

**8b Provide Tax Incentives and Grant Programs.** The city should create tax incentives and/or grants to renovate housing and buildings within historic districts or neighborhoods. These areas are significant to the community's identity. Cost for historic rehabilitation in many cases is more expensive than new construction and some assistance could help facilitate improvement of these areas. [Note: The city has tax incentives in place now but for commercial buildings only.]

**8c Create a Streetscape Improvement Plan.** The city should create a prioritized streetscape improvement plan. Implementation of the plan may require tools such as tax credits for renovating or revitalizing the facades of the buildings which front the streets within the designated plan area. [Note: The city has a façade improvement funding program for downtown and for main corridors.]

**8d Name and Brand Neighborhoods.** The city should create a naming/branding program for older neighborhoods. For those with historic significance, seek historic designation (as part of the brand). Strengthening identity can increase attachment and pride of residents.

**8e Create a "Love Your Neighborhood" program.** The "love your neighborhood" program would be volunteered by neighborhood groups. They would run projects to transform their neighborhoods/streets or blocks. (Program could be supported financially by a partnership between local businesses and the city.) This program would connect the neighborhood groups to city departments such as parks and recreation, department of sanitation and Department of Transportation to help them get things done in their neighborhood.

\* Indicates action was identified by the public and citizen steering committee as a community priority. For more details please see Implementation Matrix

## INITIATIVE 9

# SUSTAINING our Local Government



*...through measures to ensure strong fiscal health and responsibility, in order to continue to provide high quality infrastructure and services to the community.*



\* Indicates action was identified by the public and citizen steering committee as a community priority. For more details please see Implementation Matrix.

- \* **9a Improve Infrastructure Maintenance.** The city should continue efforts to improve the maintenance of basic infrastructure of the community. This should be done to minimize the backlog of deferred maintenance and as a symbol of community pride and stability.
- 9b Annex with a Clear Purpose.** In the consideration of expanding the land area of the city, a clear purpose and direct and indirect fiscal benefit should be demonstrated. It is important that developments are unique in the costs to service as well as revenue generation.
- 9c Increase the Rainy Day Fund.** The city should continue to strengthen the financial reserves as a hedge against uncertainty and to maintain strong financial ratings. This is sound fiscal practice that the city should continue.

IMPLEME

NTATION

# OVERVIEW

The Vision Plan presents an action agenda for realizing the community's shared vision for the future. The success will not be determined by the quality of this document, but rather by the committed, ongoing implementation of its actions. The all-encompassing nature of the Vision Plan means it can only be achieved through the collaborative efforts of the community.

Individuals and organizations have already begun to work together during the preparation of the plan. Nearly 1,000 community members representing a wide range of backgrounds and interests served on committees, volunteered, or attended meetings to guide the process. More than 3,000 people were following the project on Facebook and thousands more were made aware through the many publicity and outreach efforts. There is widespread awareness of the Vision Plan and ValpoNEXT is viewed favorably within the community. It is time now to harness that energy to work towards achieving the vision.

This section of the report generally describes the suggested approach for carrying out the Vision Plan. The community will spend 90 days (following acceptance of the Vision Plan by City Council) to determine the preferred implementation management structure.

## Collaborating

The Vision Plan is not intended to be solely implemented by government. Commitment to the Plan and its implementation will require the coordinated efforts of individuals and organizations representing the public, private, and civic sectors of the community. Even those actions that require public sector involvement need an active citizenry to place them on the agendas of government agencies and ensure the agencies follow through.

## Monitoring

The Vision Plan should be monitored on a regular basis, and, when necessary, it should be revised or updated. This section outlines the guidance for monitoring the Plan's effectiveness and maintaining its relevancy.

### 1. Monitoring the Plan

The plan should be monitored for implementation effectiveness and relevancy. This review should happen on a formal basis no less than once per year. A status report should accompany this review and be promoted throughout the community, such as through the continued ValpoNEXT website. An annual public meeting—perhaps with a noted speaker—could take place to share progress and attract additional participants to move the community forward.

