

# NWI 2050 Plan strategies

**Draft strategies to achieve the visions for the NWI 2050 Plan**

[After reviewing the draft strategies, comment by clicking this link!](#)

## Draft vision and critical paths

- After the April 2018 round of public engagement four visions for the 2050 Plan were drafted: a connected, renewed, united, and vibrant NWI. Sixteen critical paths to achieve the visions were also identified.

## Performance-based planning framework

- Pursuant to federal regulations, a framework for performance-based planning was developed. Each of the sixteen critical paths had performance metrics and data proposed. This includes the federally required measures and targets.

## Influences, trends, and draft futures

- Influences and trends that may impact the future of NWI were reviewed. Five broad areas of influences and trends were identified: economy, environment, people, regional assets and technology. These five areas were used to assemble three imagined futures that NWI could potentially see come to pass.

## Draft strategies

- Reflecting on the sixteen critical paths, the performance-based planning framework, and influences/trends that NWI may face in the future, draft strategies were identified. These strategies are things NIRPC or partners could work on in the near-term. Other strategies are things that NIRPC may only catalyze others to act upon since do not have a mandate to lead on those areas. Presented here are the draft strategies under consideration for the NWI 2050 Plan.

# 16 critical paths

## NWI 2050 vision statements

**Critical paths to achieving NWI's 2050 vision**



**Connected NWI /**  
*NWI's people have accessible, safe, and equal opportunities for working, playing, living and learning.*



**Renewed NWI /**  
*NWI's urban and rural centers are places people want to come to and live in, and our environment is safe and healthy.*



**United NWI /**  
*NWI's diversity is celebrated, and we work together as a community across racial, ethnic, political and cultural lines for the mutual benefit of the region.*



**Vibrant NWI /**  
*NWI's economy is thriving, our people are well educated, growth is planned, and natural and agricultural areas are valued and protected.*



**Economy + Place /**  
*Focusing on NWI's economy and quality of place*

Update land development policies and strategies to emphasize accessibility between people and opportunities.

Maximize growth in existing centers to enhance civic and economic life and to protect natural areas and farmland.

Collaborate regionally to welcome a diversity of people and talent to achieve mixed and balanced growth.

Promote initiatives and policies to ensure healthy living, sustainability, quality of life, and prosperity.



**Environment /**  
*Focusing on NWI's environmental quality*

Connect fragmented natural areas and integrate links between people and green spaces to increase resiliency and health outcomes.

Clean and protect the air, land, water, and natural habitats to sustain and enhance the environment's safety and health for all.

Build region-wide coalitions to advance environmental sustainability for the benefit of future generations.

Endorse innovative energy and environmental strategies to achieve a balance that protects diverse and unique ecological treasures while fostering a sustainable economy.



**Mobility /**  
*Focusing on NWI's transportation choices*

Complete roadway, bicycle, sidewalk, and transit networks across municipal and county lines to enhance safe and efficient access to opportunities for all.

Improve roadway, bicycle, sidewalk, and transit networks to revitalize existing urban and rural centers and enhance equity.

Prioritize transformative investments to elevate the position of the region and to attract a diversity of residents and high-quality economic opportunities.

Adopt technological innovation that enhances the safe and fluid movement of people and goods to enable a flourishing economy.



**People + Leaders /**  
*Focusing on NWI's people and community leaders*

Commit to removing barriers and obstacles to guarantee equal and accessible opportunities.

Focus educational and workforce development initiatives on expanding skills that the modern economy requires.

Foster better communications, cooperation and coordination to bring people together across the lines that divide us.

Embrace a dynamic, diversified and sustainable economy that attracts and retains talent, enhances quality of life, and increases personal and household income.

# Strategies for a Connected NWI



## Connected NWI

*NWI's people have accessible, safe, and equal opportunities for working, playing, living and learning.*



## Economy + place

*Update land development policies and strategies to emphasize accessibility between people and opportunities.*

#	Draft strategies
1	Promote future development to occur where utilities and infrastructures exist by establishing growth management strategies to ensure that population and employment growth occurs in a sustainable and responsible manner.
2	Local entities that have passengers rail stations should establish a TOD zoning and policies to the South Shore and Westlake corridor stations areas.
3	Support regional transformative investments like the Marquette Greenway, NICTD's West Lake expansion and Double Tracking Projects, GPTC's Broadway Rapid Express, or Valparaiso's transit-oriented development.
4	Improve access to Chicago as an economic center for additional opportunities to jobs and income, culture, education, and health institutes.
5	Improve downtown and main center to anchor business and enhance the local economy.
6	Develop and expand warehouses floor space and distribution centers as they correlate to economic growth.
7	Plan to repurpose big box retail, large commercial areas, and other uses as well as the large surface parking to turn into distribution centers, logistics hubs, supply spaces where the supported infrastructure is available or become public spaces.
8	NIRPC to continue pursuing regional corridor studies within the region to identify regional improvements and help prioritize future funds.
9	Support goal 2.2 of the NWIF Ignite the Region Plan in mapping current and future commercial land types to support new business startup.
10	Forecast the future land demand and requirements of logistics to accommodate e-commerce future needs.
11	Improve safety through street design standards and traffic calming treatments to accommodate the movement of pedestrian, bicyclists, elderly people, and other vulnerable users.
12	Promote awareness of trade and tariff policy outcomes that will affect businesses as well as steel and other industries in Northwest Indiana.
13	Provide people with public safety training sessions.
14	Create a parcel-based map of current and potential business location along major northwest Indiana corridors to help identifying economic centers and prioritize future transportation improvements.

