

# the regional view

the newsletter of the northwestern indiana regional planning commission

Fall 2015 Issue

## Greenways + Blueways 2020 Planning Begins

### *Public Encouraged to Complete Survey to Guide Process*

The Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC) is developing an update to both the 2007 Greenways and Blueways Plan, and the 2010 Ped & Pedal Plan. The unified document, called Greenways + Blueways 2020, will provide a one-stop plan for NIRPC's planning for conservation, multi-use surface trails (greenways) and water trails

(blueways) in Northwest Indiana. This is the first time that a plan of this type has been developed by NIRPC.

"We are excited to finally bringing together these two related subject areas, which have been becoming increasingly intertwined at NIRPC over the years," said Mitch Barloga, NIRPC's Active Transportation Planner. "We plan to begin writing the plan this fall, with a draft ready for public comment by early 2016."

To kick off the planning process, a series of listening sessions were held throughout the region in May and June to gain input from both the public and stakeholders to help guide the development of the plan. These listening sessions included a brief presentation and a mapping exercise where participants were encouraged to mark down the locations of opportunities and challenges. From these meetings, NIRPC staff gained a wealth of information, creating a launch pad for moving the process forward.



NIRPC is now asking the public to provide feedback about their preferences regarding the environment, multi-use surface trails and water trails (or blueways). NIRPC has made available an online survey and will have staff collecting responses on the region's trail network as well. Results of these surveys will be published in the upcoming plan, and will also be used

to expand and enhance outdoor experiences throughout Northwest Indiana.

Kathy Luther, NIRPC's Director of Environmental Programs, sees great potential in combining the plans. "When people are able to access nature, they gain a greater appreciation for the environment and conservation. There are also significant data showing improved education and health outcomes for those who have regular contact with natural areas. Linking transportation, recreation, and nature through planning helps stewardship and conservation in Northwest Indiana into the future."

A link to the online survey can be found on NIRPC's website at [www.nirpc.org](http://www.nirpc.org), and should take about 10 to 15 minutes to complete. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Mitch Barloga at [mbarloga@nirpc.org](mailto:mbarloga@nirpc.org), or 219-763-6060 ext. 133. The survey will be available until October 1, 2015. 

## 2015 NIRPC Executive Board

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Requests for alternate formats, please contact Stephen Sostaric at NIRPC at (219) 763-6060 extension 155 or at [ssostaric@nirpc.org](mailto:ssostaric@nirpc.org). Individuals with hearing impairments may contact us through the Indiana Relay 711 service by calling 711 or (800) 743-3333.

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## NIRPC Office Renovations Update

