

# NWI 2050 Plan

Planning for the uncertainty of the future:  
highlights on the drivers of the future and scenarios for NWI to consider

# Drivers of NWI's future

## Drivers and influences

Staff identified five broad drivers of NWI's future: economy, environment, people, regional assets, and technology. Each of those five drivers collectively represent unique influences that we can identify today. The influences may be currently experienced, trending, emerging, or in some cases are speculative. Full details on NIRPC's [website](#).

## Environment

- New energy sources
- Increased water demand in drought locations elsewhere
- Extreme weather events

## Regional assets

- Lake Michigan
- Geological and ecological
- Proximity to Chicago
- Existing infrastructure
- People and culture

## Economy

- E-commerce
- Business climate
- Housing market
- Global competitiveness
- Tourism
- Trade and tariffs

## People

- The aging population
- Slow population growth
- Migration and immigration
- Jobs and personal income
- Entrepreneurial capacity

## Technology

- Shared mobility
- Electrification and batteries
- Drones
- Connected and autonomous vehicles
- Internet of Things and Everything

# 2050 Plan summer pop-up events

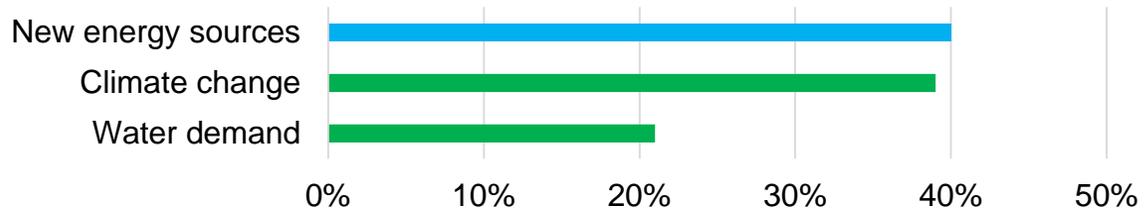
## Pop-up highlights

- Interactive table-top game
- Participants provided feedback on what trends may impact NWI's future
- Over 900 responses captured from Aug. 10 – Sept. 1<sup>st</sup>
- Rich feedback captured from diverse audiences