#	Draft strategies
15	Implement the I-65 and U.S. 30 safety and retrofit project into a livable urban regional center. Funding is needed to correct the current deficiencies as recommended in the plan.
16	Prioritize transit expansions to job centers.
17	Prioritize funding for transit oriented development.
18	Prioritize new and shared entrepreneurial spaces in coordination with universities, chamber of commerce, and local communities.
19	Conduct plans/ programs to address the impacts of growing e-commerce in northwest Indiana on travel behavior, logistic systems and land use planning in partnership with regional and local agencies.
20	Work with NWI Forum and local governments to meet local and regional needs by investing in transportation connectivity that support economic growth.



# Connected NWI

NWI's people have accessible, safe, and equal opportunities for working, playing, living and learning.



## Environment

Connect fragmented natural areas and integrate links between people and green spaces to increase resiliency and health outcomes.

#	Draft strategies
21	Encourage communities to adopt tree protection ordinances to increase resiliency, health outcomes and habitat connectivity in the urban environment.
22	Help communities to implement green streets and green infrastructure at the neighborhood level to increase pollinator habitat connectivity.
23	Help local governments adopt and keep up to date open space plans and public access standards to increase accessibility to open space and parks.
24	Encourage public ownership or public access to private riparian areas to link people to waterbodies.
25	Create long term regional urban forestry plan and program to improve habitat connectivity across urbanized areas.
26	Expand habitat conservation focus area plans to help connect fragmented natural areas.
27	Continue conservation and urban forestry planning to help connect fragmented natural areas, increase resiliency and health outcomes.
28	Coordinate spatial data acquisition, sharing and standardization in support of environmental planning across jurisdiction.
29	Collect transportation stream crossing inventory data to support stream habitat connectivity planning.
30	Promote importance of natural area protection, connectivity and accessibility with local governments and agencies to encourage local implementation.
31	Raise public awareness that opens access to open space increases resilience and health outcomes.
32	Promote conservation development practices to reduce natural area fragmentation.
33	Promote tree protection ordinances to increase resiliency, health outcomes and habitat connectivity in the urban environment.
34	Promote regional urban forestry plan to improve habitat connectivity across urbanized areas.
35	Promote habitat conservation focus area plans to help connect fragmented natural areas.
36	Seek support from legislative committees for 2050 Plan policy recommendations.

#	Draft strategies
37	Seek state funding for natural areas land acquisition and maintenance.
38	Grow and maintain partnerships that work to connect fragmented areas and integrate links between people and green spaces.
39	Promote partnerships between health care institutes and conservation agencies.



# Connected NWI

NWI's people have accessible, safe, and equal opportunities for working, playing, living and learning.



## Mobility

Complete roadway, bicycle, sidewalk, and transit networks across municipal and county lines to enhance safe and efficient access to opportunities for all.

#	Draft strategies
40	Establish minimum design standards for consistent trail development at local and regional scale. These would include trail width and signage.
41	Improve pedestrian and bicycle accessibility to high density population areas, employment and retail centers, transit stations, parks, and schools.
42	Establish a process to link short local trail to the regional trail network through local planning efforts.
43	Communicate to local, state, and non-profit the importance of developing trail network including water trails access in their local plans to provide alternative modes of travel.
44	Continue to maintain and update the "Regional Priority Trails & Corridors Map" as identified in the Greenways+Blueways 2020 Plan.
45	Collaborate with local entities with signage promoting proper use of trails.
46	Mandate all new federally-aided trail projects to use minimum design standards in NIRPC's Unified Trail Wayfinding Guide.
47	Prioritize non-motorized facilities that maximize connectivity cross county and municipal boundaries, and livable centers.
48	Continue installing additional bicycle accommodations on transit vehicles, including buses and trains.
49	Work with local entities to develop local ordinances that require new trails and connections in new developments where feasible.
50	Pursue legislative means to preserve and acquire abandoned railroad corridors by local entities.
51	Collaborate with entities and local landowners on high priority new trail corridors opportunities.
52	Work with roads and utilities entities in keeping waterways clear for paddling.
53	Identify and prioritize high-crash areas that could be improved quickly with relatively low-cost solutions.
54	Improve network connectivity in Northwest Indiana by periodically reevaluating road/block inter-/intra-connectivity of communities as was done in the NIRPC Creating Livable Communities program, and incorporate a scoring evaluation framework into future Notices of Funding Availability.

#	Draft strategies
55	Compile and map roadway crash data to prioritize high crash corridors in the Highway Safety Improvement Program funding grants.
56	Continue working with local university partners on collecting and analyzing data.
57	Share data on traffic volumes and other transportation attributes that NIRPC collects throughout the Region.
58	Maintain and update the Regional Corridors Study.
59	Educate local law enforcement on the importance of location accuracy and consistency in recording crash data.
60	Prioritize funding for roadway connectivity projects based on pre- and post-project Functional Classification.
61	Maximize connectivity and improve the regional transportation network by pursuing funding opportunities for NIRPC Regional Corridors Study corridor development, key roadway gaps that if constructed would improve connectivity and mobility throughout the region.
62	Improve the regional transportation network by pursuing funding opportunities to ensure congestion relief in key regional corridors.
63	Improve major regional centers by pursuing funding opportunities to improve connectivity and access for all users to major employment and retail centers such as implementing the NIRPC US 30 Safety Study.
64	Increase roadway safety through traffic calming techniques and ensure utilization of safety design standards.
65	Implement Transportation Demand Management programs by working with employers to establish policies for their employees to use transit passes, carpooling, flexible scheduling, and telecommuting.
66	Improve roadway connectivity by bringing communities to work together on projects affecting shared corridors.
67	Reduce congestion by developing a regional railroad crossing improvement plan with a focus on highway-rail grade separations.
68	Work with intermodal facilities and freight carriers to identify locations with high levels of freight movement and to plan strategies for alleviating freight-related congestion.
69	Develop a plan for multi-modal and intermodal hubs to improve connectivity which will allow for more efficient, reliable, and environmentally friendly movement of freight throughout the region.

