NIRPC 2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan

A Vision for Northwest Indiana

June 2011
The NWI region is expected to add 170,000 people and 80,000 new jobs by 2040.

Accommodating this growth will:

- Overburden the region’s transportation network
- Increase development pressure on the region’s natural lands, farmland, and forest lands.
- Vacant land already exists in urbanized areas of existing communities.
- However, the development trend has been shifting away from the more historically urban portions of the region and into unincorporated areas.
- Existing land supply meets the growth needs and demands through 2040.

New strategies are needed to address this growth:

- Without implementation of regional growth strategies, the revitalization, conservation, and sustainability principles of NIRPC’s 2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan will be difficult to realize.
Strategy: Create Livable Centers
Livable Centers clustering many different land uses in a compact area gives people the opportunity to accomplish various activities without using a car.

“Livability means being able to take your kids to school, go to work, see a doctor, drop by the grocery or Post Office, go out to dinner and a movie, and play with your kids at the park – all without having to get in your car” - Ray LaHood
• **To encourage livability and accessibility**, NIRPC has called for transit-oriented development and Livable Centers Initiative in the **2040 Plan**.

• **Livable Centers Initiative** is one of the principal urban framework strategies for the 2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan, which is fundamental to achieve the preferred regional strategy for land use, transportation and environmental balance in Northwest Indiana.
2040 Plan - Basic Elements of Livable Centers

- Jobs and housing
- On-street, shared, structured or rear parking areas
- Transit stops and amenities
- Traditional street grid
- Access management
- Pedestrian-friendly speed limits
- Short block lengths
- Bicycle lanes
- Wide sidewalks
- Public spaces
- Minimal building setbacks
- Existing infrastructure
Livable Centers Initiative

- Livable Centers Initiative lay out the concept to concentrate future growth and transportation/land use investments within a defined perimeter around central locations which will be defined within each community.

- Livable Centers Initiative encourages local jurisdictions to plan and implement strategies that link transportation improvements with land use development strategies to create sustainable, livable communities consistent with regional development policies.
Identifying the Need

NIRPC Projects/Initiatives
Livable Centers Initiative (LCI)
Creating Livable Communities (CLC) Funding Program
Livable Centers

- Livable Centers make it easy to reach multiple destinations by foot, bicycle, car or transit.

- A well-designed street and sidewalk system provides good connectivity and safety for everyone.

- Livable Centers concentrate housing, employment, shopping, and entertainment in areas with good pedestrian networks.
Specific Elements of Livable Centers

- Compact, mixed use development - building facing streets
- Short block length (400’-600’)
- Having unique and distinct design characteristic with shops offer local products and services
- Many Access options including pedestrian lanes, bike lanes, trails, transit, and roadways
- Convenient, safe and easy street crossing
- Well-maintained public streets
- Public gathering places
- Serving different activities that occurred both daytime and night time
Livable Centers Analysis
## Defining the Centers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SYMBOL</th>
<th>CENTERS</th>
<th>GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS/DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>ILLUSTRATIONS</th>
<th>POPULATION INDICATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| ☢️     | Small Community | Small rural centers supporting basic living needs - low density residential land uses and some commercial or retail activities  
Residents depend on nearby medium or large communities to meet full service needs i.e. major purchases and health care  
Examples: Winfield, Long Beach, La Crosse, Kingsbury | ![Image](image1.jpg)  
![Image](image2.jpg)  
![Image](image3.jpg) | up to 6,000 |
| ☢️     | Medium Community | Moderate size urban/suburban community with retail activities and residential land uses  
Important destinations primarily for the people from surrounding communities or towns  
Does not always function as a full “service community” (ie lacks hospital, full retail services, employment, etc)  
Impacts traffic and land use patterns at local and sub-regional level  
Examples: Lowell, Dyer, St. John | ![Image](image4.jpg)  
![Image](image5.jpg)  
![Image](image6.jpg) | 7,000 - 19,000 |
| ☢️     | Large Community | More of a free-standing community with hubs of retail activities and residential land uses  
Includes nearly a full complement of services and facilities  
Typically sustains a higher percentage of employment  
Impacts traffic and land use patterns at local and sub-regional level  
Examples: Merrillville, Portage, Valparaiso, Hobart | ![Image](image7.jpg)  
![Image](image8.jpg)  
![Image](image9.jpg) | 20,000 - 70,000 |
| ☢️     | Metropolitan Center | More urban center for commercial activities, services, amenities and residential land uses  
Includes major/unique destinations for people around the region  
Areas with high density of employment and population  
Significantly impacts the regional economy, traffic and land use patterns  
Examples: Gary, Hammond | ![Image](image10.jpg)  
![Image](image11.jpg)  
![Image](image12.jpg) | 70,000 + |
This report has been developed in response to widespread interest for improving both mobility choices and community character through a commitment to creating and enhancing walkable communities.
Livable Centers Checklist: composed of data metrics for livable centers development in all 41 municipalities that includes:

- Residential density
- Employment density
- Jobs to housing ratio
- Existing transit service and facilities
- Speed limits
- Block lengths and perimeters
- Sidewalk widths
- Roadway characteristics
- Daily traffic levels
- Access to expressways
- Building setbacks and height
- Amount of attached buildings to detached buildings
- Amount and typology of parking options
- Access to open space
- Access to trails and bike lanes
- Building vacancy
- Lot vacancy
Livable Centers Methodology/ Scope

GIS
- Analyze region as a whole
  - Block Size
  - Street Grid
  - Population, housing, and employment density
  - Proximity of schools, civic halls, transit, and trails

Research
- Read the municipality’s plans and past projects
- Learned about current projects and initiatives

Drawing Boundaries
- Met with individual municipality planners and other staff
- Listened to their plans, hopes, and considerations for their town or city
- Drew boundaries directly on the maps using their insight and NIRPC’s analysis
Livable Centers have been defined in 40 of the municipalities in Northwest Indiana. These Livable Centers vary widely in scale, use, mix and purpose within each community, but all represent areas of regional significance. They are already served by utility infrastructure and the roadway network. In some cases, significant reinvestment will be needed to upgrade existing utility and roadway capacity for the future. The centers are classified in four categories: Metro Center, Large Center, Medium Center, and Small Center.
• Project team met with 19 Cities/Towns in NWI to work on defining livable/neighborhood centers.

• Project team met with Transit Operators in NWI to discuss transit area/station boundary within ½ a mile.

• Small communities Workshop was held on September 5th to define livable centers boundaries for the remaining 22 communities.
Eligibility Area

Transit Areas in Northwest Indiana
Creating Livable Communities Report

How to Use the Report?

- Use the Introduction section to get yourself familiar with:
  - Livable Centers definition and benefits.
  - How center are defined
  - Livability checklist
  - NIRPC Methodology
- Find your Community

Transit-Related Projects should be located within half a mile from a transit stop or station.
NIRPC/Walk Score Methodologies

**NIRPC Analysis**
- Block Length (400’-600’)
- Street Grid/Connectivity
- Population, housing, and employment density
- Proximity of schools, civic halls, transit, and trails
- Transit
- Mixed use
- Building Setback

**Walk Score Analysis:**
- Walking routes to nearby amenities.
- Points are awarded based on the distance to amenities.
- Amenities within a 5 minute walk (.25 miles) are given maximum points.
- The more distant amenities the more decline in score with no points given after a 30 minute walk.
- Pedestrian friendliness is measured by analyzing population density road metrics such as block length and intersection density.

