

Comprehensive Regional Plan
Steering Committee

GUIDE

Why Do a Comprehensive Regional Plan?

A comprehensive regional plan lays out the blueprint for change within a region. The plan is the vision of what the region wants to become and the steps needed to meet those goals. It is based on the values, vision and aspirations of the people of the region's communities. Planning together takes many individual ideas, specific commitments and actions. Below are some reasons for preparing a comprehensive plan:

- 1. To create a vision of what the region wants to become in the future.**
- 2. To see the overall picture of how the region's economy, environment, land use, transportation and demographics will be changed.**
- 3. To make sure that everyone in the region shares in its well being.**
- 4. To give direction for future development.**
- 5. To select and agree on some common goals.**
- 6. To involve as many people, communities, and local organizations as possible in the process.**
- 7. To determine how much time, money, and other resources are needed to create change.**
- 8. To get the support of Local, Federal, State, governments, and private and non-profit partners.**

Comprehensive Planning Process

Unless required by a specific regulation or program, the plan does not have to follow any specific format. Here are the major elements of a plan:

1. Vision Statement

- What values will guide our activity?
- What kind of region/community do we want to become?

2. Existing Conditions

- Trends/conditions (economic, social, etc.)
- Strengths and opportunities
- Ranking or prioritizing of problems and opportunities
- Existing resources, assets, capabilities and new resources needed
- Constraints

3. Goals

Group goals under key issues, such as employment, economic development, environment, land use, and transportation and under each major heading, describe:

- What are our long-term goals?
- What is our desired condition?
- What do we want to change (condition, problem, barrier, opportunity)?

4. Strategies

- How can we best achieve each goal?
- How will partnerships help us achieve our goal?

5. Scenarios

- Set of choices for economic development, environment, land use, transportation, existing and new places which offer a credible solution to the issues and opportunities raised.
- How and where development will occur in our region?
- What do local plans currently show for future development?
- What if nothing changes?
- What difference can new public policies make?
- How does the current list of proposed major public infrastructure projects compare to regional goals?

6. Implementation

- What new programs should NIRPC and other regional partners develop?
- What can communities/governments/other institutions and organizations do to implement and support the Comprehensive Regional Plan?
- How can projects and programs be funded?

Comprehensive Regional Planning in Northwest Indiana: Our Approach

For Northwest Indiana, this comprehensive plan will represent the first truly regional approach to creating a vision of the future based on high levels of participation by a broad group of citizens and leaders. The plan will feature the integration of social equity, sustainability and efficiency across four issue areas: transportation, land use, environment, and economic development.

The future of the region belongs to all of us who live, work and enjoy the bountiful resources of Northwest Indiana. Creating a comprehensive regional plan will be a learning activity for all participants. NIRPC will learn about local community priorities, community representatives will learn about regional needs, experts from one field will exchange learning with experts from other fields and community participants from around the region will learn of each others priorities. From this mutual learning, understanding and insights will emerge to forge a new vision and strong commitments to the future of the region.

Comprehensive planning includes a number of well-developed steps to guide the Steering Committee and Working Groups in producing the Comprehensive Regional Plan. Existing plans and studies in combination with public input and working group recommendations are a part of the process.

Step 1: Vision, Goals and Objectives: Through extensive public involvement, a vision statement and a set of goals and objectives will be developed that will then be adopted by NIRPC

Step 2: Regional Public Policies and Strategies: Through extensive research and public involvement, policies and strategies will be identified and evaluated for their achievement of the vision, goals, and objectives.