#	Draft strategies
70	Improve regional connectivity by assisting in identifying key coordinated stops where transit operators can rendezvous to switch passengers from one service to another.
71	Improve the accessibility of transit by using universal design standards when developing new transit infrastructure like bus stops and other signage.
72	Expand the regional transit network by prioritizing funding to expand transit to job centers and high-density areas and the implementation of ADA transition plans.
73	Increase the accessibility and overall ridership of the transit network by improving the transparency of ADA transition plans, so other agencies, such as transit operators, can better coordinate with ADA transition plan goals and region residents can monitor the progress of transition plan implementation.
74	Prioritize transit to include priority destinations of an aging population and other health-related locations.
75	Reduce congestion and increase the use of transit by working with major employers to consider transit and carpooling as viable methods to get their employees to work.
76	Improve regional transit connectivity by prioritizing transit expansions; that cross county and municipal boundaries, connect to key destinations like downtowns and major employment centers, and link EJ communities to regional resources and assets.
77	Improve the accessibility of regional pedestrian and transit infrastructure by allocating funding for the implementation of locally-developed ADA transition plans, and incorporating universal design standards so all public infrastructure meets or exceeds ADA standards.
78	Increase funding for the overall transit network by utilizing NIRPC's legislative committee to designate a dedicated local funding source for transit, so more federal funds can be leveraged into greater transit access.
79	Increase funding for the transit network by partnering with human service agencies, medical centers, businesses, and other major destinations to secure more local funding for expanding or enhancing local services or incorporating universal fare programs.
80	Increase funding for the transit network by partnering educational institutions to existing public transit operators to offer campus transportation services instead of schools transportation services. Their funds can be leveraged as match for federal grants. By also providing students with universal access passes allows mutual benefits for transit operators to receive more local match and students to get broader use of a larger transit network with the same fees.
81	Increase efficiency by partnering transit operators together to share facilities and maintenance responsibilities. This way costs are shared between agencies and the savings can be passed on to service improvements.

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## Connected NWI

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## People + leaders

*Commit to removing barriers and obstacles to guarantee equal and accessible opportunities.*

#	Draft strategies
84	Implement the Complete Streets Policy through programming and project scoping assistance. Assist municipalities and counties in adopting Complete Streets Policies/Ordinances.
85	Implement the Complete Streets Policy through early coordination with INDOT before their projects are scoped and programmed.
86	Encourage municipalities to update land use regulations to include pedestrian connectivity between land uses.
87	Balance between transit programming and transit planning to better support initiatives to connect region w/ high quality transit.
88	Review and work with INDOT on the statewide corridor plan to incorporate local corridors.
89	Monitor and update ADA transition plans by LPAs with NIRPC assistance on a routine basis.
90	Continue to educate and raise issues/trends of universal design with municipalities and counties.
91	Sustain funding for US 30 & I-65 Plan planning activities for implementation.



# Strategies for a Renewed NWI



## Renewed NWI

NWI's urban and rural centers are places people want to come to and live in, and our environment is safe and healthy.



## Economy + place

Maximize growth in existing centers to enhance civic and economic life and to protect natural areas and farmland.

#	Draft strategies
92	Develop form-Based Code rezoning to allow higher densities and mixed-uses to create more livable communities and maintain more human scale environment and spaces with the preservation of a traditional community character.
93	Establish special zoning for historic districts and national and register buildings.
94	Provide incentives for downtown investment to increase density of population and employment.
95	Promote adaptive reuse* of existing buildings in downtown and main centers area for shared office space and infill to accommodate entrepreneurs, startups, and remote workers.
96	Work to adjust zoning regulations to allow non-retail uses in closed big box retail.
97	Establish inclusionary** housing policies to preserve the affordability of the region's housing stock before market conditions change (i.e.. interest rates increase) and as the region is revitalized.
98	Establish policies to increase affordable housing near job centers.
99	Continue and strengthen NIRPC's role at the Regional local food Council to convene, discuss issues, and develop solutions for strengthening the local food system.
100	Concentrate new growth around infrastructure to allow preservation of environmental assets.
101	Support the Transit Development District (TDD) of the regional South Shore Corridor TOD areas to develop context-appropriate strategies for creating a network of transit-oriented places and sites that integrate different functions and activities within easy access of transit.
102	Update the various maps related to the local food system as it relates to Food Deserts, transit, transportation investments, land use, Environmental Justice areas, trails, and high density population areas.
103	Map and identify prime agricultural land within urbanized areas in close proximity to high density, transit, and Environmental Justice areas, taking into consideration transportation and economic development.

\*Adaptive reuse refers to the process of reusing an old site or building for a purpose other than which it was built or designed for.

\*\*Inclusionary zoning (IZ) is an affordable housing tool that links the production of affordable housing to the production of market-rate housing. IZ policies either require or encourage new residential developments to make a certain percentage of the housing units affordable to low- or moderate- income residents.

#	Draft strategies
104	Identify land access opportunities and land value map for farmers (beginning), urban agriculture and agriculture.
105	Coordinate between local governments and funding agencies to prioritize investment in existing centers will further improve development opportunities and facilitate mixed-use in existing centers.
106	Prioritize investment of roads, public transit, and other infrastructure to improve the market of the identified opportunity zones and disinvested areas.
107	Continue to prioritize transportation funding in older communities and livable centers to improve public infrastructure and redevelopment.
108	Adapt to the changing land use and local and regional economy patterns to accommodate the trending technologies. Such as online shopping that decreases the need for commercial and retail land use. It also increases the demand for intermodal facilities.
109	Work to coordinate and provide assistance in obtaining non-transportation funding for local communities through Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA), Lake Michigan Coastal Program, etc.
110	Continue to partner with the NWI Forum and implement the Economic Development Districts (EDD) strategies and fund projects.



