



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: July 25, 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. This memo provides a status update as project work continues to progress, and supplements previous reports submitted.

Task Updates

- The “Forest Industries of the Future” symposium was held on Thursday July 21, 2022. The event’s agenda is attached to this report which contains a list of speakers that participated. The event started with an introduction by project team members Scott Harrington, Vandewalle & Associates, and Eric Singaas, NRRI (Natural Resources Research Institute). The second session featured research and innovative forest products. Presenters highlighted products in exterior, interior, and structural building materials, energy, and packaging. The final session featured a panel session of professionals who work in commercialization of research and economic development. Over 80 individuals registered to attend the symposium which actual attendance during the event totaling over 50 individuals.

As follow-up to the event, the recording, presentation slides, speaker contact information, and registration list will be emailed to those who registered. This information will also be posted on the city’s project webpage.

The information presented and follow-up conversation will be used to generate a report of potential economic opportunities for reuse or redevelopment of the mill site.

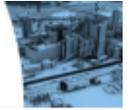
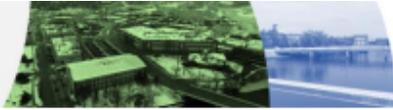
- Input sessions were held with the Plan Commission and Common Council, as well as the public. Events occurred on May 10, 2022, and June 1, 2022, respectively. Attendees heard a presentation from the planning consultant and engaged in an exercise to identify individual and group priorities. Through a sticky-dot voting system, the meetings concluded by identifying the top priorities of the group regarding mill’s future. These priorities will be incorporated into visioning and reuse or redevelopment scenarios for the mill. At

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Shaping places, shaping change

the public meeting, participants were also asked to share a favorite memory or identify any sense of loss due to the mill's closure.

- The same input questions from the above exercises are now posted on the City Website [link: <https://www.wirapids.org/recovery-and-redevelopment-plan.html>]. Members of the public are encouraged to share their responses online. This survey has been advertised by city staff and the Heart of Wisconsin Chamber of Commerce. Over 200 responses have been received since posting.
- The sale of the property to Billerud Corporation was finalized in March 2022. Vandewalle & Associates has continued its efforts to engage with the purchaser, to obtain additional feedback regarding the future of the property. Billerud has noted willingness to discuss but has not yet provided additional information. For example, we have not received specific information on how long the converting facility (building adjacent to the river in the middle of the site) will continue to run. The converting facility operates to provide sheeting services for one of the acquired mills in the Upper Peninsula. As long as this mill continues production of sheeted paper or printed products, a conversion facility will be necessary whether that is at the Rapids site or at another location. Billerud has recently filled approximately 25 additional positions at the Rapids site to meet this demand. Total employment at the conversion facility is around 150 people.
- We initially anticipated completing the Economic Recovery study first (by early spring) followed by the Site Reuse Plan (early summer), but delays in coordinating with others for both portions have caused us to complete these together rather than separately. As a result, we should have drafts of both to share late summer/early fall.



Forest Industries of the Future Symposium

AGENDA

July 21, 2022

2:00 pm – 4:00 pm

Register in advance for this webinar:

https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_RXR4L_haSfmaEM7ksSaD6A

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing a meeting link.

Introduction

10 Minutes

- A. Scott Harrington, Vandewalle & Associates
- B. Eric Singaas, Natural Resources Research Institute (NRRI)

Presentation Session: Forest Product Innovations

50 Minutes

This session will highlight emerging and innovative new forest products with approximately ten-minute presentations by each speaker.

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| A. Building Products: Exterior Cladding
Matt Aro, NRRI | D. Energy: Bio-Refinery
Tracy Saville, Comstock |
| B. Building Products: Interior Materials
Scott Dionne, TimberHP | E. Packaging: Plastic Alternatives
Addie Teeters, Ahlstrom-Munksjo |
| C. Building Products: Structural Materials
Timbatec, Presented by Patrick Donahue, NRRI | |

5-Minute Break

Panel Session: Implementation Pathways

50 Minutes

Eric Singaas will moderate a panel discussion highlighting the role of research and pathways and challenges to implementation in commercial markets.

- A. Entrepreneurship: Idella Yamben, Center for Technology Commercialization
- B. Translational Research: Arjun Sanga, WiSys
- C. Industry Coordination: Masood Akhtar, Bio-Renewable Deployment Consortium
- D. Economic Development: Melinda Osterberg, WEDC Regional Economic Development

5-Minute Wrap Up and Next Steps