

## Brownfield Revolving Loan Fund Grant Awarded

*US EPA Grant Will Help Reduce Contaminated Sites in Urban Core*

*By: Kathy Luther*

The third time was the charm this year when after several attempts, a regional brownfield coalition of the Regional Development Authority (RDA), the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC), and the urban core Cities of Gary, Hammond, and East Chicago has finally been



awarded a Brownfield Revolving Loan Fund Grant by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). NIRPC began working with the RDA to apply for this funding in an effort to promote implementation of the 2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan Vision.


One of the major aspects of the regional 2040 Vision is “A revitalized region- Urban Areas are renewed and our environment is clean.” These three cities have the highest density of contaminated and remediation sites in our region, and analysis in the 2040 Plan revealed brownfield densities of over 14 sites per mile. Many aspects of this vision cannot come to pass without significant investments in brownfield redevelopment.

A regional coalition approach focusing on these three communities was strongly encouraged by staff at USEPA Region 5. By submitting multiple applications from individual municipalities in our area, the region was competing against itself as well as others in the highly competitive arena of federal brownfield funding. The RDA was the best fit to lead the application pro-

cess, with their charge to promote economic development in the region. NIRPC’s decades of experience in operating the LaPorte County revolving loan fund and bringing communities together was also an important part of the success of this application. Each of the three cities brought to the table

different experiences and skills that help round out the coalition’s abilities.

The purpose of the Brownfield Revolving Loan Fund will be to finance the environmental clean-up aspects of economic development projects in these three cities. Clean up dollars are often the hardest to come by when it comes to redevelopment, so this grant provides an excellent opportunity to fund the environmental remediation needed to encourage redevelopment.

The next steps for the coalition partners are to complete necessary grant agreement paperwork with the EPA, to work together to draft a joint memorandum of understanding (MOU) detailing how the coalition will operate, to solicit proposals for brownfield technical support, and to develop criteria for loan project evaluation and selection. 

*Kathy Luther is NIRPC’s Director of Environmental Programs. She can be reached at 219-763-6060, or by email at [kluther@nirpc.org](mailto:kluther@nirpc.org).*

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Requests for alternate formats, please contact Stephen Sostaric at NIRPC at (219) 763-6060 extension 155 or at [ssostaric@nirpc.org](mailto:ssostaric@nirpc.org). Individuals with hearing impairments may contact us through the Indiana Relay 711 service by calling 711 or (800) 743-3333.

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## Marquette Plan Update Underway


*Taking Stock & Looking Forward*



*By: Kathy Luther*

In 2012, the RDA, in partnership with NIRPC and the Indiana Landmarks Association, received a planning grant from the Indiana Department of Natural Resources Lake Michigan Coastal Program to update the Marquette Plan. Phase I of this plan was originally completed in 2005 and Phase II in 2007, so it seemed timely to take stock of progress. Many projects originally included in these visionary documents have been successfully completed or significantly advanced. Others may have stalled or evolved in entirely new directions. This update will not change the core Marquette principles and goals such as increasing public access to the Lake Michigan lakefront, environmental, social, and economic sustainability.

The objectives of the update are to celebrate successes, update projects list and status, integrate the Phase I and Phase II plans, develop an online presence for Marquette, build a Marquette Geodatabase, and create a new framework for cultural and historic landmarks as economic and development opportunities. The project also will provide a new print version. Rather than create a new group, NIRPC has asked the Lake Michigan Marina and Shoreline Development Commission to serve as the Marquette Advisory Council for purposes of the project.

NIRPC and Indiana Landmarks will be interviewing stakeholder groups around the region to obtain project updates, progress on implementing Marquette policy recommendations, and general feedback on opportunities and barriers encountered over the past eight years. 

*Kathy Luther is NIRPC's Director of Environmental Programs. She can be reached at 219-763-6060, ext. 127, or by email at [kluther@nirpc.org](mailto:kluther@nirpc.org)*



# Bill Brown Retires After 30 Years



*By: Stephen Sostaric*


After just over 30 years of outstanding service at NIRPC, Bill Brown retired on June 27. Born in Calumet City, Bill moved with his family to Munster in 1969. In 1975, Bill earned his pilot's license at the age of 17, before graduating from the Bishop Noll Institute in Hammond in 1976. After high school, Bill attended the University of Notre Dame, graduating with a bachelor's degree in architecture in 1981. He worked as a draftsman for Obenchain Corporation, working on structural steel, electrical, and mechanical drawings for the steel mill modernization projects happening at the time. But it was on March 1, 1983, that Bill's tenure at NIRPC officially began.

Starting with his first transportation assignment, the Regional Airport System Plan, his duties grew and evolved. Working with NIRPC's Congestion Management Process, Intelligent Transportation System Architecture, and the Transportation Improvement Program. Bill's primary responsibility was maintaining and running the regional transportation network model, which is used to analyze future development scenarios, air quality conformity, and congestion. The air quality conformity is especially

important, as it ensures that the region's transportation network stays within emissions budgets.