## Renewed NWI

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## Environment

*Clean and protect the air, land, water, and natural habitats to sustain and enhance the environment's safety and health for all.*

#	Draft strategies
111	Help local governments to adopt model anti-idling ordinances and incentives.
112	Encourage communities to adopt energy efficient building codes and incentives for building retrofits to reduce energy use, increase sustainability, and reduce air pollution emissions.
113	Encourage communities to adopt tree protection ordinances to reduce exposure to urban air pollution and reduce urban stormwater pollution runoff.
114	Help communities to adopt green street ordinances to reduce stormwater runoff pollution.
115	Promote model policies that incentivize brownfield redevelopment to increase the pace of brownfield remediation and cleanup.
116	Encourage the incorporation of pollution prevention and environmental impact avoidance in regional and local land use, transportation, flood and stormwater management and mitigation planning to enhance future environmental quality.
117	Encourage local governments to use conservation development practices to reduce habitat fragmentation.
118	Promote policies that encourage riparian buffer setbacks to reduce development impacts and stormwater runoff pollution to waterbodies.
119	Promote and support watershed management planning and implementation measures to reduce non-point source water pollution.
120	Encourage the adoption of ordinances that support proper operation and maintenance of septic systems to reduce water pollution.
121	Maintain all practices in the State Implementation Plan including vehicle emission testing to prevent backsliding on vehicle emissions.
122	Create long term regional urban forestry plan and program to reduce human exposure to urban air pollution and stormwater pollution runoff.
123	Plan for Northwest Indiana appropriate off road vehicle destination to help alleviate recreational impacts to critical natural areas.
124	Maintain a strong long term regional brownfield support program to provide training and tools, increase the pace of brownfield remediation and redevelopment to reduce pollution from contaminated areas, and and improve local capacity.
125	Develop watershed management plans to facilitate water quality and aquatic habitat protection and improvements.

#	Draft strategies
126	Continue and increase impact of Green Fleets partnership with SSCC and LPAs.
127	Continue engaging in natural area connectivity planning with regional partners.
128	Continue CommuniTree Program in to reduce exposure to urban air pollution and reduce urban stormwater runoff.
129	Evaluate, update, and implement existing watershed and stormwater management plans.
130	Promote public understanding and use of IDEM Regional AQ monitoring data.
131	Integrate SSCC and USDOE fuel and emission data into NIRPC programs.
132	Support the collection and sharing of data for watershed and stormwater management planning.
133	Encourage and support the conversion of local health department septic system paper records into digital format.
134	Collect conservancy district boundary data for sewer service in support of environmental planning.
135	Support the collection and sharing of wetland functional data with local decision makers.
136	Maintain and update parcel level septic system mapping in support of environmental planning.
137	Promote best practices to reduce transportation emissions.
138	Educate the Commercial Real Estate Community of Brownfield Redevelopment.
139	Promote green infrastructure and Low Impact Development to become a regional standards practices.
140	Raise public awareness on the value of urban forests.
141	Hold stormwater and Watershed Public Education Campaign.
142	Promote and grow public education and involvement programs supporting urban forests.
143	Create a regional awards program for "Air and Energy Friendly Employers" to promote air emission reduction through voluntary efforts.

#	Draft strategies
144	Continue and increase impact of Green Fleets partnership with SSCC and LPAs.
145	Continue support of local watershed management and Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) education and public involvement programs.
146	Continue support of Partners for Clean Air education and outreach programs.
147	Seek funding for projects that reduce diesel emissions in Northwest Indiana.
148	Create a funding program for those financially impacted by vehicle emission testing.
149	Seek federal grant funding for brownfields.
150	Increase regional participation in Indiana Brownfield Program.
151	Seek funding to secure an off road vehicle destination in Northwest Indiana.
152	Promote fully funded and financed regional water and wastewater infrastructure maintenance.
153	Secure funding for watershed and stormwater management plan projects.
154	Purchase clean energy and fuel transit vehicles.
155	Support the continuation of Vehicle Emission Testing Program.
156	Support the continuation of CMAQ funding for diesel emission reduction projects.
157	Support the continuation of the Northwest Indiana Storm Water Advisory Group.
158	Support the continuation of the Northwest Indiana Septic System Working Group.
159	Collect periodically IDEM Air Quality Monitoring Data.
160	Integrate environmental site databases with parcel data.



## Renewed NWI

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## Mobility

*Improve roadway, bicycle, sidewalk, and transit networks to revitalize existing urban and rural centers and enhance equity.*

#	Draft strategies
161	Incorporate when feasible universal designs standards for non-motorized access.
162	Work with local entities on the development of a sidewalk maintenance plan which inventories facilities in need of repair or missing segments.
163	Promote placemaking themes and create a unique identity along trail corridors to attract a wide range of trail users by using public art and provide amenities.
164	Make pedestrian and biking areas safe and more desirable for users by providing amenities like lighting benches , drinking fountains, restrooms, etc.
165	Provide opportunities and encourage private and public officials to take part in trail operations and maintenance training.
166	Develop a resource site on NIRPC webpage promoting use of best trail operations and maintenance documents.
167	Hold annual workshops training for local officials on benefits of universal design and Complete Streets, including policy development.
168	Continue to support the policy of progressive maintenance/ asset management plan per all newly funded federally-aided trail projects.
169	Work with local governments and INDOT to implement and pass Complete Streets policy.
170	Improve resiliency and reduce congestion by sharing data and plans with local Emergency Planning Committees to help them with decision-making and improving evacuation plans.
171	Improve access to freight funding by establishing and updating critical urban and rural freight corridors.
172	Prioritize bicyclist and pedestrian safety and comfort by reviewing and adjusting traffic speeds.
173	Utilize the data that the Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP) has been collecting about regional asset management to better inform, and where appropriate coordinate, project decision-making.
174	Improve transportation reliability by compiling, analyzing and mapping reliability data for roadways in order to prioritize funding.
175	Reduce congestion and identify opportunities for targeted improvements such as increasing transit mode share, highway flex lanes, etc. by compiling, analyzing and mapping congestion data for all modes on roadways and bottlenecks in order to prioritize funding.

