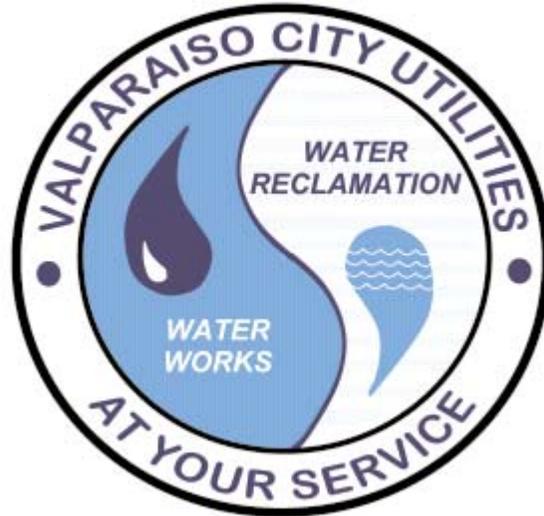


# VALPARAISO CITY UTILITIES



## Strategic Plan 2010 - 2015

*Prepared By: The Valparaiso City Utilities*

**December, 2010**

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## FOREWORD

Valparaiso City Utilities has seen a number of changes over the past few years. In the early 1990s, both the Department of Water Works and the Water Reclamation Department went through a re-engineering process that saw a great change in the operations of both Departments. One of the results of these operational changes was to reduce our staff, through attrition, which allowed for keeping our rates as low as possible while maintaining exceptional service to our customers.

In 2004, Mayor Jon Costas developed a plan to merge the Department of Water Works and the Water Reclamation Department under the leadership of the new Valparaiso City Utilities Board of Directors. The new utilities board was formerly known as the Department of Water Works Board of Directors. In 2009, the Storm Water Management Department was merged with the City Utilities.

Throughout this time frame, both utilities have modernized their operations by employing advanced technologies in order to meet ever increasing federal and state regulations. Following the lead of City government, the Valparaiso City Utilities began a strategic planning process earlier this year in order to develop a plan to guide the many facets of the organization over the next 5 years.

A group of 19 members of the Valparaiso City Utilities staff met and worked for a 7 month period to review every business aspect of each of our divisions and to plan for the future needs of the utility. This planning group consisted of current utility leadership.

The document you are about to read will be our road map to major activities, programs and projects over the next 5 years. I hope you will agree with me that the City of Valparaiso is a great place to live. As Mayor Jon Costas has said "*The City of Valparaiso is one of the jewels of Indiana communities*". The Valparaiso City Utilities is an integral part of the structure that helps make the City of Valparaiso a jewel.

The purpose of this strategic plan is to keep our utility strong and viable well into the future. At the same time, this plan will allow us to continue to improve our service to our customers. It has been and is a pleasure to serve you.

John A. Hardwick  
Utilities Director  
December, 2010

## **GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

Guiding principles are those ideals and beliefs which provide direction to an organization's management, personnel and customer service activities and in consistently producing a high level of quality in the course of conducting everyday business. As a customer driven organization, the guiding principles of the Valparaiso City Utilities are defined within a mission statement and in a clear set of core values.

The Valparaiso City Utility's mission statement defines the purpose of the organization. The core values identified by the Valparaiso City Administration and the Valparaiso City Council in the City of Valparaiso's Strategic Plan of 2009 are those values embraced by the Valparaiso City Utilities as a commitment to customer service with honesty and professionalism.

### **Mission Statement**

The mission of the Valparaiso City Utilities is to constantly provide our community with safe, responsible and reliable drinking water, wastewater and stormwater services in a cost effective and exceptional manner.

### **Core Values**

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

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

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

## INTRODUCTION

In January of 2004, Mayor Jon Costas put into place a new organizational structure for the City of Valparaiso in order to streamline City government. This new structure included integrating the Department of Water Works and the Water Reclamation Department into one City wide utility. There were many reasons for combining both municipal utilities and some of those reasons are as follows:

1. Both organizations are customer service driven.
2. Each utility serves virtually the same residential, business and industrial user accounts.
3. Both are deeply committed to the environment.
4. The United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) and the Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM) greatly regulate both utilities.
5. The types of vehicle and process equipment used by both utilities are similar.
6. The combining of similar functions, such as vehicle maintenance and field services, would provide an economic benefit to both utilities.

On April 1, 2004, this new City utility organization came into existence after the Utilities Director assumed directorship over both the Department of Water Works and the Water Reclamation Department. The new combined utility organization is now known as the Valparaiso City Utilities. The City of Valparaiso's Stormwater Management Program or Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) Program was added to the utility's responsibilities in 2009.

