

## REPORT OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION

Date of Meeting: January 3, 2022

### Report #1

The Planning Commission met at 4:00 p.m. on January 3, 2022, in the City Hall Council Chambers and via remote audioconferencing. Members present included Chairperson Shane Blaser, Susan Feith, Ben Goodreau, Lee Thao, Eric Daven, and attending via Zoom was Ryan Austin. Shane Burkart was absent. Also at the meeting were Associate Planner Carrie Edmondson, Alderperson Patrick Delaney, Norman Paul, Earl Haefs, Kurt and Connie Saylor, Rose Schultz, and Chris Jackson. Community Development Director Kyle Kearns attended remotely.

The meeting was called to order at 4:04 p.m.

**1. Approval of the report from the December 6, 2021, Plan Commission meeting**

The report was not included in the January 3, 2022, Plan Commission packet and approval was postponed for February's meeting.

**2. Vandewalle & Associates – Wisconsin Rapids Recovery & Redevelopment Plan Update**

Kyle Kearns provided an progress update for the Wisconsin Rapids Recovery and Redevelopment Plan, and referenced the consultant memo (attached).

**3. PLAN-21-1258; Community Development Department – Public hearing and action on a request for an amendment to the City's Comprehensive Plan, specifically map 7-2 Future Land Use Map, to classify 8 parcels, identified below, from a Residential classification to a Commercial or Mixed-Use land use classification: 1210 River Run Drive (Parcel ID 34-11865), 1310 River Run Drive (Parcel ID 34-11867), 1211 Parkwood Drive (Parcel ID 34-11868), 1221 Parkwood Drive (Parcel ID 34-11869), 1220 Parkwood Drive (Parcel ID 34-11870), 1210 Parkwood Drive (Parcel ID 34-11871), 1350 River Run Drive (Parcel ID 34-11875), and an unaddressed parcel on 16<sup>th</sup> Street South (Parcel ID 34-11880).**

Carrie Edmondson provided a synopsis of the proposed changes to the City's Comprehensive Plan and zoning changes, including the items in PLAN-21-1258 and PLAN-21-1259.

Public hearing opened at 4:22 p.m.

Speaking in favor: Connie Saylor spoke in favor on behalf of the Animal Medical and Surgical Clinic as did Rose Schutz, representing the architect for a building project at the Animal Medical and Surgical Clinic.

Speaking against: none

Public hearing closed at 4:25 p.m.

Norman Paul of Lily Lane had questions about tax implications from the proposed changes and Alderperson Patrick Delaney questioned the effect of State Licensing at the Assisted Living facility, to which Kyle Kearns responded. Susan Feith expressed concerns regarding how signage, setbacks, building heights, and animal activities might be impacted. Mr. Kearns referred to the Use Table and other standards from the Zoning Code to address these issues.

Motion by Blaser to approve PLAN-21-1258, a request for an amendment to the City's Comprehensive Plan, specifically map 7-2 Future Land Use Map, to classify 8 parcels, identified below, from a Residential classification to a Mixed Use land use classification: 1210 River Run Drive (Parcel ID 34-11865), 1310 River Run Drive (Parcel ID 34-11867), 1211 Parkwood Drive (Parcel ID 34-11868), 1221 Parkwood Drive

(Parcel ID 34-11869), 1220 Parkwood Drive (Parcel ID 34-11870), 1210 Parkwood Drive (Parcel ID 34-11871), 1350 River Run Drive (Parcel ID 34-11875), and an unaddressed parcel on 16<sup>th</sup> Street South (Parcel ID 34-11880); second by Goodreau.

Motion carried (6 – 0)

4. **PLAN-21-1259; Community Development Department** – Public hearing and action on a request for a zoning map amendment to rezone 7 parcels, identified below, from R-2 Mixed Residential District to B-3 Neighborhood Commercial District: 1210 River Run Drive (Parcel ID 34-11865), 1310 River Run Drive (Parcel ID 34-11867), 1211 Parkwood Drive (Parcel ID 34-11868), 1221 Parkwood Drive (Parcel ID 34-11869), 1220 Parkwood Drive (Parcel ID 34-11870), 1210 Parkwood Drive (Parcel ID 34-11871), and 1350 River Run Drive (Parcel ID 34-11876).

Public hearing opened at 4:37 p.m.

Speaking in favor: Connie Saylor

Speaking against: none

Public hearing closed at 4:38 p.m.

Motion by Daven to approve PLAN-21-1259, a request for a zoning map amendment to rezone 7 parcels, identified below, from R-2 Mixed Residential District to B-3 Neighborhood Commercial District: 1210 River Run Drive (Parcel ID 34-11865), 1310 River Run Drive (Parcel ID 34-11867), 1211 Parkwood Drive (Parcel ID 34-11868), 1221 Parkwood Drive (Parcel ID 34-11869), 1220 Parkwood Drive (Parcel ID 34-11870), 1210 Parkwood Drive (Parcel ID 34-11871), and 1350 River Run Drive (Parcel ID 34-11876); second by Goodreau.

Motion carried (6 – 0)

5. **PLAN-21-1259; Community Development Department** – Public hearing and action on a request for a zoning map amendment to rezone an unaddressed parcel on 16<sup>th</sup> Street South (Parcel ID 34-11880) from R-3 Multi-family Medium Density Residential District to B-3 Neighborhood Commercial District.

Public hearing opened at 4:40 p.m.

