



Introduction

The Wisconsin Rapids Recovery and Redevelopment Plan project team held a public meeting on June 1, 2022. The purpose of the meeting was to gain input regarding the COMMUNITY PRIORITIES which will help inform the Site Vision and Redevelopment and Reuse Program for the former Verso Paper Mill Site.

There were eleven registered attendees at the meeting, that worked in three small groups to provide input on the Community Priorities.

Ice Breaker Questions

Favorite memory of the mill? Sense of loss? Something you miss after closure. What did the Mill contribute to the community?

Favorite memory

- Tours of mill as local business groups
- Trainings for the fire department, the mill had their own fire brigade
- Always busy and moving, buzzing site
- The billowing smoke stacks above the mill
- Young professionals' groups touring the mill
- Community contributions and economic impact that came with annual mill shut downs for maintenance, when maintenance crews were brought into town
- Generations of relations working at the mill
- Hopping on the train
- Family oriented (especially under consolidated employee recognition)
- Family tours – visits every Sunday with dad
- Mill tour with grandpa, putting hand in pulp
- Coming to visit Rapids / recruited from Canada

Contributions to the community

- Contributed to infrastructure
- Regional presence – could see smokestacks from all over
- Sense of pride
- Community identity
- Fortune 500 company
- Headquarters and Fortune 500 company

Sense of loss / Miss after closure

- Good people to deal with
- Loss steam noises, whistle at noon (especially along River)
- No more visual smoke
- Good living wages and benefits, supported schools, charities
- Leadership
- Good living wage and benefits
- jobs
- Vision for community
- Prosperity and hope for the future
- Thriving community for recruited workers

Step 2: Small Group Priorities: 30 minutes

As a small group, take about 30 minutes to complete the following exercise:

Group 1

- Sustainable and lasting development enhances long term economic stability (4 votes)
- Create new jobs with simpler way and benefits to what was lost
- Increase property tax base
- Mitigate environmental pollution
- Build community identity and improve image
- Create opportunities to create and retain new business (2 votes)
- Reuse existing facilities to maximum extent possible
- Catalyze development (2 votes)
- Provide opportunities for youth

Group 2

- Increase property tax base (1 vote)
- Create opportunities (2 votes)
- Reuse existing facilities (1 vote)
- Catalyzes development
- Creates new jobs
- Enhances long term sustainability (1 vote)
- Redevelop properties quickly (1 vote)

Group 3

- Provides sustainable and lasting development (2 votes)
- Builds community identity and improves community image (1 vote)
- Increase property tax base

Step 3: Final Priorities: 15 minutes

- Create opportunities to create and retain new business
- Enhance long term economic stability [7 votes]
- Catalyze development
- Increase property tax base [2 votes]
- Reuse existing facilities
- Create new opportunities [1 vote]
- Provide sustainable and lasting development [7 votes]
- Builds community identity and improves community image [3 votes]
- Redevelop properties quickly