

The Marquette Plan

Introduction

The Marquette Plan: A Vision for Lakeshore Reinvestment illustrates a compelling long-term, common vision to guide future decision making for the entire forty-six mile Lake Michigan shoreline. This comprehensive land use vision is intended to create a lasting legacy that looks at each community individually and collectively, addressing both community-specific needs and broader regional objectives. The Plan is action-oriented and geared to achieve tangible quality of life improvements for the residents of northwest Indiana.

Phase I titled the Marquette Plan: The Lakeshore Reinvestment Strategy (January 2005) was a collaborative effort of the lakefront communities of East Chicago, Gary, Hammond, Portage and Whiting, the office of Congressman Pete Visclosky and the Indiana Department of Natural Resources to develop a comprehensive land use vision to guide reinvestment efforts to reclaim Indiana's lakefront – from the Indiana / Illinois state line to the Burns Harbor International Port in Portage, Indiana – as a livable lakefront. The Plan highlights a changing landscape where more compact viable industries co-exist with public parks, mixed-use neighborhoods and business-oriented developments. It's a Plan about balance – between nature and industry, between public access and privacy, between old jobs and new economies, between redevelopment and restoration and between heritage and a new way of life.

A key recommendation of Phase I was to extend the study east from the Burns Harbor International Port, Portage, Indiana to the Indiana / Michigan state line. The Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC), northwest Indiana's Council of Governments (COG) and Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), recognizing the importance of this recommendation, successfully identified funding for the eastern reach or Phase II. Major funding assistance for Phase II was provided through a grant from the Indiana Department of Natural Resources Lake Michigan Coastal Program with matching funds from the Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelley Foundation.

The Phase II study area includes twenty-six miles of lakefront and is comprised of a series of connected dune and swale landscapes, beaches, vast natural resources and attractions, and a range of diverse habitats that co-exists with the built environment. The area includes two cities, eleven towns, two counties and serves as home to the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore, Indiana Dunes State Park, and the Burns Harbor International Port in Portage, Indiana.

This Plan builds upon the vision and principles set forth in the Marquette Plan: The Lakefront Reinvestment Strategy (January 2005). The Plan also considers the numerous local and regional planning documents guiding development in the study area including: NIRPC's Greenways and Blueways Plan, NIRPC's Ped and Pedal Plan, the Porter County Comprehensive Plan, and the Michigan City North End Plan. The Plan re-emphasizes the need for collaboration across the region. Only through



Map of Project Area

collaboration and a transparent, open dialogue will the Marquette vision be realized. Toward that end, a series of multi-jurisdictional community-endorsed short-term projects have been identified to unite the diverse stakeholders of the study area.

In summary, Phase II aims to:

- Re-emphasize that Lake Michigan is northwest Indiana's greatest resource;
- Increase public shoreline access from approximately 57 percent today (for both phases) to over 75 percent in the future and to provide generous minimum setbacks for new development to ensure this access;
- Establish physical, social and economic connections, including a continuous trail network linking people to the lake, features along it and to each other;
- Develop a cooperative lakeshore visitor management plan – to guide visitors to and from lakeshore destinations; while supporting a harmonious relationship between residents and visitors;
- Capitalize on the existing transportation infrastructure (roads, trails and trains) to promote a truly multi-modal region giving residents and visitors alike choices to reduce dependency on the automobile;
- Recognize the changing economy in the region and capitalize on new opportunities for remediation and re-use of industrial brownfield properties;
- Leverage available resources, including political resources that span town, city, county, and state boundaries to broaden the pool of funds and support needed to achieve the vision;
- Continue to promote public-private partnerships;
- Identify and fund an effective management structure to assist the region to realize the Marquette Vision – to Create a Livable Lakefront;
- Plant the seed so the Plan becomes a rallying cry for change and the process lives on.

Phase II builds upon the future envisioned in Phase I of the Marquette Plan: The Lakeshore Reinvestment Strategy. The key is having strong cooperation at all levels, and the dedication to implement the community endorsed vision to create a livable lakefront. Because of the vision and collaboration of leaders like Congressman Visclosky, Congressman Donnelly, East Chicago, Gary, Hammond, Michigan City, Portage and Whiting, NIRPC and the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, as well as the passionate support of the residents and stakeholders that have never given up hope, northwest Indiana will reclaim and restore the Lake Michigan shoreline.