



2040

Comprehensive Regional Plan A Vision for Northwest Indiana

Letter from the Commission Chair

August 2011

To the Residents of Northwest Indiana:

All of us in Lake, Porter and LaPorte counties – the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC) region – have a history, common bonds, goals and interests in our future. We aspire to a better quality of life for ourselves and our future generations. We seek more and better economic and educational opportunities. We want our air and water to be clean. We want a highly competitive business environment. Our environmental treasures, such as Lake Michigan and the Indiana Dunes, should be protected. Our transportation system should be both effective and efficient and meet the diverse needs of our population. We desire safe, livable communities, with high-quality public services provided in a cost-effective manner. To these ends, while the legacy of the region is strong, to be successful in the future we must aspire to do more and be more.

In June 2011, the NIRPC Board of Directors unanimously approved such a reality – 2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan (CRP), the first plan with a comprehensive vision for sustainable growth and development of Lake, Porter and LaPorte Counties. This vision began in December 2008 when NIRPC embarked on an ambitious and exciting journey to help us develop a means to those ends. On a snowy day in Merrillville, more than 500 people gathered to share and discuss their hopes and dreams for the region. They came from diverse backgrounds and from urban, suburban and rural areas. Working together that day, they helped create a common and shared vision for Northwest Indiana – a region that is vibrant, revitalized, accessible and united.

The CRP is a long term planning framework and is a truly integrated plan that seeks to align federal and state planning and investment resources with local and regional strategies for achieving sustainable communities. The plan contains policies and strategies that support and will lead to the implementation of the concepts and vision. It is based on extensive public involvement and input obtained through numerous public workshops and meetings with local agencies and officials. Integrating land use and transportation planning with economic development, environmental and social equity considerations, the CRP provides a framework for how the region will grow through the year 2040 and is a tool to guide actions and direct resources to achieve a common and shared vision for Northwest Indiana.

Today, each community in the region makes its own decisions regarding land use. The CRP looks at these individual decisions as a whole and builds upon the best elements of our existing local general plans and regional infrastructure plans and provides a framework for where and how we want to grow. The plan is based on a concept of Livable Centers - mixed-used neighborhoods where residents can safely walk to shopping and employment centers - concentrating growth in and around the 41 existing local municipalities, and encouraging redevelopment in Gary, Hammond, East Chicago and Michigan City with a commitment to quality planning. The plan acknowledges constraints on infrastructure development and promotes regional transit and the protection of prime agricultural and environmentally sensitive areas.

This plan moves us towards a future with more choices and opportunities for all residents. My hope is that you will also make a commitment to join us in realizing our future.

Sincerely,



Thomas M. McDermott, Jr.
Mayor, City of Hammond, and Chair, Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission



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RESOLUTION 11-16

**A RESOLUTION OF THE NORTHWESTERN INDIANA REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
ADOPTING THE 2040 COMPREHENSIVE REGIONAL PLAN FOR NORTHWESTERN INDIANA**

WHEREAS, the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission, hereafter referred to as "The Commission", being designated the Council of Governments, representing all local governments in the region has established a comprehensive planning process including the three domains of environmental, economic development and transportation planning; and

WHEREAS, the Commission, being designated the Metropolitan Planning Organization for the Lake, Porter and LaPorte County Region, has established a regional, cooperative and comprehensive planning program to develop the unified planning work program, long-range transportation plan and transportation improvement program; to annually endorse the plans and programs; to facilitate federal transportation funding for the Indiana Department of Transportation, regional communities and transit operators, and to provide technical assistance and expertise to regional transportation interests; and

WHEREAS, the Commission performs the above mentioned activities to satisfy regional requirements under the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU, 2005) as well as other federal, state and local legislation mandating cooperative, comprehensive and continuing regional transportation planning activities; and

WHEREAS, the Commission has conducted a continuous, cooperative, and comprehensive process in an open and participatory manner, including extensive participation involving numerous people, with a specific effort to engage low income populations and minority populations and soliciting public comment at various points in the process, including requesting public comment on the draft 2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan; and the Commission has reviewed and considered the comments received; and

WHEREAS, integrating land use and transportation planning with economic development, environmental and social equity considerations, the 2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan provides a framework for how the three-county region can develop in the next generation, and is a tool to guide our actions and direct our resources to achieve our vision of a vibrant, revitalized, accessible, and united region; and