Today, the Valparaiso City Utilities is governed by a 5 member Valparaiso City Utility Board of Directors and encompasses drinking water treatment and distribution, wastewater collection and treatment and stormwater collection. The utility has an operating budget of \$11.68 million for fiscal year 2010 and a capital improvement plan for fiscal years 2010 thru 2014 of \$17.4 million. Valparaiso City Utilities is currently comprised of 69 employees. The utility serves a population of approximately 35,000 located in or adjacent to the City of Valparaiso.

## STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

In May of 2010, the Valparaiso City Utilities embarked upon a planning process in order to improve the performance of the organization by honestly assessing the current state of the utility and to provide a road map for actions and project priorities over the next 5 years. After 7 months of effort, this process has resulted in the Valparaiso City Utilities initial Strategic Plan.

This Strategic Plan reflects the active involvement of utility management and members of utility staff who formed both the Strategic Planning Committee and the Strategic Planning Oversight Committee. In addition, members of the utility staff not on either committee also participated in the planning process.

The designated groups within the Strategic Planning Committee began the planning process by reviewing other water/wastewater/stormwater utility strategic plans and by conducting a utility wide assessment for each designated group. The main instrument used by the designated groups in conducting the utility wide assessment was the *10 Attributes of Effectively Managed Water Sector Utilities* as developed by a coalition of collaborating industry-wide professional organizations.



Once the important attributes being performed at a low rate of achievement were identified by the Strategic Planning Committee, the next step in the planning process was to develop and implement a procedure for making the desired improvements within the attributes. An outline for the development of individual goals when addressing the identified attributes was provided by the Strategic Planning Committee to each planning group. This outline is as follows:

1. Goals
2. Strategies (Tasks or Activities Used)
3. Timeline
4. Resources Needed
  - a. Human Resources
  - b. Financial Resources
5. Intangibles

In conjunction with the work of the individual planning groups, the Strategic Planning Committee met to discuss and review each of group's goals. After approval of each of the group's individual strategic plans by the Strategic Planning Oversight Committee, the individual plans were edited at the end of the planning process and organized into the Valparaiso City Utilities' Strategic Plan.

The Valparaiso City Utilities' Strategic Plan is a living and breathing document covering a 5 year time frame. Due to the wide scope and time frame of the plan, an annual review of the plan will take place by the Strategic Planning Committee and utility management in order to evaluate the progress of the utility in attaining the goals outlined and discussed within this document.



## CUSTOMER SERVICE CENTER

The Valparaiso City Utilities Customer Service Center is located at 205 Billings Street and services a population of approximately 35,000 within an 11 square mile area service area. The Customer Service Center is currently staffed with 7 full time employees serving as the primary point of contact for water, wastewater, stormwater, and trash collection customers.

Some of the services performed by the Center are to start/stop accounts, account transfers, leak surveys, new construction meter sets, answering questions about accounts, initiating service requests to all utility departments in response to complaints or concerns, bill collections, bill processing and to provide a means for follow-up to service requests.

Over the next 5 years, the Customer Service Center's goals are to work to enhance our understanding of what makes services valuable to our customers, improve operating efficiencies and to proactively manage the Center's staff. These 3 goals are as follows:

### **Goal #1**

*Proactively interact with our customers to better understand their needs and their perceptions of what makes services valuable.*

### **Goal #2**

*Improve operating efficiency and customer service through the use of wireless technology.*

### **Goal #3**

*Proactively manage Customer Service Center staff to ensure that we recruit, train and retrain highly qualified employees that will allow us to operate our increasingly complex work management programs.*



## FINANCE OFFICE

The Valparaiso City Utilities Finance Office is responsible for the overall internal and external budgeting for the entire organization. The Office is also responsible for complying with financial regulations issued by the State of Indiana Board of Accounts and in reporting utility payroll, billing, accounts payable and accounts receivable.

The Finance Office is located at 205 Billings Street in Valparaiso, Indiana and serves 69 employees, 5 Valparaiso City Utilities' Board of Directors and an estimated population of 35,000. The Office is overseeing a utility operating budget of \$11.68 million for fiscal year 2010 with a capital improvement plan for fiscal years 2010 thru 2014 of \$17.4 million.