**Walk Score®**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Walk Score®</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>90-100</td>
<td>Walker's Paradise Daily errands do not require a car.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-89</td>
<td>Very Walkable Most errands can be accomplished on foot.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-69</td>
<td>Somewhat Walkable Some errands can be accomplished on foot.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-49</td>
<td>Car-Dependent Most errands require a car.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-24</td>
<td>Car-Dependent Almost all errands require a car.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

http://www.walkscore.com/
Walkability Score / Density Comparison

Population Density
Housing Density
Employment Density
Walkability Score
LARGE COMMUNITY

**Design Principles**

- Employment center
- Improve community identity
- Close to transit stops
- Concentration of housing, retail, office and civic destinations within walking distance and a good pedestrian network.
- Walkable, and mixed-uses development
- Achieve appropriate density based on the size of center
- Improve pedestrian mobility and safety
- Improve storefront space, park and open space
- Provide diversity housing options

**Scale Recommendations**

- Blocks generally between 200-400 feet in length that contain a variety of uses
- Densities typically range between 8 and 15 dwelling units per acre, while nonresidential floor area ratios may range between 1.0-2.0.
- Areas of concentrated employment or major trip generators
- Low to middle-rise buildings serve with trail and local buses.
- Municipalities: Merrillville, Portage, Valparaiso, and Hobart, including eleven communities in the region.
Creating Livable Communities (CLC) Funding Program
The purpose of this funding is to support community-based transportation/land use projects that bring vitality to downtown areas, neighborhoods, station areas, commercial cores, and transit corridors.
Putting real transportation dollars behind its planning efforts, NIRPC developed the new funding program to help ensure that transportation investments will be linked to the vitality of northwestern Indiana’s communities.

$400,000 over the next two years has been identified to provide tangible support to communities in Lake & Porter Counties seeking to enhance their center places, with some prime beneficiaries being those communities able to take advantage of also TOD opportunities.
Overview:

- To support community-based transportation/land use projects that bring vitality to downtown areas, neighborhoods, station areas, commercial cores, and transit corridors.

- To encourage livability and accessibility, NIRPC has called for transit-oriented development and Livable Centers Initiative in the 2040 Plan.

- To support projects that are guided by the principle of “place-making” to ensuring increased residential development, a mix of uses and connectivity in livable and neighborhood centers.
Eligible Recipients:
- Local governments, transportation agencies, and community-based nonprofit organizations. Nonprofit organizations must partner with a local governmental agency.

Requirements / Eligibility:
- Projects should be identified in the Livable Centers Map or Transit Corridor Area Map (see the CLC report).
- Projects must be possible to be implemented under existing codes/ordinances of the local government.
- Project must address the 2040 Plan - Livable Centers Goals and Objectives.
Types of Grants:

- To fund planning projects or pre-development plan that revitalize: existing centers, neighborhood, downtown, transit stop or transit corridors, TOD ordinance, and

- To prepare projects to compete for funding in the STP construction projects category.
Examples of Issues
Eligible Projects

- Projects related to access management, transportation-related zoning ordinance, and streetscape improvements.
- Transit amenities, TOD plans and zoning ordinances, and transit area plans.
- Plans for street lighting and signage, public pedestrian features like sidewalks, bike lanes, street furniture, and crosswalks.
- Traffic calming plans.
- Public-use parking plan or shared public-private garage; and access projects.
Eligible Projects

- Extensions/modifications or relocation to local public sewer and water lines, and storm water management improvements.
- Street connectivity improvement plans
- Transportation-related Downtown/ Neighborhood plans.
- Corridor planning.
- Design and engineering of transportation improvements.
- Transportation/ Land Use Design Guidelines
Project Funding:

• 80/20 Match (80% Federal (STP) /20% Local Match).

• Successful applicants follow all INDOT grant funding procedures for payment and when hiring consultants.
NIRPC has awarded seven grants totaling $402,500 of STP funding to seven communities. The total funding with the local match is $495,500. These communities are:

- Chesterton
- Crown Point
- East Chicago
- Gary
- Highland
- Porter
- Winfield

In future iterations of the program, our agency hopes to expand the eligible activities to include construction and other measures that will aid communities further along in the process of creating and enhancing their livable centers.
Questions

Contact Information

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