#	Draft strategies
176	Maximize the life of pavements and bridges through proper pavement and bridge treatment processes with the right treatments at the right times by maintaining proper drainage.
177	Use asset management data from pavement and bridge conditions to pursue projects that address needs.
178	Encourage legislators to look at asset management needs statewide and match those to future funding opportunities such as the Community Crossings Grant Program.
179	Improve emergency response times and reduce congestion by convening a regional stakeholder group to plan signal preemption and signal coordination projects.
180	Expand the transit network, and improve the efficiency of the existing transit network by using density thresholds to prioritize demand response or fixed route services. Fixed route services have priority in dense urban environments and demand response services have a priority in less-dense areas.
181	Improve the efficiency of transit and curb the costly growth of sprawl, by in increasing the overall density of urban areas.
182	Attract more transit users to transit services by improving the efficiency of existing fixed route transit operators by using data to identify corridors well-suited for bus rapid transit. Metrics such as population density, congestion, and concentrations of employment may be used in developing priority corridors.
183	Reduce congestion and increase the use of transit by conducting a study to demonstrate the number of workers that cannot reach shift jobs to better support transit expansions to meet the needs of the private sector.
184	Support existing and future regional transformative projects such as the South Shore's West Lake Expansion and TOD areas by providing and expanding transit services, after their completion, and by increasing public awareness to the benefit of these projects.
185	Attract transit users and improve their customer experience by developing a regional transit website to assist in finding more information about transit services, transit-decision making, scheduling rides, and real-time bus tracking.
186	Increase the use of transit and the customer experience by prioritizing expansions that decrease wait times so that transit users will not have to wait long for a scheduled ride.
187	Increase the use of transit and the customer experience by prioritizing expansions that add availability during nights and weekends

#	Draft strategies
188	Increase the use of transit and the customer experience by prioritizing expansions that increase accessibility to major high employment centers; medical facilities; and recreation areas that include restaurants, shopping centers, movie theaters, and other recreational amenities.



## Renewed NWI

*NWI's urban and rural centers are places people want to come to and live in, and our environment is safe and healthy.*



## People + leaders

*Focus educational and workforce development initiatives on expanding skills that the modern economy requires.*

#	Draft strategies
189	Focus transit planning on better connecting residents to education, workforce development, and economic opportunities.
190	Work with schools and workforce development agencies to build a workforce with future skills that are needed for the modern economy by offering professional degrees and job training programs.
191	Support regional efforts to maintain NWI's economic and business competitiveness and raise the profile of the region for a good place to do business.
192	Demonstrate the positive impact of transit and other transportation choices on economic development, workforce participation, public health, and personal/household income.
193	Demonstrate the importance of immigration (domestic and foreign) to the workforce, accommodating an aging population, to ultimately support population and economic growth of NWI.



# Strategies for a United NWI

# United NWI



*NWI's diversity is celebrated, and we work together as a community across racial, ethnic, political and cultural lines for the mutual benefit of the region.*

## Economy + place



*Collaborate regionally to welcome a diversity of people and talent to achieve mixed and balanced growth.*

#	Draft strategies
194	Provide incentives to developers to include affordable housing as part of the development of market-rate housing.
195	Update the historic register and the designated historic districts map.
196	Create and share immigration data to educate people on how immigration may help to keep the region relatively young and its impact on the region overall.
197	Prioritize transit investments that better connect the environmental justice populations to job centers, medical facilities, recreations centers, shopping districts, and educational institutions.
198	Prioritize transit investments that connect communities in environmental justice areas, people who are elderly, low-income, people with disabilities, and veterans.
199	Initiate a region-wide sales tax structure to address issues like the decreases of the tax revenue because of the online shopping that results in an insufficient sale tax revenue to cover the cost of public services.
200	Support immigration that leads to, as recent studies confirm, more innovation and creativity, a workforce with higher education levels, better fit of skills with jobs, and economic growth.
201	Prioritize transit expansions that close the gap between environmental justice populations and fresh food resources.

# United NWI



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# Environment



*Build region-wide coalitions to advance environmental sustainability for the benefit of future generations.*

#	Draft strategies
202	Promote shared alternative energy and fuel infrastructure agreements between communities.
203	Help LPA understand how to engage with regional SSCC and FHWA Plans for alternative fuel corridors to support fuel and energy diversification.
204	Promote common energy and water efficient building codes, renewable energy friendly zoning and codes between jurisdictions to advance sustainable development across the region.
205	Provide regional training and tools to support unified local green street implementation.
206	Provide regional training and tools to support unified local brownfield redevelopment and remediation strategies.
207	Help local governments integrate open space plans across jurisdictional boundaries.
208	Provide regional technical support to integrate local implementation of Regional 2020 Greenways and Blueways Plan across jurisdictions.
209	Promote and support watershed management planning and implementation measures to encourage planning across jurisdictional boundaries.
210	Develop a regional energy and fuel plan for Northwest Indiana to increase regional energy sustainability.
211	Engage Local Economic Development Organizations in Brownfield Redevelopment.
212	Develop multijurisdictional watershed advisory groups to facilitate water quality improvements across communities.
213	Create a Climate Resiliency Plan for the Region.
214	Maintain regional watershed resource inventory.
215	Encourage and promote benefits of existing regional coordinating initiatives between municipal jurisdictions that are organized around environmental concerns.
216	Grow and expand NWI Brownfield Database.