### 2. Updating the Plan

A major update of the Plan should be considered every 10 years to incorporate new decennial Census data. In the interim, key milestones may be reached which necessitate an update sooner than a 10-year cycle.

# HOW TO USE THE PLAN

The Vision Plan is intended to be a long range planning document, but used on a daily basis as public and private decisions are made concerning the community's future, including development, redevelopment, capital improvements, economic incentives and other matters affecting the community. The following is a summary of how decisions and processes should align with the vision, and actions.

- 1. Annual Work Programs and Budgets.** City staff and administrators should be cognizant of the recommendations of the Plan when preparing annual work programs and budgets. Local institutions might also consider the Plan when making important policy and financial decisions that impact the community.
- 2. Community Planning.** Community planning efforts, including those of the school district, should be aligned with the values, and goals and recommendations of the Vision Plan.
- 3. Capital Improvement Plan.** The city's capital improvement plan (CIP) should be consistent with the Plan's recommendations.
- 4. Economic Incentives.** Economic incentives should be reviewed to ensure consistency with the recommendations of the Vision Plan.
- 5. Private Investment Decisions.** Property owners, developers, and other private entities should consider the Plan's recommendations in their planning and investment decisions. Public decision-makers will be using the Vision Plan as a guide in their deliberations about proposals, projects, and funding requests. Property owners and developers should be cognizant of and complement the Plan's recommendations.
- 6. Civic and Social Engagement.** All civic and community groups should create opportunities to explore solutions to issues and problems of concern to the community. They should seek alignment with the recommendations of the Vision Plan and collaborate across interests, missions, and constituencies.
- 7. Consistent Interpretation.** ValpoNEXT's implementation leadership should collaborate with city staff and other critical decision-making entities to ensure clear and consistent interpretation of the Vision Plan.

# IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

## 1. Engaging our Citizens

CODE	KEY RECOMMENDATION	TIMEFRAME	LEAD COORDINATOR
<b>1a</b>	<b>Build Platform for Citizen Action and Input.</b>	Immediate	City, Mayor's Office
<b>1b</b>	<b>Embed Civic Education and Engagement in Schools.</b>	Short Term	Valparaiso Community Schools, Valpo Schools Foundation
<b>1c</b>	<b>Establish Civic Corps.</b>	Short Term	TBD
<b>1d</b>	<b>Establish a Coordinated Service Network.</b>	Short Term	City
<b>1e</b>	<b>Evaluate Public Communication.</b>	Short Term	Mayor's Office, Public Information Officer, Twitter, Facebook

## 2. Nurturing our Young People

CODE	KEY RECOMMENDATION	TIMEFRAME	LEAD COORDINATOR
<b>2a</b>	<b>Invest in Community Schools.</b>	Short Term	Valparaiso Community Schools
<b>2b</b>	<b>Evaluate School Governance.</b>	Immediate	Valparaiso Community Schools
<b>2c</b>	<b>Create Teacher Excellence Program.</b>	Medium Term	Chamber of Commerce, Valparaiso Community Schools, Valpo Schools Foundation
<b>2d</b>	<b>Create a Student Readiness Program.</b>	Short Term	Valparaiso Community Schools, Valpo Schools Foundation
<b>2e</b>	<b>Prepare School Master Plan.</b>	Short Term	Valparaiso Community Schools
<b>2f</b>	<b>Encourage Public Engagement in Schools.</b>	Short Term	TBD



**ADDITIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

**EXAMPLES**

Valparaiso University, Chamber of Commerce, Public Information Officer, Twitter, Facebook

City, Valparaiso University, ValpoNext Committee

<http://www.nycservice.org/>  
<http://schools.nyc.gov/community/sis/default.htm>

United Way of Porter County, Valparaiso University

<http://www.nycservice.org/>

Chamber of Commerce, ValpoNext Committee

Valparaiso University, Valparaiso Community Schools



**ADDITIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

**EXAMPLES**

Liasion work group (could include students, teachers, business owners, City Staff, City Council, Valparaiso Redevelopment Commission, etc. )

