



# Cumberland Crossing

## Makes the Map

# CITY TALK

a City of Valparaiso Quarterly Newsletter

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[www.valpo.us](http://www.valpo.us)

Cumberland Crossing is a new star on city maps and a star attraction on the city's north side. Once a blighted strip mall called County Seat Plaza, the new Cumberland Crossing is becoming a dynamic lifestyle center and an attractive gateway to the city. The city took the lead on the project when it acquired the crumbling property in 2006, initiating a public/private partnership by selling the property to the Urschel family for development. The Urschels' development company, Vale Park LLC, got busy building a striking new retail center as the city launched construction of new roadways extending west to Cumberland and north to Bullseye Lake Road.

The good news continued when the Urschel family donated land plus \$7.5 million in funding for a new \$15 million Valparaiso Family YMCA to anchor the new development. "We're counting the days until we move in," said Bob Wanek, CEO for the Valparaiso Family YMCA. The new space is scheduled to open on May 4 and will feature such perks as an indoor walking/running track, two pools, an expanded (quadrupled!) child watch area, light-filled spaces, and abundant parking. "We're particularly excited that the new facility will be brighter and more accessible," said Wanek.

"We're going to be open from 5:30 in the morning until 10:30 at night, and our members will be shopping in Cumberland Crossing," said Wanek. "We're eager to see the stores do well, and we look forward to partnering with retailers so that everyone succeeds," he said. Valpo's YMCA currently has about 7,000 members and estimates an increase of about 30 percent with the new facility. "We're being conservative and factoring in the economy, but we've seen other Ys increase their membership by as much as 50 percent to 75 percent with the opening of a new facility," he said.

Businesses are responding to the upgraded infrastructure. Burger King and Dairy Queen have recently reopened after extensive remodeling. Carol's Hallmark has moved into a bright new space on the north end, and new businesses have opened doors along Calumet Ave. "The remodel was an opportunity for us to upgrade to the new 'Grill & Chill' restaurant model to match the new look of the center," said Kevin Crozier, owner of the newly-remodeled DQ. "We've had a very positive response from the community and look forward to many years of success here," he said. The attractive, modern building will feature outdoor patio dining when the weather improves.

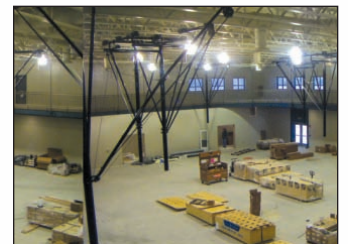
To complement Cumberland Crossing, the city will complete infrastructure improvements that will widen Calumet Ave from Vale Park Road to Bullseye Lake Road, creating a turning lane and installing traffic signals at the entrance to Cumberland Crossing. The roadway will be resurfaced and decorative lighting installed. Federal funds will pay for 80 percent of the North Calumet project, and the Redevelopment Commission is funding the city's 20 percent share.

"Cumberland Crossing is now an asset to Valparaiso. So many great people from both the public and private sector have gotten on board to make this project succeed," said Mayor Jon Costas.



**The YMCA is offering monthly "hard hat" tours of the new facility as it completes construction.**

**To register, visit [www.valpoyymca.org](http://www.valpoyymca.org) or call 219-462-4185.**



**D**ear Citizens:

What a welcome sight is springtime this year! This winter topped all expectations – colder, whiter... longer? Along with warmer temps and bluer skies, we have many other amazing things to greet this season.

Visit [www.valpo.us](http://www.valpo.us) for upcoming City Talk Live dates.

Take Cumberland Crossing. This new lifestyle center is taking shape each week. New stores are opening and familiar faces have returned in new digs. The brand new \$15 million YMCA is getting ready to open in May. The whole area is becoming more friendly to pedestrian traffic, and we look forward to watching this new city gateway take shape.



Our downtown park is another exciting springtime project. The public has really gotten involved in the planning, and we're anxious to break ground on this community project. I'm anxious to attend the first city-wide movie night under the stars at our own Central Park.

Watch as the roundabout goes green with plantings, Valparaiso Street evolves, and Eastgate takes shape. It's certainly an exciting time to stroll Valparaiso.

Sincerely,

*Jon Costas*

Jon Costas  
Mayor

## A "Greener" Landscape

### City's Horticulturists Share Environmentally-friendly Landscaping Tips

A "green" landscape isn't just about the color of the plantings, according to Steve Martinson, the city's Horticulture Superintendent. "Some plants just make better environmental neighbors," he said. The city considers the environment as it cares for acres of landscaped beds throughout the city's 600 acres of parks, as well as other city properties.

When choosing plants, Martinson and his crew look for plants that are noninvasive, drought tolerant, and pest resistant.

"We want the plants to look good yet we don't want the taxpayer to pay for a lot of expensive maintenance and fuel," he said.

The city will apply these green techniques later this year when the roundabout gets a polish of plants as it transforms into a dramatic entrance to the city, thanks to a state grant. Part of the design is "savannah" look, particularly friendly to the environment. The design features an arbor of native trees that will feature "crazy fall color" with species such as carpinus, serviceberry, redbud, and quaking aspen, according to Martinson. Groupings of salt-tolerant perennials will include catmint, grasses, alliums, and Russian sage, along with bayberry shrubs and a special rain garden planted in conjunction with the Save the Dunes Conservation Fund.

