



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: September-October 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.

- 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 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 were posted on the city website for members of the public to share additional responses. This survey was advertised by city staff and the Heart of Wisconsin Chamber of Commerce. The survey received 638 responses as of the closing date in early September. A summary report of the survey results is attached.

- Draft Economic Opportunities Analysis in progress. A draft report is underway that includes a synthesis of previous related economic studies and information gathered in project work to date. This work includes an analysis of workforce data, stakeholder meetings, purchaser meetings, the public input session, the Plan Commission and Common Council input session, public survey, and industry innovation symposium. From this data, economic opportunities are being identified.
- Summary of upcoming schedule: Over the coming weeks, follow-up meetings are anticipated with groups including Centergy, Billerud, Masood Akhtar, and Sonoco. We anticipate a steering committee meeting in November which will include review of the draft economic opportunities identified for the site.

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