Speaking in favor: none

Speaking against: none

Public hearing closed at 4:40 p.m.

Motion by Austin to approve PLAN-21-1259, a request for a zoning map amendment to rezone an unaddressed parcel on 16<sup>th</sup> Street South (Parcel ID 34-11880) from R-3 Multi-family Medium Density Residential District to B-3 Neighborhood Commercial District; second by Daven.

Motion carried (6 – 0)

6. **PLAN-21-1260; Community Development Department** – Action on a request for an amendment to the City's Municipal Code, Chapter 46 – Sign Code, to increase sign height allowance within the Institutional (I-1) Zoning District.

Carrie Edmondson shared an analysis for sign height maximums in various zoning districts, recommending the changes noted in the table provided in the staff report.

Commissioners questioned the impact of the changes for adjacent properties, to which staff responded.

Motion by Goodreau to approve Plan-21-1260, a request for an amendment to the City's Municipal Code, Chapter 46 – Sign Code, to increase the ground sign height allowance to ten feet maximum within the Institutional (I-1) Zoning District; second by Austin.

Motion carried (6 – 0)

- 7. PLAN-21-1261; Community Development Department** – Action on a request for an amendment to the City's Municipal Code, Chapter 46 – Sign Code, to increase sign size allowance within the Mixed-Use Commercial (B-5) Zoning District.

Carrie Edmondson provided a summary of the findings and recommended the changes as outlined in the staff report.

Motion by Feith to approve PLAN-21-1261, a request for an amendment to the City's Municipal Code, Chapter 46 – Sign Code, to increase sign size allowance within the I Mixed-Use Commercial (B-5) Zoning District; second by Daven.

Motion carried (6 – 0)

## **8. Adjourn**

Motion by Thao to adjourn; second by Blaser

Motion carried (6 – 0)

Meeting adjourned at 5:01 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted by Erika Esser, Secretary



# VANDEWALLE & ASSOCIATES INC.

**To:** Common Council, City of Wisconsin Rapids  
Plan Commission, City of Wisconsin Rapids  
Recovery and Reuse Project Steering Committee

**From:** Scott Harrington, AICP, Principal  
Sonja Kruesel, AICP, Associate

**Date:** December 27, 2021

**Re:** Recovery and Reuse Plan Progress Report

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Earlier this year, the City of Wisconsin Rapids requested proposals for a Recovery and Reuse Plan and Implementation Strategy in response to the idling of the Verso Papermill. This work will entail analyzing future economic opportunities for Wisconsin Rapids and the greater Central Wisconsin region given its heritage in timber processing, and reuse alternatives for the extensive mill site. The City has engaged with a consultant team lead by Vandewalle & Associates in this effort, and project work officially kicked off this fall. This memo summarizes progress to-date and lists focus areas for work into the New Year.

The overall project is comprised of two main parts, including a Recovery and Reuse Plan, and an Implementation Strategy. Development of the Recovery and Reuse Plan is the project focus until early Summer 2022 and will result in a visioning and plan deliverable. Three main tasks will support this effort including (1) market assessment, (2) visioning, and (3) site area redevelopment research. At this time, the consultant team is primarily engaged in market and industry data collection, mapping of the mill site and assets, and stakeholder outreach. In addition, we will continue monitoring the impacts of the recently announced BillerudKorsnäs acquisition of Verso.

## **Visioning and Stakeholder Outreach**

The project team has held or scheduled initial outreach meetings with various stakeholders including existing ownership interests, potential purchasers, industry representatives, state legislators, and economic development groups. Outreach will continue into the coming months, including an anticipated focus group session with local and regional economic development professionals. In addition, city staff and the consultant team will organize a public visioning session and Council work session as requested in the City's request for proposals. Initial contacts to-date include the following:

- Project Steering Committee
- Verso, Inc.
- Sononco
- Consolidated Water and Power Company
- Timber Cooperative
- Incourage Foundation
- Representative Scott Krug
- Senator Patrick Testin

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### **BillerudKorsnäs Acquisition**

In late December, it was announced that Verso had reached a deal with Swedish company BillerudKorsnäs to acquire Verso's sites and assets including the Wisconsin Rapids mill site. Project team members attended a press conference on Monday December 20, 2021, regarding this news. The press conference was conducted by BillerudKorsnäs representatives Christoph Michalski, President & CEO, and Ivar Vatne, CFO.

The deal includes an offering of \$825 million, or \$27 per Verso share. It appears the company's main interest is in the acquisition of Verso's Escanaba and Quinnesec mills in Michigan's Upper Peninsula.

BillerudKorsnäs plans to convert the two primary Escanaba machines to paperboard operations within the next two years. They expect the Quinnesec mill to handle displaced load of coated papers and to continue current operations indefinitely. BillerudKorsnäs representatives acknowledged the Wisconsin Rapids site during the press conference, including the continued operation of the conversion facility; however, it was noted more than once that they have no intention to fire up the mill and will be evaluating options for disposition of most of the property including Consolidated Water and Power Company. They also noted that sale proceeds of the Rapids mill were not one of the primary financial factors driving the merger. They estimate the book value of the mill and CWPCO to be \$100 million. The acquisition is expected to be completed in the second quarter of 2022.

### **Next Steps**

We look forward to continued outreach, data collection and site area redevelopment research into January and February, including the following:

- Economic Development professionals focus group
- Industry symposium including representatives from paper products and timber industries
- Public visioning session
- Council work session