

## CITY COUNCIL PREVIEW #10: APRIL 28, 2025

Let's briefly discuss civility, which is really nothing more than being polite in behavior and speech. The mayor sees a decline in it, identifies a series of reasons for why this is, and asks us to be more civil. There's a lot there to agree with. We've seen uncivil behavior directed at Council on two occasions, by speakers invited by the mayor, for example.

On the other hand, it appears to us that what the mayor brands as uncivil behavior is often simple disagreement. For example, the opposition to the data center and the opposition to the downtown expansion are both instances where people have expressed opposition or asked questions critical of the mayor's proposals, sometimes pointedly.

What these examples have in common are the fact that they're projects that were developed behind closed doors, with no opportunity for public input or discussion. Taken by surprise, and taken aback, the public's passionate response shouldn't be astonishing. People are looking for transparency and accountability. They're apparently not going to be open to backroom deal-making any longer.

What the public seems to crave right now is an open conversation about the city's direction. What kind of growth can the city's existing infrastructure handle? What kind of growth do current city residents want? How do we strike the balance between maintaining what we have and building new for the future? It seems to us that these are important questions worth exploring together. Strengthening collaboration by seeking more public input could be a key step towards a more engaged and a more civil community.

Speaking of collaboration, the Valparaiso Redevelopment Commission (RDC) will be presenting its 2024 Annual Report to City Council. Councilmember Barb Domer posted on her webpage and publicized on Facebook a draft copy of the presentation, along with some additional documentation: maps of TIF districts and the like.

There's a lot to unpack in the presentation; it is dense. There are numerous tables and appendices to digest. Council will be sure to have a number of questions, as is its prerogative. We're happy to see some transparency coming from the RDC in the form of this report. At issue remains the question of the degree of accountability that the RDC allows, however, and it's going to take more than a report to answer that question.