Local gardeners can make earth-friendly plant choices in their own landscapes by choosing plants that won't need a lot of supplemental watering and chemicals. Other good choices are plants that attract desirable wildlife (birds and bees). Martinson also warns gardeners to avoid invasive plants. "Some plants quickly get out of hand and take over the real estate," he warns. Invasive plants would include ornamental pear, Norway maple, garlic mustard, English ivy, and ailanthus – (tree of heaven). The root systems of invasive trees can also cause damage to sewers and foundations.

Using an earth-friendly strategy, the city is able to maintain its acres of landscaping each year using a full-time crew of just three horticulturists. To stretch the green a little further, the Parks' horticulture team produces more than 600 flats of annuals each year at its own greenhouse facility. Valpo's horticulturists are eager to share their expertise with local gardeners online at [www.valparaisoparks.org](http://www.valparaisoparks.org) (look under "About the Parks") where readers can find lists of suggested plants and trees, as well as the invasive species to avoid. The community can enjoy examples in person throughout the city's landscaped beds, as well as at Ogden Gardens, a four-acre botanical garden at Harrison and Campbell streets. Exhibits include perennial beds, seasonal flowers, trees, and a Japanese garden with a 22,000 gallon koi pond. The community is also invited to get involved as a horticultural volunteer by calling **531-HORT (4678)**.



**To maximize the green each season, the Valparaiso Parks Department produces more than 600 flats of annuals in its own greenhouse.**

# Strategic Plan Advances City

Miles of resurfaced roadways. A revived downtown, Eastgate, and Cumberland Crossing. More than \$27 million in grant funds from state and federal government. These are all products of the city's first ever comprehensive strategic plan – laid out in 2004. The work continues as the new strategic plan advances the vision for the next five years and beyond. "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," said Mayor Jon Costas.

The following are highlights of the 2009 Strategic Plan:

## ■ Sidewalk Improvement Plan

The Sidewalk Improvement Plan will develop a five-year sidewalk improvement plan to repair existing sidewalks and install missing sidewalk sections necessary to connect neighborhoods, schools, and businesses.

## ■ US 30/Morthland Drive Corridor Enhancement Strategies

The city will initiate a strategy for enhancing the US 30/Morthland Drive Corridor, including recommendations for design standards, streetscape, and signage improvements for the most heavily traveled corridor of the city.

## ■ Downtown Park

Located at the corner of Lafayette and Indiana Streets, the downtown park will transform a vacant building into a vibrant gathering space using ideas submitted by the community, including a water feature, performance space, and an area to host community functions from the Farmer's Market to movie nights.

## ■ Storm Water Plans

Recent unprecedented rains underscored the need to improve the storm water system and provided information valuable in enhancing the system. In 2009, an updated storm water plan will be introduced to the public for input and final plans completed to strengthen the system and reduce drainage problems.

## ■ Public Works Campus

Rebuilding or relocating the city's Public Works campus is critical to protect the equipment fleet and provide a safe and efficient working environment. In 2009, a plan will be developed to find a solution capable of meeting the city's needs for at least 30 years.

## ■ Public Transportation

To better serve residents and respect the environment, the city will support the city's transit system with improvements such as shelters at selected V-Line stops, as well as possible partnerships with other communities for express service to Chicago.

To read the complete Strategic Plan, visit [www.valpo.us](http://www.valpo.us) or call City Hall at **462-1161**.

# Bag Worms A Green Approach

Bag worms infest (*and kill!*) shrubs and trees. The bags they make look very much like pine cones and can go undetected while the worms do their damage. Each tear-drop shaped bag can contain more than 800 eggs, waiting to emerge as hungry larvae in May. Steve Martinson, the city's Horticultural Superintendent recommends the following green approach to bag worms:

- ▼ **First**, physically remove and destroy any bags/ worms you can reach.
- ▼ **Secondly**, you can spray the entire plant with a Spinosad solution – an alternative to conventional pesticide.

"Spinosad is a naturally derived growth inhibitor that prevents the worms from growing, yet it won't harm desirable bugs such as ladybugs and lacewings," he said.

***Bag worms look a lot like pinecones as you can see here in an example found in Valparaiso.***







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# Valparaiso Street on Pace



The long-awaited Valparaiso Street project is almost a complete reality. The project includes the relocation of water lines, installation of new storm and sanitary sewers, and reconstruction of the road from Evans Avenue to Herta Street. Still to come this spring are the installation of turn lanes at the Glendale Boulevard intersection, along with a traffic signal, plus sidewalks and gutters along the roadway. The project

comes with a price tag of more than \$6 million, with the majority coming from a federal grant and additional state funding.

In response to resident requests, the street now has a posted speed limit of 25 miles per hour. Further, the city's Traffic and Safety Committee is considering residents' requests to allow parking along one side of the street.

The project is already delivering on the promise of better drainage, according to Matt Kras, the City's Stormwater Engineer. "We had an area just south of Harrison and west of Valparaiso Street that was naturally very low and attracted a lot of water every time it rained. We'd consistently have a crew out there pumping out water when it rained. Since the new main was installed, the water has a place to go. Even during the biggest rain this past September, we didn't receive any calls from that area," he said.