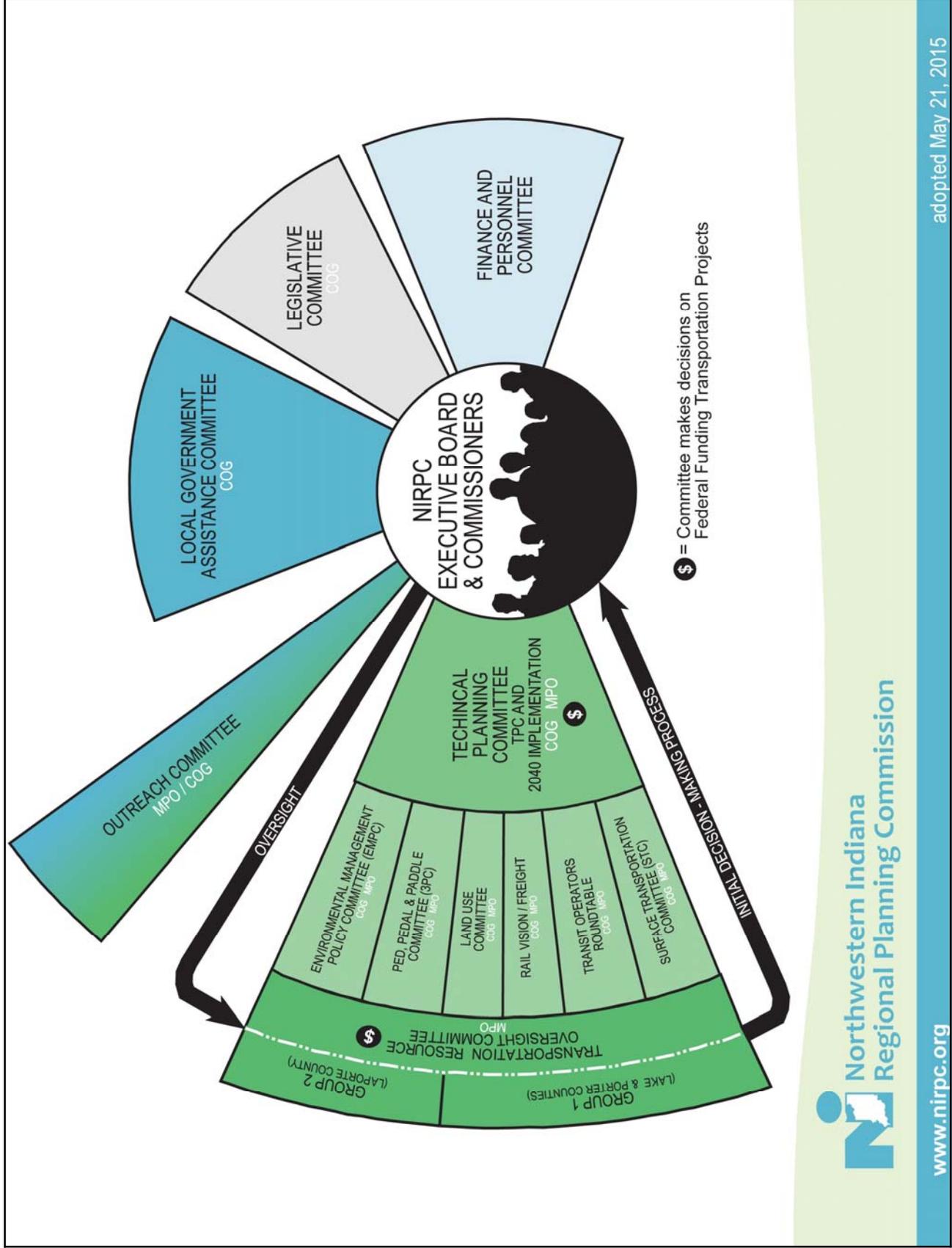


The summer of 2015 has proven to be an interesting one for NIRPC. In late May, work began on updating and rebuilding NIRPC's office space. When finished, both NIRPC and the Northwest Indiana Forum will share the space once solely occupied by NIRPC. During the intervening months, NIRPC staff resided in the building's auditorium, lobby, and the current Forum space. Meetings, when held, have been at facilities such as Woodland Park and the Construction Advancement Foundation's safety training center.

Staff is getting settled into the newly renovated office space, and the remaining phases focusing on the auditorium and Forum spaces have commenced. Eventually, the City of Portage's Department of Community Development will move into the space currently occupied by the Northwest Indiana Forum.

As with any major renovation project, there has been some upheaval to the normal schedule of things. However, the generous assistance of NIRPC's partners has made this process go smoothly and allowed our work to continue. NIRPC would like to express its sincere gratitude to the Northwest Indiana Forum, the City of Portage Parks Department, and the Construction Advancement Foundation for their generous accommodations during this project.

# New NIRPC Committee Structure Adopted



**Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission**

[www.nirpc.org](http://www.nirpc.org)

adopted May 21, 2015

The chart above shows NIRPC's new committee structure as adopted by the Full NIRPC Commission on May 21, 2015. The new structure is designed to provide even better transparency, streamline project review, and align NIRPC's overall decision-making even more closely with the goals of the 2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan. The Commission is currently working on populating these committees -- stay tuned for more as the new structure is implemented.

# Meet the NIRPC Staff!



Kathleen Honl has been NIRPC's Accounting and Procurement Coordinator since July of 2014. Her main responsibilities are to purchase anything transit-related for NIRPC's sub-recipients using federal funds and to purchase items for NIRPC-related projects.

Kathleen is a native of Northern Ohio, growing up there before moving to North Carolina, where she attended North Carolina Wesleyan and lived for twenty years. She moved to Northwest Indiana in 2003, and currently resides in the town of Kouts. Prior to starting at NIRPC, Kathleen held various accounting positions in government, most recently as a Deputy Assessor for Porter County.

Kathleen has two daughters and is eagerly awaiting her first grandchild. Kathleen is an avid volleyball player and plays softball in her spare time. She also loves animals and has two dogs and three cats.

James Winters is NIRPC's newest employee, having started in June of 2015. As a Regional Planner and Policy Analyst, he serves as NIRPC's internal and external data resource as well as freight planning for Northwest Indiana.



James is originally from Alton, Illinois. He also lived in Chicago, where he attended the University of Illinois-Chicago, obtaining both his bachelor's and master's degrees there. Prior to coming to NIRPC, James worked for two and half years as an Associate Planner at the Southwestern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission in Platteville. While there, he helped municipalities create a variety of plans as part of SWWRPC's local technical assistance program.

He now lives in Valparaiso with his fiancée Natalie and their dog Auggie. A movie buff, James appeared as an extra in *The Dark Knight*, though he isn't visible in the background despite his best efforts.

## *Just a Reminder...*

While NIRPC staff is now settling into their new offices, the large meeting spaces where committee meetings are typically held will not be usable for meetings until early 2016. Please continue to be mindful of this and pay close attention to meeting notices as we continue to work within the limitations imposed by the construction. Thank you for your patience!

NIRPC staff continues to appear on The Green Commuter Radio Show with South Shore Clean Cities' Carl Lisek, which airs every other Friday from 1:05 to 1:35 p.m. on Lakeshore Public Radio, 89.1 FM.

NIRPC's Active Transportation Planner Mitch Barloga will be appearing on October 9th at 1:05 pm. Don't forget to tune in and listen!