Over the next 5 years, the Finance Office's goals are to correct capital asset recordkeeping deficiencies and maintain modernized capital asset records; implement additional Incode financial system modules in order to better serve our customers, the Valparaiso City Utilities's Board of Directors, utility vendors and employees; and to create and implement a financial disaster recovery plan based upon the Incode computer software system. These 3 goals are as follows:

### **Goal #1**

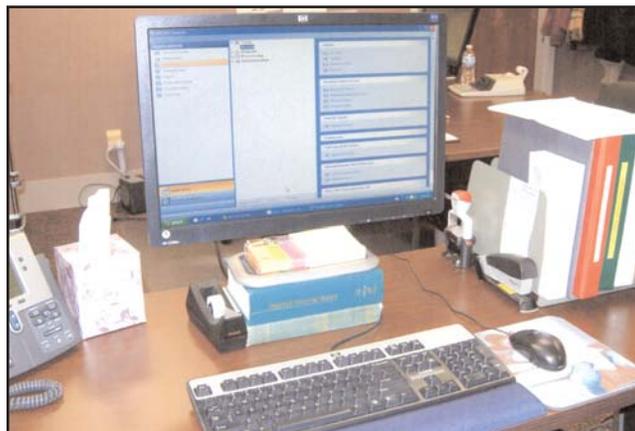
*Correct capital asset recordkeeping deficiencies and maintain capital asset records going forward.*

### **Goal #2**

*Research, purchase and implement additional Incode financial computer system modules in order to better serve our customers, Valparaiso City Utilities Board of Directors and utility vendors and employees.*

### **Goal #3**

*Create and implement a Financial Disaster Recovery Plan based upon the Incode software system.*



## DEPARTMENT OF WATER WORKS

The Valparaiso Department of Water Works is composed of 2 drinking water treatment plants and a water distribution system which provide an average of 4.5 million gallons per day of high quality potable water to our customers. The first water treatment/filtration plant is located next to Flint Lake and the second plant is located next to the Porter County Municipal Airport. The water distribution system offices are centrally located within the City of Valparaiso under the elevated water storage tank at 107 Billings Street.

The Department maintains over 200 miles of water delivery system pipeline while serving approximately 35,000 customers in the City of Valparaiso and in outlying communities of the Greater Valparaiso area. Additional infrastructure includes 1,593 fire hydrants, 3,344 valves and 5 water storage tanks of which 3 are elevated.

Over the next five years, there are 4 drinking water treatment goals and 1 water distribution system goal planned for completion by the Department of Water Works. Those goals are to develop new water wells for the Airport and Flint Lake Water Treatment Plants, investigate water softening of the Department's potable water product, automate the distribution system flushing system, reclaim filter backwash water for improved water use efficiencies and to replace aging water infrastructure through a systematic plan. These 5 goals are as follows:

### **Goal #1**

*Develop a new drinking water well field for the Airport Water Treatment Plant and new drinking water wells for the Airport and Flint Lake Water Treatment Plants in order to meet the Department's current and future water demands.*

### **Goal #2**

*Investigate the softening of the current drinking water supply of the Department of Water Works.*

**Goal #3**

*Flush water distribution pipe lines using automatic flushing device in order to improve the water quality as well as to minimize manpower usage for the activity.*

**Goal #4**

*Reclaim the filter back wash water at both treatment plants for improved water use efficiency and to conserve the Department's water supplies.*

**Goal #5**

*Address potential critical infrastructure needs within the City of Valparaiso by planning to replace approximately 2,000 to 3,000 feet of aging water distribution infrastructure with funding from the Department's Annual Budget.*



## WATER RECLAMATION DEPARTMENT

The Valparaiso Water Reclamation Department consists of the Elden Kuehl Pollution Control Facility or wastewater treatment plant and the Wastewater Collection (Sewer) Division which serves the residents, commercial establishments and many various sized industrial manufacturing facilities located next to or within the corporate limits of the City of Valparaiso. The treatment plant is the largest in Porter County and is a modern facility with the plant treating an average daily wastewater flow of about 5.5 million gallons and has a current designed capacity to treat a peak wastewater flow of 18 million gallons per day. The Collections Division maintains 228 miles of sanitary sewers, stormwater mains and combination sewers.

Over the next five years, the Water Reclamation Department's 4 goals are to continue to maintain 100% compliance with the treatment plant's issued permits, expand the plant's biosolids program to include a Class A compost product component, institute a sewer infrastructure stability and replacement program and modernize underground infrastructure construction standards. These 4 goals are as follows:

### **Goal #1**

*Continue to maintain 100% compliance with the City of Valparaiso's State of Indiana issued National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit and Site Specific Biosolids Land Application Permit.*