#	Draft strategies
217	Develop GIS maps for open space and water resource protection (Update, Expand, Maintain LMCP Eppley Project).
218	Maintain watershed data inventory.
219	Continue AQ Public Education "It all adds up to cleaner air" including emphasis on modal shift.
220	Support implementation and share natural area maps and habitat conservation focus area plans with local decision makers and the public.
221	Conduct Public Knowledge and Behavior survey.
222	Promote statewide public private partnership to implement alternative fuel infrastructure on Interstates.
223	Amplify efforts of local solar energy advocates to increase implementation.
224	Create and maintain database of regional properties with environmental concerns.



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## Mobility



Prioritize transformative investments to elevate the position of the region and to attract a diversity of residents and high-quality economic opportunities.

#	Draft strategies
225	Encourage employers to install showers, bicycle parking and other incentives to increase bike-to-work opportunities. Encourage employers to install showers, bicycle parking and other incentives to increase bike-to-work opportunities.
226	Promote a region-wide bicycle tourism market with the adoption of "Trail Towns" and similar designations. <a href="http://www.trailtowns.org">www.trailtowns.org</a>
227	Update and distribute the Greenways+Blueways Map.
228	Utilize NIRPC Water Trail Signage Manual to fabricate and install signage along waterways.
229	Make travel more user-friendly and accessible to all users by deploying Intelligent Transportation Systems including advanced digital communication techniques including other languages to better communicate congestion, service wait times, parking availability, and other travel attributes.
230	Expand LTAP's resources to better educate local officials about transportation assets and elevate the position of the Region.
231	Identify emerging growth areas and then leverage NIRPC's data capabilities to help those emerging growth areas.
232	Increase transparency and awareness of the transportation network performance by publishing a Performance-based Planning data dashboard that shows visually how the region's transportation assets are performing in the context of the region's broader performance among other non-transportation indicators, and allow this dashboard to be viewable at all geographic scales.
233	Promote tourism and improve impression of the transportation system by working with major employers and tourism centers on securing local match and/or private funding for gateway enhancement projects (streetscape improvements, non-motorized enhancements, pavement programs, etc.) to those locations.
234	Find additional sources of funding and encourage partnerships to assist municipalities with planning, engineering and other prerequisites of transportation projects.
235	Improve air quality and reduce the dependence on fossil fuels by convening stakeholders to regionally collaborate on, seek grants for, and apply for funding for alternative fuel and electric vehicle and infrastructure projects.
236	Attract more transit users by utilizing advanced digital communication techniques to instantly communicate transit information, in accessible and bilingual formats, to riders to better coordinate travel.

#	Draft strategies
237	Attract more transit users by developing a multi-county website and phone number for scheduling trips across providers in an accessible and bilingual format.
238	Increase the use of transit services and enhance the customer experience by using advanced communication techniques and universal accessibility features to communicate issues about transit matters. Techniques such as instant messaging, social media, texting, email, and push notifications can be used so that that all communication about transit is maximally informative and accessible for all.
239	Promote transparency and participation in transit operator board meetings and other transit related public meetings by promoting these events across regional communication platforms.
240	Encourage use of transit by utilizing travel-assistants to help familiarize and inform riders with available transportation services.
241	Encourage use of transit by coordinating transit trainings that can educate the public on where transit is available and how to use it, with multiple transit operators represented.
242	Increase the use of transit and the customer experience by prioritizing expansions that connect environmental justice communities to medical facilities, major high employment centers, shopping districts, and other recreation locations.
243	Improve customer experience by linking individuals that live in environmental justice communities to fresh food resources to increase the health and well-being by developing partnerships between food distributors and transit operators to bring food access to transit facilities.
244	Increase the awareness and participation of environmental justice communities by using transit to connect these communities to regional decision makers.
245	Increase efficiency of the transit network by developing cost-saving measures between transit operators and human service agencies such as multi-user pick-up and drop-off times, coordinated services between many clients, distribution of information about transit, and others; so that more funds can be leveraged to expand service areas.
246	Increase decision-making capacity by sharing transit asset management data with regional bodies.

# United NWI



*NWI's diversity is celebrated, and we work together as a community across racial, ethnic, political and cultural lines for the mutual benefit of the region.*



## People + leaders

*Foster better communications, cooperation and coordination to bring people together across the lines that divide us.*

#	Draft strategies
247	Provide assistance to local governments on sustainable growth and coordination where future planned growth overlap between communities.
248	Increase public access to local plans by providing links on NIRPC's website.
249	Continue the efforts of the Local Government Assistance Committee as a venue to discuss local/regional issues.
250	Raise awareness of NIRPC planning activities through more robust public outreach and engagement across the region.
251	Bring planning experts to NWI to share best-practices for our communities to consider for their planning activities, ordinances, land use updates, etc.
252	Raise awareness of funding opportunities for planning beyond just transportation throughout the region through activities like OCRA grant administration and other sources.
253	Local Government Assistance Committee continues to be a venue to discussion local/regional issues and opportunities to provide more Council of Government services to our member communities.
254	Convene locally elected officials to secure local match to leverage all federal-aid, sustain existing service, and expand transit strategically.
255	Convene locally elected officials to sustain/increase Public Mass Transportation Fund (PMTF) allocations, and/or direct and predictable transit revenues.
256	Initiate local governments partnerships to explore sharing or consolidation of services that allows local governments to reduce costs.
257	Conduct an annual survey to keep up with new local governments plans/ major activities.
258	Convene locally elected officials on a regular basis to discuss and deliberate critical transit issues in the Region.