Step 3: Regional Framework: Based in part on the results from Steps 1 and 2, future growth projections, and additional research, future alternative scenarios will be evaluated through analysis and public involvement resulting in a preferred regional framework. It will include discussion on alternative future growth scenarios and their likely impacts, and identify ways to achieve the desired future. This framework will inform the plan components in Step 4 and begin

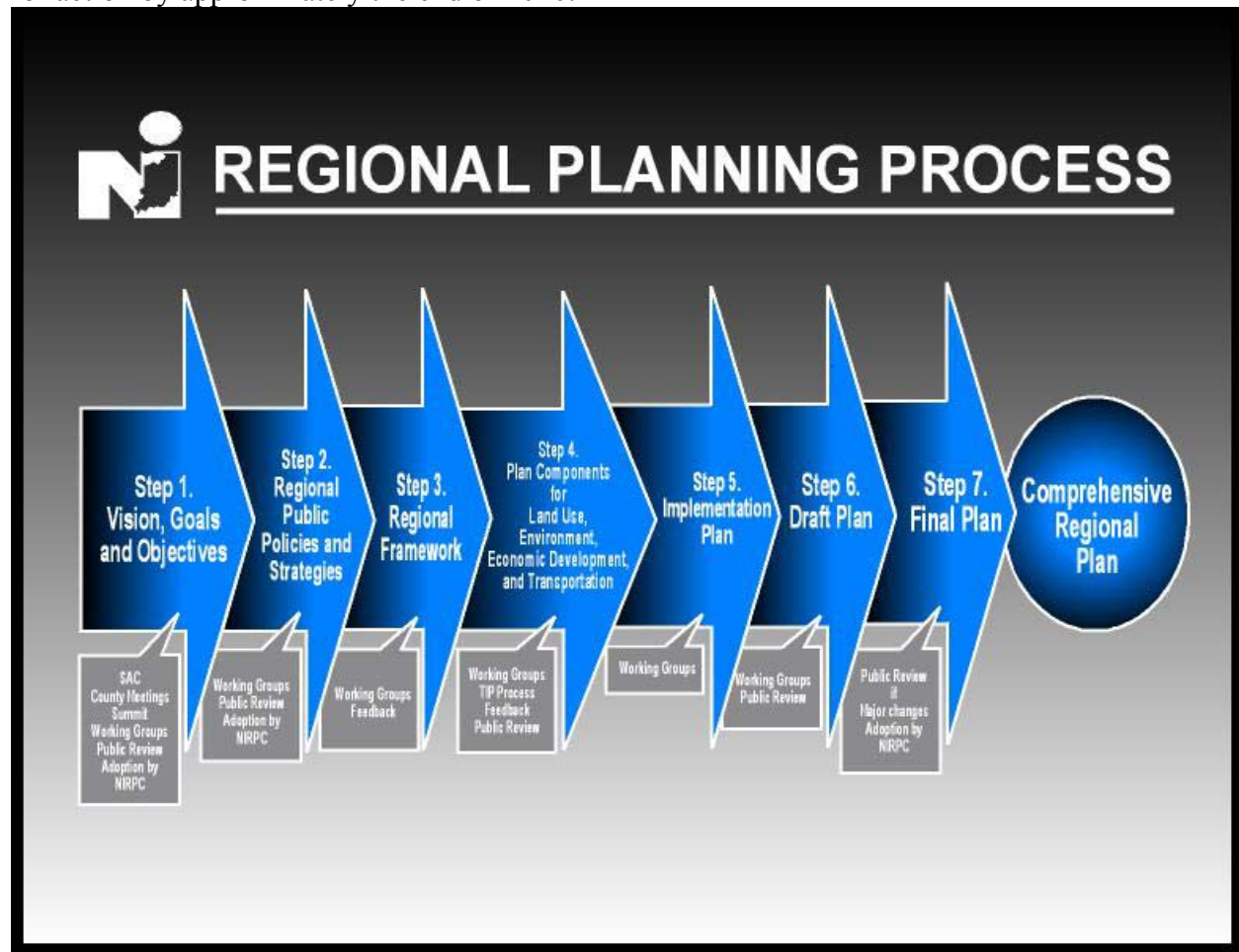
to support decisions on future development and public investment in infrastructure, and act as a guide for local community land use planning.

Step 4: Action Items: Plan Components for Land Use, Environment, Economic Development, and Transportation: Each component will address projects or types of projects and activities related to land use, environment, economic development, transportation, and the interrelationships among the components. Each area will include implementation strategies including identifying appropriate responsible parties, cost estimates for regional projects, and resources available or needed to complete projects.