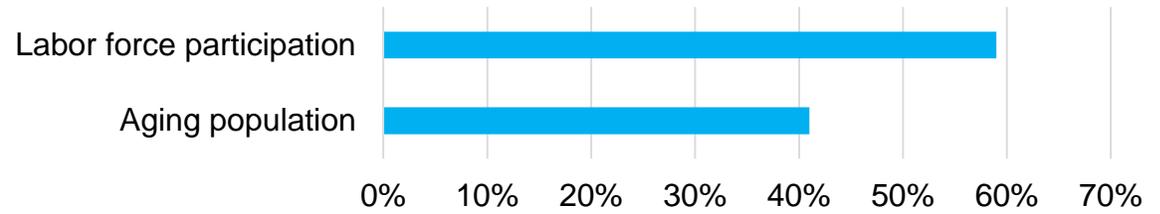


# People's thoughts on most impactful influencers

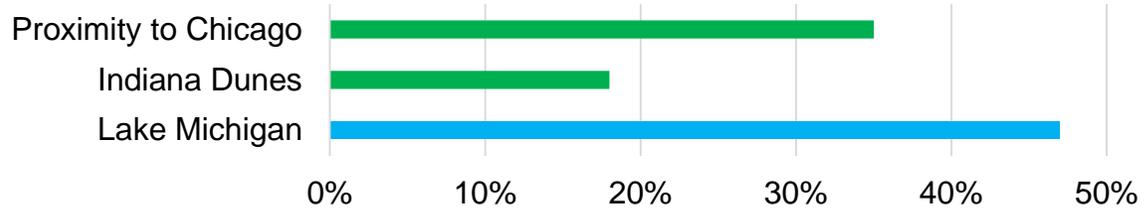
## Environment



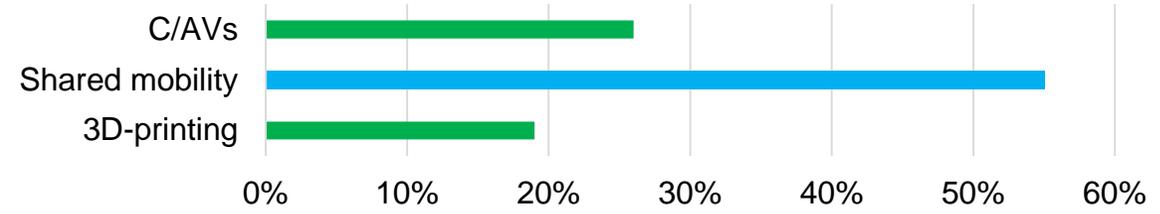
## People



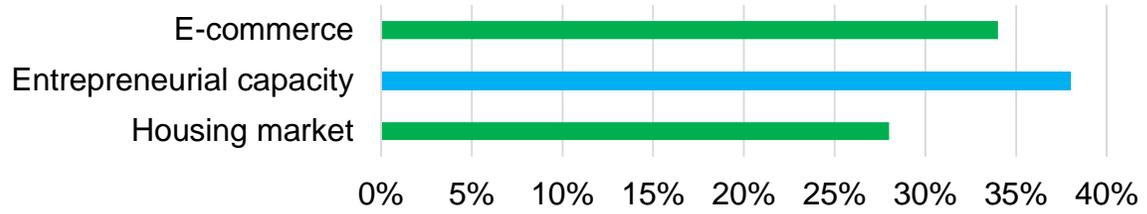
## Regional assets



## Technology



## Economy



# New chances in a new frontier

In this scenario, the future of NWI is driven by:

	Economy	Environment	People	Regional assets	Technology
Economy	The economy has diversified and the benefits are enjoyed by more of the population	The economy of NWI is strong but the impacts to the environment are less severe	The strong economy of NWI is buoyed by the growth in people, mitigating the aging population	The strong economy of NWI is most impacted by Lake Michigan as a regional asset w/ water	The economy of NWI is different from today and assisted by new technology
Environment		The environment has changed with chronic droughts elsewhere forcing people to seek fresh water	People are flocking to places with abundant sources of fresh water like NWI	Lake Michigan provides the region a new draw for people seeking fresh water	Tech advances in energy and batteries reduce the economies impact on the environment
People			Population growth is strong, and the region is more diverse, and better educated	Our people and culture grow, people are better educated and healthier	People enjoy new efficiencies in their jobs and mobility brought about by technology
Regional assets				Lake Michigan is the strongest regional asset, drawing people seeking fresh water	Technological advances let NWI be more "independent" from Chicago's economy
Technology					Technology has dramatically changes our lives through innovation and automation; NWI is ready

**The *New chances in a new frontier* future is one of significant and rapid change that the Region acknowledges and prepares for. Change is driven by a large influx of residents in need of fresh water, and technological innovation. The economy is strong due to fast growth of the population, but changes in technology allow for a balance between the economy and the environment.**



Illustration credit: Nick Vovjodich

# Sharp and in focus

In this scenario, the future of NWI is driven by:	Economy	Environment	People	Regional assets	Technology
<b>Economy</b>	The economy is healthy and resembles today but with more diversification	The moderate and well-planned economic growth protects the environment	The aging workforce and only moderate migration to NWI hampers the economy	The economy is strengthened by stronger connections to Chicago	The economy diversifies some with changing technology, but not dramatically
<b>Environment</b>		The environment is protected and development does not threaten green space	People are attracted to existing centers and the environment is not further harmed	The Dunes and Lake Michigan continue to be a significant asset for our environment	Technology helps the environment but not significantly, other policies are needed
<b>People</b>			Population growth is moderate w/ aging population and moderate in-migration	Investments in NICTD connect Chicago to NWI allowing for some migration	Technology further enables people to work where they want, enabling them to move to less costly NWI
<b>Regional assets</b>				NWI plays to its strength with Chicago and attracts some residents and business	Existing infrastructure needs to be updated to further harness tech changes
<b>Technology</b>					Technological changes happen, but not as rapidly as others predict

The *Sharp and in focus* future is one that has a healthy economy with diversification, a protected environment, moderate growth, with a still aging population, but more in-migration, strong connections to Chicago, but not a dependency, many innovations, but not so rapidly it dramatically changes the way we know the Region today.

