

## Some Concluding Remarks...

*Departing Executive Director John Swanson offers some final words as his tenure at NIRPC comes to an end.*

By: John Swanson

As I conclude my work at NIRPC, I want to say what a privilege and honor it has been for me to serve northwest Indiana, its residents, the commissioners and the staff. It has been an extraordinary experience for me to be the executive director of NIRPC and a great way to end my 39 year career in regional planning. I have had the fulfilling experience of serving a group of dedicated and hard-working elected local officials, who recognize the importance of cooperating and collaborating across municipal and county lines to make this a better region. I consider myself extremely fortunate to have worked with an exceptionally talented staff, who have demonstrated their extraordinary skills and a commitment to making this a vibrant, revitalized, accessible and united region. The governing board has chosen an outstanding planning professional in Ty Warner as NIRPC's next executive director, and I know that he



*John Swanson, NIRPC's third Executive Director, served as the agency's head for eight years.*

will lead NIRPC successfully into the future.

I also wish to express my love for northwest Indiana. It is truly blessed with incredible assets, including Lake Michigan, the Dunes, proximity to Chicago, and some of the most wonderful people I have ever met. My wife and I will continue to live here in retirement, and we both intend to become increasingly involved in church, community and civic activities.

There are many indicators of positive change in northwest Indiana at this time, and I believe that there will be many more great things happening in the years and decades to come. I look forward to watching

NIRPC continue to be an effective force for positive change.

Thank you for allowing me to serve you. 

*John Swanson was NIRPC's third Executive Director, a post in which he served for eight years. His successor, Ty Warner, started January 1, 2013.*

## 2012 NIRPC Executive Board

Chairman.....**Geof Benson**  
*Beverly Shores Town Council*

Vice-Chairman.....**David Uran**  
*Mayor of Crown Point*

Treasurer.....**Brian Snedecor**  
*Mayor of Hobart*

Secretary.....**Blair Milo**  
*Mayor of La Porte*

Executive Board.....**Roosevelt Allen, Jr.**  
*Lake County Commission*

Executive Board.....**Thomas M. McDermott, Jr.**  
*Mayor of Hammond*

Executive Board.....**Nancy Adams**  
*Porter County Commission*

Executive Board.....**Jim Ton**  
*Chesterton Town Council*

Executive Board.....**Ken Layton**  
*LaPorte County Commission*

Executive Board.....**Robert Schaefer**  
*Long Beach Town Council*

Executive Board.....**Chester Dobis**  
*Indiana State Representative*

Executive Director.....**John Swanson**  
*NIRPC*

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## Now Showing: The 2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan!



By: *Gabrielle Biciunas*

The Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission is pleased to debut a new video on the award-winning 2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan. The video came about as a recommendation from the Plan's Implementation Committee, known as *Pathway to 2040*. The video provides a visual journey of the plan's key recommendations: growth and conservation, transportation, environment and green infrastructure, human and economic resources and stewardship and governance.

The Comprehensive Regional Plan is a guide for creating a vibrant, revitalized, accessible and united region. The plan, adopted in June, 2011, stresses urban reinvestment, environmental justice, protecting natural resources and integrating transportation with land-use and employment.

In order to bring the 2040 Plan to the big screen, NIRPC hired Smith Donovan Marketing & Communications to produce the video in about two months. The video will serve as a communication and outreach tool to engage the general public, cities and towns, and students about how they can build a better region for the future.

The video was made possible through the generous support of the Dean and Barbara White Family Foundation; the Discovery Alliance, an alliance of the Crown Point Community Foundation, the Legacy Foundation, the Porter County Community Foundation and the Unity Foundation of LaPorte County; the Lake County Community Fund at Legacy Foundation and the Federal Transit Administration.

We encourage you to watch the video on the NIRPC website at <http://www.nirpc.org/2040-plan.aspx> and discover how you too can help create our tomorrow...today. 

*Gabrielle Biciunas is NIRPC's Long Range Planner and can be reached by email at [gbiciunas@nirpc.org](mailto:gbiciunas@nirpc.org)*

## “TAP” Dancing at NIRPC

By: Mitch Barloga

In July of 2012, Congress passed the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century legislation, or MAP-21. This law provides omnibus spending for transportation uses in the United States, from road to rail. Also included is funding for bicycle and pedestrian facilities, including other transportation-related projects under the Transportation Alternatives Program, or TAP.

TAP is the successor to the former Transportation Enhancements (TE) program under previous funding laws. With TAP, a number of eligible projects under TE have merged with projects under the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program. SRTS, which existed as a separated funding avenue under previous laws, will be directly administered by NIRPC under TAP.

