



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 Planner
Sonja Kruesel, AICP, Associate Planner

Date: January 28, 2022

Re: Recovery and Reuse Plan Progress Report

Vandewalle & Associates and a sub-consultant team have contracted with the City of Wisconsin Rapids to develop a Recovery and Reuse Plan and Implementation Strategy in response to the idling of the Verso Papermill. Project work began in late 2021. This memo provides a status update as project work continues to progress. A previous progress report was provided in December 2021.

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

Our last progress report discussed outreach activity which has continued throughout January. 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
- Encourage Foundation
- Representative Scott Krug
- Senator Patrick Testin

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Data Collection and Site Area Redevelopment Research

Our team continues work under the general project element of data collection and site area redevelopment research. Products in progress include detailed mapping of the local site assets in Wisconsin Rapids and the greater Wood County area to analyze reuse and redevelopment potential. In addition, market research data on the local workforce is nearly complete.

Planned Events

Several key events are anticipated in the next two months.

- We will meet with the city's steering committee meeting late January for a general project update and to collaborate on upcoming events.
- Economic Development professionals focus group anticipated late February.
- Industry symposium including representatives from paper products and timber industries. We have identified February 22, 2022, in the afternoon as the tentative target date for this symposium. Save the date announcements to key industry representatives will be distributed in the near future.
- Public visioning session anticipated late February or early March. Planning for this event will be in collaboration with the city steering committee and consultant team.
- Council work session anticipated late February or early March. Planning for this event will be in collaboration with the city steering committee and consultant team.