But through all of this, what was something Bill did that made him the most proud? "My skills were put to the test as I converted NIRPC's transportation network model from an older zone system to a newer one," he said. "When I finally put the model back together, I was amazed to see the first run predict base year traffic within two percent of the target values." In terms of the region's future, Bill expressed hope that NIRPC and its neighbor agency in Chicago, CMAP, can work together on modeling to create an even more sophisticated regional system.

As for what he planned on doing now that he's retired, Bill said that traveling is definitely a top priority, both here in the U.S. and abroad. "I'd love to go back to Rome after 34 years to finally throw coins into the fountain." But the very first thing planned for day one? "The first thing I plan to do is to turn off my alarm clock."

After 30 years, he's definitely earned it. Good luck, Bill, and enjoy! 

*Stephen Sostaric is Regional Planner/Public Involvement & Communications Coordinator at NIRPC. He can be reached at 219-763-6060, ext. 155, or by email at [ssostaric@nirpc.org](mailto:ssostaric@nirpc.org)*




Bill presenting at a NIRPC meeting, 1989.

## Meet the Commissioner. . .

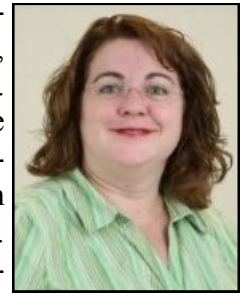


Commissioner Jeff Freeze is the Town of Burns Harbor's representative for NIRPC. He is currently co-chair of the Local government Assistance Committee. He was elected to serve on the Burns Harbor Town Council in November of 2011.

Prior to serving on the Town Council, Commissioner Freeze was an appointee to the Burns Harbor Advisory Plan Commission, participating in the town's comprehensive plan update. This process included sub-area plans and rewriting the town's zoning. Since his election, Commissioner Freeze has made it a priority to implement the comprehensive plan, with a specific focus on the sub-area plans.


Originally a resident of Niles, Michigan, Commissioner Freeze relocated with his family to Burns Harbor in 2005 where he was involved in activities such as the Buchanan Chamber and the SW Michigan Volunteer Center. He, along with his wife Tracy, own HMS Midwest, LLC, a medical practice management consulting business. He has two sons, aged 20 and 17. In his free time, Commissioner Freeze enjoys photography and boating. 

## Meet the NIRPC Staff. . .



Kathy Luther is the Director of Environmental Programs at NIRPC, starting six years ago in June, 2007. She is tasked with coordinating the fulfillment of the regional environmental planning obligation set forth in NIRPC's enabling legislation. This involves working with stakeholders and partner organizations, creating great synergy for NIRPC and the region.

Born and raised in Grand Rapids, Michigan, Kathy attended college at Hope College in Holland, Michigan, becoming a Hoosier when she moved to Bloomington to attend graduate school at IU. Prior to working at NIRPC, Kathy worked for the Indiana Department of Environmental Management as the Lake Michigan Lakewide Management Plan Coordinator for seven years, and as a project manager for Microbac Laboratories in Merrillville, managing environmental compliance testing projects.

Kathy currently resides in Valparaiso with her husband, Ken, and their two daughters. She enjoys spending time with her family and is a bassoonist-in-exile until her children are older and she has spare time again. 

## NIRPC Quadrennial Certification Review Takes Place

*By: Ty Warner*

On June 18 & 19, NIRPC hosted representatives from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) for NIRPC's quadrennial (every four years) review of the metropolitan planning process, required of all Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs).


Nearly all of NIRPC's staff was involved in this two-day discussion of the transportation planning process in northwestern Indiana. The discussions between these Federal agencies and NIRPC were clearly marked by a commitment to partnership and open communication. A final certification report from these agencies is expected in September.

Comments on northwestern Indiana's metropolitan planning process are being accepted until August 18, and may be directed to:

Joyce Newland  
Federal Highway Administration, Indiana Division  
575 N. Pennsylvania Street, Room 254  
Indianapolis, IN 46204  
[Joyce.Newland@dot.gov](mailto:Joyce.Newland@dot.gov)

or

Reginald Arkell  
Federal Transit Administration, Region V  
200 West Adams, Suite 320  
Chicago, IL 60606-5253  
[Reginald.Arkell@dot.gov](mailto:Reginald.Arkell@dot.gov)

NIRPC is committed to maintaining a high standard of excellence in its operations, and appreciates the support of its partners while encouraging input that can help improve the transportation planning process for the benefit of all residents of the region. This Federal review process is an important way for NIRPC and its partners to review the effectiveness of regional transportation planning and move forward together. 

*Ty Warner is Executive Director of NIRPC. He can be reached by calling 219-763-6060, or by email at [twarner@nirpc.org](mailto:twarner@nirpc.org).*