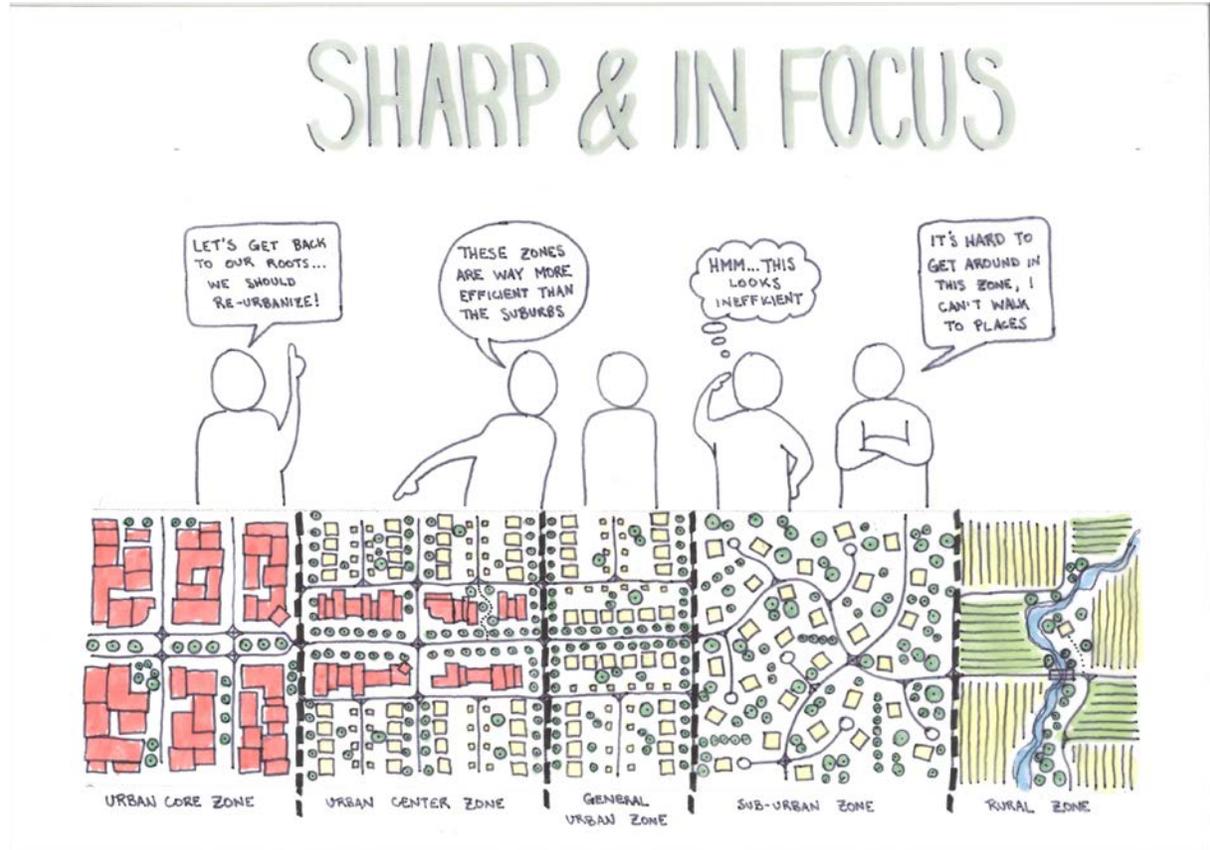


Illustration credit: Nick Vovjodich

# Stay in your lane

In this scenario, the future of NWI is driven by:

	Economy	Environment	People	Regional assets	Technology
Economy	The economy resembles that of today; manufacturing is extremely important for NWI	A balance between the economy and the environment is still elusive, and the environment is at risk	Immigration to the USA slows and new NWI residents need to be attracted from other parts of the USA	The economy depends significantly on regional assets to help the economy grow	Technology does not play a strong role in economic growth and endangers jobs
Environment		The environment struggles like it does today; growth continues on green-space	People continue to spread out in NWI risking the environment	Environmental regional assets are at risk, but are exploited for tourism	Slow adoption to technological changes in the region do not help the environment
People			Our population growth is slow; lack of immigration and aging population keeps workforce small	The region does not aggressively pursue quality of life improvements and struggles to attract new residents	People in the region resist changes in technology and the future threatens to pass the region by
Regional assets				Our existing infrastructure is NWI's greatest strength and Chicago is biggest opportunity	Existing infrastructure is not modernized in a way to use new technology
Technology					Technological change is resisted and NWI is not ready for some of the biggest changes

**The *Stay in your lane* future resemble the economy of today, the environment is at risk, our population growth is slow, with an aging workforce, and the region depends on our infrastructure connections to Chicago to sustain the economy, and changes in technology are resisted, risking NWI's place in future.**



Illustration credit: Nick Vovjodich