Step 5: Implementation Plan: This step will prioritize the recommended actions from Step 4 and guide short and long term implementation. A series of milestone years showing the anticipated progress toward the horizon year will be included. This is required for air conformity analysis and determinations.

Step 6: Draft Plan: Draft of plan reviewed by working groups and public review process

Step 7: Final Plan: CRP adopted by NIRPC board and taken to other supporting organizations for action by approximately the end of 2010.



Working Together: Roles and Responsibilities

Role of Steering Committee

- Provide guidance, oversight, and overall direction of the planning process
- Develop decisions and recommendations based on consensus
- Review and make recommendations on Vision statement, goals, objectives, scenarios, policies, and strategies
- Create and direct Working Groups
- Review recommendations from Working Groups
- Present information to Policy Committees
- Review and endorse draft and final Comprehensive Regional Plan
- Present recommendations to NIRPC's Board of Commissioners

Role of Staff and Consultants

- Support Steering Committee and working groups by providing the best and available high quality information and analysis
- Synthesize Steering Committee and working group input into draft plan components
- Support broad participation by the public as well as local officials representing the diversity of the region, similar to the Regional Forum outreach process
- Prepare meeting agendas and materials

Role of Individual (Staff, Consultants, and Committee Members)

- * Shares responsibility and takes ownership in the process.
- * Recognizes and encourages diversity, differing opinions, and broad representation of the Region.
- * Shares a commitment to the common good.
- * Commits to thoughtful deliberation that is safe and respectful.
- * Listens carefully and respectfully to each person. Everyone choosing to speak is heard and heard as often as necessary to be understood.
- * **Helps reach and support consensus.** No one gets everything they want just like they want it. Participants must be willing to practice the fine art of compromise.

What is Consensus?

- Consensus is a group process where the input of everyone is carefully considered and an outcome is crafted that best meets the needs of the group. It is a process of synthesizing the wisdom of all the participants into the best decision possible at the time. The root of consensus is the word consent, which means to give permission to. When you consent to a decision, you are giving your permission to the group to go ahead with the decision.

You may disagree with the decision, but based on listening to everyone else's input, all the individuals agree to let the decision go forward, because the decision is the best one the entire group can achieve at the current time.

- Consensus is **Solution-oriented**. An effective consensus decision-making body strives to emphasize common agreement over differences and reach effective decisions using compromise and other techniques to avoid or resolve mutually-exclusive positions within the group.
- The heart of consensus is a **cooperative intent**, where the members are willing to work together to find the solution that meets the needs of the group. The cooperative nature of consensus differs from the competitive nature of majority voting. In a consensus process the members come together to find or create the best solutions by working together. Key attributes to successful participation include humility, willingness to listen to others and see their perspectives, and willingness to share your own ideas but not insist they are the best ones.
- When you consent to a decision, you are giving your permission to the group to go ahead with the decision. You may NOT COMPLETELY AGREE with the decision, but based on listening to everyone else's input, all the individuals agree to let the decision go forward, because the decision is the best one the entire group can achieve at the current time.
- **What consensus is not:** It is not unanimous agreement. Participants may consent to a decision they disagree with in recognition of the fact that it meets the needs of the region. The goal is "unity, not unanimity."

When these principles are incorporated into an open process, the result is a more invigorated democracy. To follow these principles, NIRPC is committed to the following practices:

1. **The planning process is a Partnership between NIRPC, the Steering Committee, and the public**
2. **NIRPC will constantly seek the broadest possible participation**
3. **The Comprehensive Regional Plan will build on existing plans, data, and analysis and develop new data and conduct new analysis as needed.**

The following chart illustrates the organization of the Comprehensive Regional Plan. The workgroups will be created as needed by NIRPC staff, the consultants, and the Steering Committee.

ORGANIZATION OF THE COMPREHENSIVE REGIONAL PLAN