### **Goal #2**

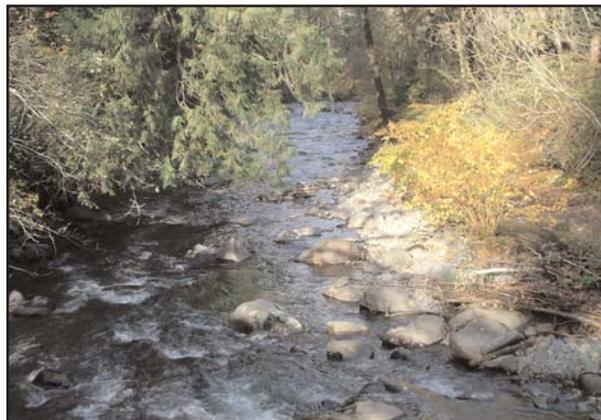
*Expand the Valparaiso Water Reclamation Department's current Class B Biosolids Land Application Program to include a composted Class A biosolids component.*

### **Goal #3**

*Develop and implement an infrastructure stability and replacement program.*

### **Goal #4**

*Modernize underground infrastructure construction standards for both the sanitary wastewater collection system and the storm water collection system.*



## UTILITY INTEGRATION

The connecting of the Water Works Department and the Water Reclamation Department into the entity now known as the Valparaiso City Utilities began in earnest after the City of Valparaiso underwent a reorganization of City Administration in early 2004. In addition to the changes in City Administration, it was recognized that the integration of both utilities would provide a number of advantages to both Departments. Some of those advantages include cost savings in obtaining common equipment and bulk supplies due to a combined purchasing power or an increase in operational efficiency in certain areas within both Departments such as through combined vehicle maintenance (completed). Additional cost savings could be realized through Department integration in the joint use of heavy construction equipment or in utility-wide emergency action planning as is currently being researched and developed by the utility's Safety and Security Committee.

Over the next 5 years, the Valparaiso City Utilities will continue to look into ways for achieving the further integration of both Departments into a City-wide utility. The integration goals addressed in this plan are to continue to combine the Distribution System Division of the Department of Water Works Department and the Collections Division of the Water Reclamation Department into 1 operational location, modernize current communications and mapping systems for the utility's field services, develop and implement utility-wide policies and procedures, complete a utility succession plan and to enact a utility-wide energy policy. These 5 goals are as follows:

### **Goal #1**

*The full operational integration of the Distribution System Division of the Department of Water Works Department and the Collections Division of the Water Reclamation Department's through cross-training and certification.*

## **Goal #2**

*Modernize communications equipment for the Distribution Division and the Collections Division by purchasing mobile laptops and ipads for field personnel as needed so as to allow real-time access to databases and mapping information while in the field. Complete the development and implementation of a modernized mapping system for the City of Valparaiso's drinking water distribution, wastewater collection and stormwater infrastructure. The mapping system will consist of water distribution system mains and piping, sanitary sewer mains, manholes and force mains, combination sewer mains and manholes and stormwater mains and inlets.*

## **Goal #3**

*Develop and implement a strong succession plan, training and education program and a retirement counseling program for Valparaiso City Utilities personnel.*

## **Goal #4**

*Modify and/or develop policy and procedures in order to standardize and streamline Valparaiso City Utility work procedures and to assure compliance with all regulatory agencies.*

## **Goal #5**

*Recognizing the need for an energy savings and sustainability, the Valparaiso City Utilities has partnered with the Region V Office of the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA), the Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM) and other Indiana communities in an Energy Management Pilot Project. The 2 year project, which started in October of 2008, will result in the utility being knowledgeable about energy management and to develop energy policies and long term plans in order to improve energy and environmental performance.*



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*Strategic Planning.* Those words can bring to a person's mind a wide variety of thoughts and emotions. Especially if the person has a part in the creation of such a plan. The essence of strategic planning is the ability of an organization to honestly assess its current operations and then to have the foresight and strength to determine verifiable goals for an organization's viability at some distant point in the future. It is not a simple task. After all of the effort that has gone into the making of this plan, it is my hope that the reader will come away with a better understanding of the Valparaiso City Utilities and the goals that our organization is attempting to achieve in the future.

There were many individuals who had a part in the development and completion of this plan. Thanks are due to the members of the City Utilities Board for their patience as this plan took awhile to complete. Recognition goes to John Hardwick and Steve Poulos for the constant direction they gave throughout this project for they required only one thing from us – excellence. Acknowledgement also goes to Stu Walesh for his expertise in strategic planning. For their hard work and dedication to this project, the members of the Strategic Planning Committee who are Sue Gustafson, Chuck McIntire, Mary Woodworth, George Brown, Shihua Chen, Dick Freeman, Shaun Shifflett, Cathy Fejer, Peggy Busse, Dick Condon, Mark Geskey, Alina Hahn, Jane Leighty, Brian Pursley, Mike Steege and Vera Trikilis. And finally, to all of the professional men and women of the Valparaiso City Utilities - for it is they who will bring this plan to life.

Edward J. Pilarski  
Editor  
December, 2010