# Strategies for a Vibrant NWI



# Vibrant NWI

*NWI's economy is thriving, our people are well educated, growth is planned, and natural and agricultural areas are valued and protected.*



## Economy + place

*Promote initiatives and policies to ensure healthy living, sustainability, quality of life, and prosperity.*

#	Draft strategies
259	Plan to improve campus areas and turn them to great places by creating local student-centered gatherings and nightlife offerings, good mixture of modern cuisine, bars, bike paths, trails, parks, cultural offerings, and outstanding public transit system.
260	Increase park space and green infrastructure to promote a health environment especially in EJ areas that tend to be located in proximity to deteriorated, brownfields, and industrial areas.
261	Develop healthy livable areas with housing choices that are based on type, price, household income, household composition, rental, home, ownership, and lifestyle.
262	Establish a partnership between educational institutions, e-commerce leaders, and workforce development on job training to meet the future job demand that includes IT experts, call in centers, distribution centers and warehouses, packaging, online web content writers, photographers, designers, telecommuting, home-based business, freight drivers, etc.
263	Improve quality of life by promoting placemaking that creates a vibrant environment through architecture design, public art, and historic preservation.
264	Continue to support transit and complete streets to ensure that all residents have access to schools, grocery stores, community centers, medical facilities, reliable transportation and job opportunities.
265	Continue to support and partner with the NWI Food Council on annual education and convening conferences such as the Food Expo and Discussions event.
266	Continue to support the NWI Food Council with FarmHop, Local Farm Tours, that enhance Agritourism and strengthen partnerships with Visitor and Convention Bureaus.
267	Continue to offer workshops on the Sensible Tools Handbook to provide guidance to local government on best practices of sustainable growth and vibrant communities and to understand how land use choices affect local revenues.
268	Support marketing programs and opportunities to enhance the Indiana Dunes and Lake Michigan Beaches.
269	Incorporate policies and strategies in transportation funding to support centers, revitalization areas and infill and potential growth areas.
270	Continue the implementation of the Marquette Plan. The Regional Development Authority and the lakefront communities should continue to fund projects within the Marquette Plan area.

#	Draft strategies
271	Promote development within the Lake Michigan Watershed to meet the future demand.

## Vibrant NWI

*NWI's economy is thriving, our people are well educated, growth is planned, and natural and agricultural areas are valued and protected.*

## Environment

*Endorse innovative energy and environmental strategies to achieve a balance that protects diverse and unique ecological treasures while fostering a sustainable economy.*

#	Draft strategies
272	Assist regional transit providers to adopt clean energy fleet policies clean energy and fuel by 2030.
273	Develop model ordinances on electric vehicle and alternative fuel infrastructure and incentives to promote a diverse and sustainable regional energy economy.
274	Encourage communities to develop ordinances and adopt energy efficient building codes and provide incentives for building retrofits to foster a balanced and sustainable regional economy.
275	Assist local governments and land owners manage urban forests to increase tree canopy coverage, diversity and health.
276	Promote green streets ordinances as an innovative approach to managing stormwater for increased sustainability.
277	Promote local governments to incentivize best practices for sustainable energy/transportation fuel/EV infrastructure on brown and grey fields.
278	Promote participation of regional entities in local planning activities to advance regional sustainability.
279	Help local governments adopt open space plans and public access standards that protect ecological treasures and increase sustainability.
280	Increase the impact and effectiveness of regional brownfield programs on reuse of historic buildings.
281	Encourage water conservation programs and strategies.
282	Maintain existing alt. fuel and energy infrastructure planning efforts to increase future energy resilience.
283	Continue to update and expand ecosystem services evaluation efforts.
284	Include high solar and wind energy potential areas as natural resource GIS layers in NWI (DOE has national data).
285	Maintain a regional Inventory of alternative energy and fuel infrastructure.
286	Analyze NWI energy and fuel use and carbon footprint trends.
287	Promote knowledge and use of Clean Cities NWI Energy and Fuel Use and sources database.

#	Draft strategies
288	Obtain LIDAR tree canopy, land use and land cover data and keep the data up to date.
289	Track NWI Water Use and Sources.
290	Encourage communities to get Tree City USA designation.
291	Educate public on nature friendly ORV use.
292	Encourage public outreach for the Tree Steward Program.
293	Continue Public Education/Workshops on Options and Economics of Alternative and Renewable Energy.
294	Continue Renewable and alternative energy job training programs.
295	Support and obtain funding for local Solarize programs.
296	Implement local incentives for renewable energy and green building.
297	Upgrade regional water and wastewater infrastructure to state of the art technology reflective of climate projections.
298	Purchase Clean Energy and Fuel Transit Vehicles.
299	Share best Energy Practices from similar areas (Columbus OH).
300	Support alt energy and fuel friendly state and federal legislation.
301	Maintain an inventory and GIS data of local renewable energy ordinances and policies.
302	Look for additional energy and fuel partnership opportunities with NIPSCO and Industry.
303	Collect data on usage and locations of alternative fueling stations.
304	Partner with Regional Universities to analyze data on new technology and impacts.