City Council, New Created Committee

PTO/PTA, Local Business, School or Education Foundation

District Awards for Teacher Excellence program (State of Texas)  
<http://governor.state.tx.us/news/press-release/2369/>

Teachers, PTO/PTA, Local Business, School or Education Foundation

Consultant, City Departments, Citizen Outreach

Valparaiso Community Schools, City Council, Mayor's Office, ValpoNext Committee

# IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

## 3. Embracing our Diversity

CODE	KEY RECOMMENDATION	TIMEFRAME	LEAD COORDINATOR
<b>3a</b>	<b>Ensure Affordable Shelter.</b>	Medium Term	City (Planning, City Administrator)
<b>3b</b>	<b>Create a Commission on Diversity and Inclusion.</b>	Immediate	City (City Administrator), Valparaiso University
<b>3c</b>	<b>Coordinate Social Services.</b>	Short Term	TBD
<b>3d</b>	<b>Explore a Living Wage Law.</b>	Short Term	City (City Administrator )
<b>3e</b>	<b>Celebrate Diversity.</b>	Short Term	City (City Administrator)

## 4. Connecting our Community

CODE	KEY RECOMMENDATION	TIMEFRAME	LEAD COORDINATOR
<b>4a</b>	<b>Build Streets for People.</b>	Medium Term	City (Planning, Parks, Engineering)
<b>4b</b>	<b>Advocate for Expanded Transit.</b>	Short Term	City (Planning)
<b>4c</b>	<b>Build a Multimodal Transportation Hub.</b>	Medium Term	City (Planning, Engineering)



**ADDITIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

**EXAMPLES**

Housing Opportunities, Porter County Coalition for Affordable Housing, Porter Starke, Spring Valley Shelter, United Way of Porter County and others TBD

Advisory Human Relations Council

Housing Opportunities, Porter County Coalition for Affordable Housing, Porter Starke, Spring Valley Shelter, United Way of Porter County, Porter County Community Foundation, Valparaiso University Department of Social Work and others TBD

Single Stop USA

<http://www.singlestopusa.org/>

<http://nationswell.com/nonprofit-creating-online-marketplace-social-services/>

St. Anthony's

<http://www.stanthonysf.org/SocialWorkCenter>

Chamber of Commerce, local businesses

NELP (National Employment Law Project)

[http://www.nelp.org/content/content\\_issues/category/living\\_wage\\_laws/](http://www.nelp.org/content/content_issues/category/living_wage_laws/)

Valparaiso University, Chamber of Commerce



**ADDITIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

**EXAMPLES**

Northern Indiana Regional Planning Commission

Northern Indiana Regional Planning Commission, Porter County, Indiana Department of Transportation, State of Indiana

Northern Indiana Regional Planning Commission, Porter County, Indiana Department of Transportation, State of Indiana, Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority

# IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

## 5. Protecting our Natural Resources

CODE	KEY RECOMMENDATION	TIMEFRAME	LEAD COORDINATOR
5a	<b>Develop a Greenway.</b>	Medium Term	City (Planning, Parks)
5b	<b>Create a Clean Energy Initiative.</b>	Medium Term	City (All Departments)
5c	<b>Practice "Green" Operations.</b>	Medium Term	City (All Departments)
5d	<b>Promote Green Building Practices.</b>	Short Term	City (Building, Planning, Engineering)

## 6. Fostering our Economic Competitiveness

CODE	KEY RECOMMENDATION	TIMEFRAME	LEAD COORDINATOR
6a	<b>Facilitate New Downtown Housing.</b>	Medium Term	City (Planning)
6b	<b>Manage Fiber Network Development.</b>	Short Term, Ongoing	City (City Administrator )
6c	<b>Prepare a Downtown Amenities or Attraction Strategy.</b>	Medium Term	City (Parks, Planning, Public Works, Valapraiso Events)
6d	<b>Develop a Meeting and Conference Center.</b>	Medium Term	City
6e	<b>Create Airport Corporate Support Services.</b>	Medium Term	City (Planning)



**ADDITIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

**EXAMPLES**

Chamber of Commerce

Home Buyers Association of Northwest Indiana Future Home Buyers (the community)



**ADDITIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

**EXAMPLES**

Valparaiso Redevelopment Commission

Valparaiso Economic Development Corporation, Chamber of Commerce

Valparaiso Events

Valparaiso University, Chamber of Commerce, Builders, Investors

Valparaiso Redevelopment Commission, Valparaiso Economic Development Corporation

# IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

## 7. Expanding our Cultural and Recreational Offerings

CODE	KEY RECOMMENDATION	TIMEFRAME	LEAD COORDINATOR
<b>7a</b>	<b>Create an Arts District.</b>	Long Term	City (Planning, Parks)
<b>7b</b>	<b>Enhance University-Community Collaborations.</b>	Immediate, Ongoing	City
<b>7c</b>	<b>Expand Educational Offerings for Senior Citizens.</b>	Short Term, Ongoing	City (Parks Department)
<b>7d</b>	<b>Build a Civic Center.</b>	Long Term	City (Parks Department)
<b>7e</b>	<b>Create a University-Community Calendar.</b>	Short Term	City, Valparaiso Events, City Manager
<b>7f</b>	<b>Enhance Community Festival and Event Offerings.</b>	Short Term, Ongoing	Valparaiso Events, City Manager
<b>7g</b>	<b>Create a Homecoming Event.</b>	Long Term	City, Valparaiso Events



**ADDITIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

**EXAMPLES**

Valparaiso University, Valparaiso Art Advisory Committee, Porter County Museum, Porter County Community Foundation, Arts Coalition

Valparaiso University, Town and Gown, Ivy Tech, Indiana University, Purdue

Valparaiso University, Ritten House, Pines Village, Council on Aging

Valparaiso University

Valparaiso University

Valparaiso Events

Valparaiso University, Valparaiso Community Schools, Valparaiso Events

# IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

## 8. Strengthening our Sense of Place

CODE	KEY RECOMMENDATION	TIMEFRAME	LEAD COORDINATOR
<b>8a</b>	<b>Create a Land Bank.</b>	Medium Term	City (Parks, Planning, Engineering)
<b>8b</b>	<b>Provide Tax Incentives and Grant Programs.</b>	Short Term, Ongoing	City (Planning)
<b>8c</b>	<b>Create a Streetscape Improvement Plan.</b>	Short Term	City (Parks, Planning, Engineering)
<b>8d</b>	<b>Name and Brand Neighborhoods.</b>	Medium Term	City (Planning)
<b>8e</b>	<b>Create a “Love Your Neighborhood” Program.</b>	Short Term	City (Planning)

## 9. Sustaining our Local Government

CODE	KEY RECOMMENDATION	TIMEFRAME	LEAD COORDINATOR
<b>9a</b>	<b>Improve Infrastructure Maintenance.</b>	Short Term, Ongoing	City (City Manager, Engineering, Public Utilities)
<b>9b</b>	<b>Annex with a Clear Purpose.</b>	Ongoing	City (Planning)
<b>9c</b>	<b>Increase Rainy Day Fund.</b>	Short Term, Ongoing	City (City Manager)



**ADDITIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

**EXAMPLES**

Valparaiso Redevelopment Commission

Center for Community Progress  
<http://www.communityprogress.net>

City Council, Historic Preservation, Planning Commission

Valparaiso Redevelopment Commission, Northern Indiana  
Regional Planning Commission

Neighborhood Leaders

NYC Service, Love Your Block (LYB) Program  
[http://www.nycservice.org/initiatives/index.php?bitinitiative\\_id=5](http://www.nycservice.org/initiatives/index.php?bitinitiative_id=5)

Create a grant program for community nonprofits to improve their neighborhood.



**ADDITIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

**EXAMPLES**

Planning Commission, City Council, Property Owners, Valparaiso  
Community Schools

City Council, Clerk's Office, Mayor's Office