With TAP, eligible entities (primarily municipalities) are able to request funding for three major project areas. These include pedestrian and bicycle activities, historic preservation and environmental activities and SRTS projects – both infrastructure and education-based. The majority of funding (80%) will be allocated to pedestrian and bicycle activities, which largely consists of off-road trail funding.

One major change over the TE program, other than eligible projects, is the amount of funding available. Under TE, NIRPC allocated nearly \$2 million to regional entities, but under TAP, this figure is scheduled to fall to under \$1 million – or half of the original funding level. This includes projects in all three NIRPC counties.

The TAP program’s first cycle will take place in either late spring or summer of 2013. NIRPC’s Ped, Pedal and Paddle Committee has already made adjustments to their TE application in anticipation. 

For more information about TAP, please contact Mitch Barloga at [mbarloga@nirpc.org](mailto:mbarloga@nirpc.org).



## NIRPC’s Livable Centers Initiative Begins

By: Eman Ibrahim

The 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.

NIRPC’s approach of Livable Centers is to promote transportation investment and redevelopment in the places where we already live and work to create a better range of working, housing and travel choices. Livable Centers allow us to preserve our environmental assets and use funding more efficiently to create livable, pedestrian-friendly communities that offer a high quality of life for all residents.

Livable Centers have been conceptually defined in each of the 41 established communities in Northwest Indiana. These Livable Centers vary widely in scale, use, mix and purpose within each community today, but all represent areas of regional significance. 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.

Livable Centers are described as compact, mixed use development- building facing streets, short block length, having unique and distinct design characteristic with shops offering local products and services. They include many access options including pedestrian lanes, bike lanes, trails and roadways, and public gathering places. 

For more information about Livable Centers and its related programs, contact Eman Ibrahim, Planning Manager at [eibrahim@nirpc.org](mailto:eibrahim@nirpc.org).

## Meet the Commissioner. . .



Mayor Blair Milo is the current Mayor of LaPorte and Secretary of NIRPC's Executive Board.

She was born and raised in LaPorte, graduating from LaPorte High School in 2001. After graduating from Purdue University in 2004, she received a commission as an Ensign in the U.S. Navy. While on active duty, Mayor Milo served throughout the Middle East, including two Persian Gulf deployments on the USS *Mason*. She transitioned to reserve duty in 2010 after serving at the Pentagon and earning her master's degree from George Washington University. In 2011, she was elected Mayor of LaPorte at the age of 28. She is one of five Indiana mayors elected under the age of 30 and the youngest female mayor in Indiana.

An avid fitness buff, Mayor Milo has started "Fitness Fridays" in LaPorte, weekly non-competitive 5k walk/runs to encourage residents to be more active. 

## Meet the NIRPC Staff. . .



Kelly Wenger has been the Chief Accountant since September of 2010. Her job duties include general oversight and maintenance of the financial records. She manages the records for the many grants that NIRPC utilizes in order to fund the work done here. In addition to her role as Chief Accountant she also maintains the books for three of our partner agencies: the Kankakee River Basin Commission, the Lake Michigan Marina and Shoreline Development Commission, and the Northwest Indiana Economic Development District.

Kelly is a graduate of Purdue North Central in Westville and worked with the Indiana State Board of Accounts before coming to NIRPC. She is a life-long resident of Porter County and currently lives there with her husband and daughter.

She enjoys and participates in a variety of sports including softball, running, and cycling. This past year she participated in the WHAM and Valparaiso night rides. 

## NIRPC's New Website is Now Online

By: Amanda Pollard

Not only did NIRPC enter into 2013 welcoming a new Executive Director, it also has a new website. Have you been wondering what to do with that new smart phone that you got for Christmas? The new NIRPC website is mobile ready and can now be more easily viewed on not only your smart phone, but on tablets as well. Go ahead, you know you want to.

Once the updated website comes to life on your screen you will notice that the new layout highlights the individual departments at NIRPC and programs and projects that NIRPC is working on are now easier to locate and retrieve. The front page allows you to



select meeting notes, agendas, and presentations as well as the staff directory, information on NIRPC's open procurements and the region by the numbers. A calendar with all of the upcoming events and a general listing of news for NIRPC based on dates is also available.

As NIRPC looks forward to the New Year, a new Executive Director and a new website, we hope you find them all to be user friendly. 

*Amanda Pollard is NIRPC's Environmental Educator, and played a key role in the development of NIRPC's new website. She can be reached by phone at 219-763-6060, ext. 142 or by email at [apergrine@nirpc.org](mailto:apergrine@nirpc.org).*