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NIRPC Receives Economic Development District Designation from the U.S. Department of Commerce

The Economic Development Administration (EDA) of the United States Department of Commerce has designated the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC) as an Economic Development District, bringing to fruition over a decade of concerted regional effort to achieve the designation for greater economic development in northwest Indiana.

The designation for the area of Lake, Porter, and LaPorte Counties in Indiana opens the door to additional funding assistance from the EDA for economic development-related purposes not previously available to the region.

"Many individuals contributed many years of effort to achieve this designation," said Diane Noll, Clerk-Treasurer for the Town of Wanatah and current Chair of NIRPC. "With so much else on the positive upswing in our region, the timing of this designation could not be better to leverage more economic resources for the wide range of communities that make up northwest Indiana."

John Fleming, the EDA's Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Economic Development, said NIRPC's designation "will serve as the foundation for future economic successes that will benefit both families and business and will strengthen the economies of the Northwest Indiana region."

"We had a very productive meeting with Dr. Fleming and a small group of EDA officials from Washington, DC during the annual conference in Omaha of the National Association of Regional Councils," said Geof Benson, Beverly Shores councilman, prior NIRPC Chair, and then-president of the national group representing regional planning organizations such as NIRPC. "They understood the concerns of northwest Indiana in seeking the designation, and the benefit that it could bring for economic development in our region."

Heather Ennis, President & CEO of the Northwest Indiana Forum, said an Economic Development District for the region has long been a goal of business and industry, most recently articulated in *Ignite the Region: A Regional Strategy for Economic Transformation* – an economic strategic plan for northwest Indiana developed in partnership with multiple communities and organizations and spearheaded by the Forum.

"It was an important goal of *Ignite the Region* to 'establish an Economic Development District to serve as a facilitator of regional initiatives and a conduit for additional funding sources in Lake, Porter, and LaPorte Counties'," Ennis said. "NIRPC's designation as an EDD enhances the region's ability to obtain EDA grants, and will leverage the involvement of the public, private, and nonprofit sectors."

Ty Warner, Executive Director of NIRPC, said the designation will “significantly enhance the services NIRPC provides the region and its 41 municipalities.”

“This additional role as an Economic Development District enables for NIRPC to step solidly into economic development assistance, leveraging NIRPC’s experience in bringing Federal funding to northwest Indiana and building upon our longstanding Federal partnerships,” Warner said.

NIRPC is the Metropolitan Planning Organization and regional council of local governments for Northwest Indiana. NIRPC’s purpose, as put forth in Indiana state statute, is to "provide a coordinative management process for Lake, Porter, and LaPorte Counties and to institute and maintain a comprehensive planning and programming process for transportation, economic development, and environmental policy."

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