## Vibrant NWI

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## Mobility

*Adopt technological innovation that enhances the safe and fluid movement of people and goods to enable a flourishing economy.*

#	Draft strategies
305	Establish region-wide bike share installation development at major activity centers and transit stations.
306	Gauge progress on installation of bicycle sharing systems, and encourage increased participation through training.
307	Develop an interactive version of the Greenways+Blueways Map combined with a tracking application.
308	Promote e-bike and scooters legislation at the local level.
309	Work with municipalities on the installation and maintenance of trail counters.
310	Improve transportation network reliability and reduce congestion by creating, updating, and maintaining travel demand models that forecast travel for all modes including non-motorized travel as well as E-Commerce, shared mobility, and Connected and Automated Vehicles (CAVs).
311	Improve transportation network reliability, reduce congestion, and modernize the transportation network by accommodating E-Commerce, share mobility, and Connected and Automated Vehicles (CAVs) and mitigating their effects on pavement and bridge deterioration.
312	Improve safety, efficiency, and regional interoperability of the transportation system by developing, maintaining and communicating the Intelligent Transportation Systems Regional Architecture.
313	Inventory gaps in our Region's transportation infrastructure and identify ways to address those gaps to prepare for connected and autonomous vehicles (CAVs) and other advanced technologies based on research and best practices related to these advanced technologies.
314	Improve accessibility to the transportation system for all users by expanding shared mobility awareness and opportunities regionally.
315	Improve accessibility to the transportation system for all users and identify future transportation network needs by tracking the increased use of connected and autonomous vehicles (CAVs).
316	Encourage legislators and transportation agencies to explore standardizations in the roadway environment to best accommodate Connected and Automated Vehicles (CAVs).
317	Encourage legislators to explore a mileage-based user fee that uses technology such as in-vehicle GPS devices or digital odometer readings to increase transportation revenues and reduce the dependence on the gas tax.

#	Draft strategies
318	Improve transportation network reliability and reduce congestion by supporting efforts to implement Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) projects in order to provide the traveling public more information to make route decisions.
319	Coordinate with private sector development of E-commerce facilities that will heavily utilize public infrastructure, and seek information regarding their transportation needs to improve the overall efficiency.
320	Engage large private sector entities who heavily rely on public infrastructure for funding opportunities.
321	Identify universal regional standards for technology so hardware, software, or other capital purchases across providers to allow for further collaboration and coordination.
322	Increase the use of transit and the customer experience by prioritizing funding for transit expansions that can allow travel for a typical work day with some flexibility. (6am - 9pm)
323	Increase the use of transit and the customer experience by prioritizing funding for technological improvements that can allow for increased coordination between transit operators, so that all operators have real-time locations of all transit vehicles in the region. This way one operator may be able to dispatch another operator's vehicle if it is more efficient. It also utilize robust data-tracking software that can be used in transit decision-making.
324	Improve the quality of service by coordinating with transit operators to establish universal fare systems and transfer policies between transit operators to make it easier for transfer one service to another.
325	Plan for the feasibility and eventual cutting edge technology in transit including, Artificial Intelligent (AI)-assisted ride scheduling, autonomous and connected vehicles, and signal preemption.
326	Support the development of infrastructure and capital purchasing required to implement the use of autonomous and connected vehicles in transit.
327	Identify priority regional corridors where signal preemption of fixed route bus services is feasible.

## Vibrant NWI

*NWI's economy is thriving, our people are well educated, growth is planned, and natural and agricultural areas are valued and protected.*

## People + leaders

*Embrace a dynamic, diversified and sustainable economy that attracts and retains talent, enhances quality of life, and increases personal and household income.*

#	Draft strategies
328	Improve economic opportunity for prosperity particularly for EJ residents and people with disabilities to ensure that NWI is a destination for business and diverse human capital.
329	Provide technical assistance for TOD planning.
330	Update Sensible Tools Kit to provide resource to municipalities for better land use planning.
331	Support regional efforts to increase the entrepreneurial capacity of NWI residents to start and grow businesses.
332	Routinely conduct Planning Commission workshops on the Sensible Tools Handbook to continually reinforce best practices in land use planning.
333	Report on 2050 Plan metrics and accomplishments annually to demonstrate NIRPC progress on regionally important initiatives.
334	Grow local revenues for NIRPC to support planning activities beyond transportation.

The 334 unique draft strategies can mostly be categorized into 16 major initiatives for NWI to pursue over the coming years. To the right are some of the possible initiatives.

**Sensible Tools Handbook update** – a set of best practices and model ordinances for better land use and quality places

**Planning for livable centers and transit oriented development** – an initiative to better orient NWI’s land development for smart growth

**Planning for e-commerce landscape** – an initiative to better understand how e-commerce with impact NWI, and how we can adapt

**Planning for transformative investments** – an initiative to better identify major investments for NWI to pursue and leverage outside funding

**Planning for regional transit** – an initiative to set a comprehensive strategy to expand service and secure more funding

**Planning for climate / infrastructure vulnerability** – an initiative to better understand what infrastructure is at risk due to a changing climate

**Regional data / analysis framework** – an initiative to make regional data more transparent and to support more sophisticated analysis

**Planning for complete streets and an active NWI** – an initiative to sustain and expand efforts to buildout NWI’s complete streets and trail network

**Planning for an engaged public and sharing best practices** – an initiative to share best practices and educate the public on major issues

**Planning for short-range investments** – an initiative to continuously improve the investment programming process in NWI

**Air & energy** – initiatives to improve air quality and energy efficiency in NWI

**Green infrastructure and open space planning** – an initiative to build out green infrastructure and protect open spaces

**Brownfield remediation and redevelopment** – an initiative to improve brownfield sites in NWI to support economic development and urban core

**Watershed / water quality** – an initiative to improve our water in NWI

**Council of Government activities** – initiatives to expand NIRPC’s COG activities and services

**Economic development ideas** – various initiatives to pursue in partnership with local municipalities

# Participate!

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