WHEREAS, the residents of Northwest Indiana require a safe, efficient and effective regional transportation system that maintains and enhances regional mobility and contributes to improving the quality of life in northwest Indiana; and

WHEREAS, the Commission has analyzed the benefits and burdens of the implementation of

transportation expansion projects in the 2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan and has found that there are no unfair burdens, nor unfair lack of benefits for low income populations and minority populations; and

WHEREAS, the Commission has developed a working Congestion Management Process to consider multi-modal solutions to traffic congestion problems; and

WHEREAS, the 2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan identifies the convergence of an ecosystem approach, green infrastructure network, and the urban revitalization and livable communities strategies, and encourages protection of natural, rural and agricultural assets; and

WHEREAS, reinvestment in our historic urban centers is a key principle, the 2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan promotes livability, walkable street networks, improving local and regional infrastructure, and providing employment and multimodal access; and

WHEREAS, the 2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan fosters a globally competitive, diversified economy and expanded access to knowledge and educational opportunities; and

WHEREAS, the Commission has determined that the draft 2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan conforms to the State Implementation Plan for Air Quality; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Commission adopts the 2040 Comprehensive Regional Transportation Plan and supports and promotes its implementation.

Duly adopted by the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission on this twenty-third day of June, two thousand eleven.

Thomas McDermott, Chairman

ATTEST:

Ken Layton, Secretary

Foreword

Serving Lake, Porter and LaPorte counties, the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission is a council of local governments that provides a forum for Northwest Indiana elected officials to address regional issues relating to transportation, environment and community and economic development. The agency was established in 1965 as the Lake-Porter County Regional Transportation and Planning Commission pursuant to enabling legislation enacted by the state. A 1973 amendment provided the commission with its current name and allowed for the addition of new member counties, resulting in LaPorte County joining NIRPC in 1979. An amendments in 1996 provided a seat on the commission for every mayor and a subsequent amendment in 2003 opened seats to all 41 cities and towns in the three-county region, with a requirement that representatives be elected officials.

NIRPC operates as a cooperative with 53 members. In addition to the municipal appointments, the county councils, boards of commissioners, county surveyors and the governor appoint one member. The agency's planning area is composed of Lake, Porter and LaPorte counties, encompasses 1,520 square miles, includes 41 cities and towns and 44 townships and currently is home to more than 770,000 people.

NIRPC also functions as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for Northwest Indiana. It works with federal and state transportation departments and local transit operators to prioritize and fund regional projects, making the region well positioned to capitalize on some of the most strategic and critical links in our nation's transportation system.

NIRPC's adopted purpose is *to create the conditions within which policy makers can create a sustainable, vibrant regional community and quality of life for Northwest Indiana.*

To achieve that purpose, the agency has outlined the following Vision and Strategic Directions for 2010 - 2013:

- NIRPC is attaining regionally recognized effectiveness and standing.
- NIRPC is contributing to diversified economic opportunities for current and future generations.
- NIRPC is clearly communicating Northwest Indiana's positive image - the true reflection of its character.
- NIRPC is recognized as a leading knowledge contributor to regional land use, governance, economic development, environmental, and transportation planning and implementation.
- NIRPC is clearly recognized for bold planning initiatives, accomplished in a cooperative collaborative comprehensive planning framework, that positively impacts the region's future.

In addition to planning and transportation responsibilities, NIRPC also provides staff services for several "partner" agencies, including the Kankakee River Basin Commission and the Regional Bus Authority, which grew out of the Lake-Porter County Regional Transportation Authority initially staffed by NIRPC.

The 2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan (CRP) places NIRPC in a new role in the region with respect to planning and implementation. NIRPC is being called upon to assist local governments and regional stakeholders to develop integrated land use and transportation strategies, support economic development efforts, help realize land conservation and a protected green infrastructure, and to do so in a manner that recognizes and supports social equity and environmental justice. The breadth of CRP planning initiatives suggests a broader role for NIRPC in realizing the future aspirations of Northwest Indiana. The 2040 CRP lays the foundation and establishes the program for how NIRPC will assist Northwest Indiana in realizing its vision.

Comprehensive Regional Plan



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