

Northwestern Indiana Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy



A collaborative plan to enhance regional prosperity and community quality of life in Lake, Porter, and La Porte counties.



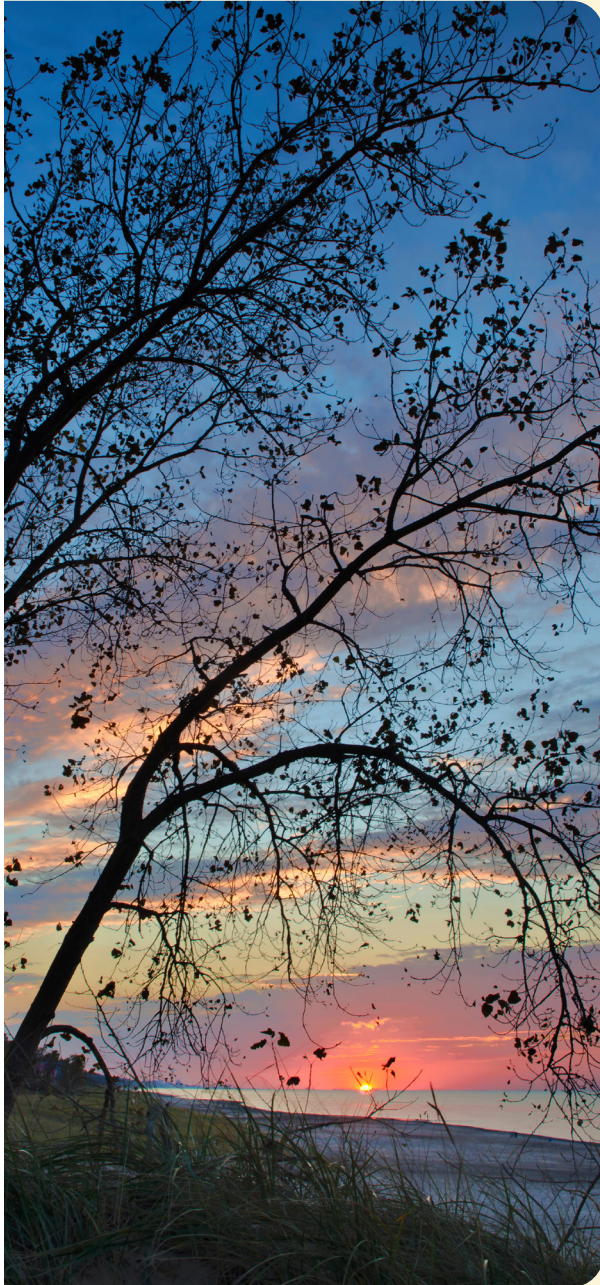


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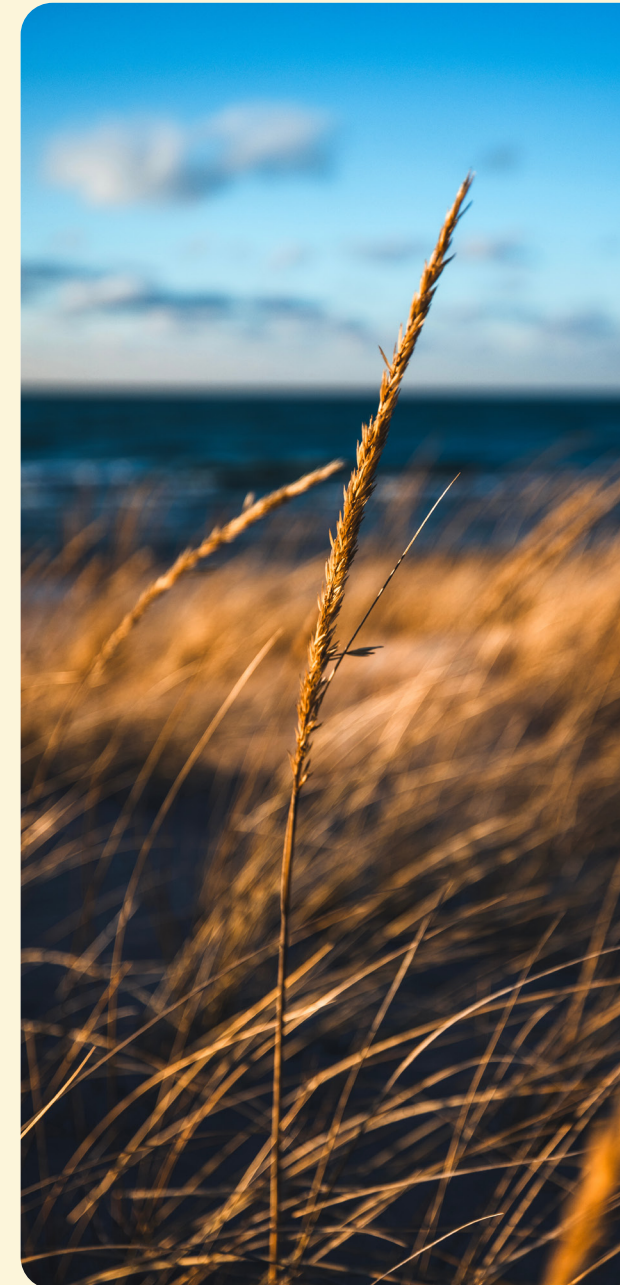


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Participating Organizations

219 Development	Indiana University Northwest	Reeder Companies
Antero Group	IVY Tech	Superior Construction
Black Chamber of Commerce	JSHELD	Thomas & Associates
City of Gary	Lake/LaPorte County Economy Development	Town of Munster
City of Michigan City	Lakeshore Chamber	Union Township Trustee of Porter County
CoAction	Northwestern Indiana Building and Construction Trades Council	Unity Foundation
Crossroads Chamber	Northwest Indiana Forum	U.S. Senator Todd Young NW Regional Office
Economic Development Corporation - Michigan City	Old National Bank	Valparaiso University
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Indiana American Water	Purdue Extension	Weiss Entities
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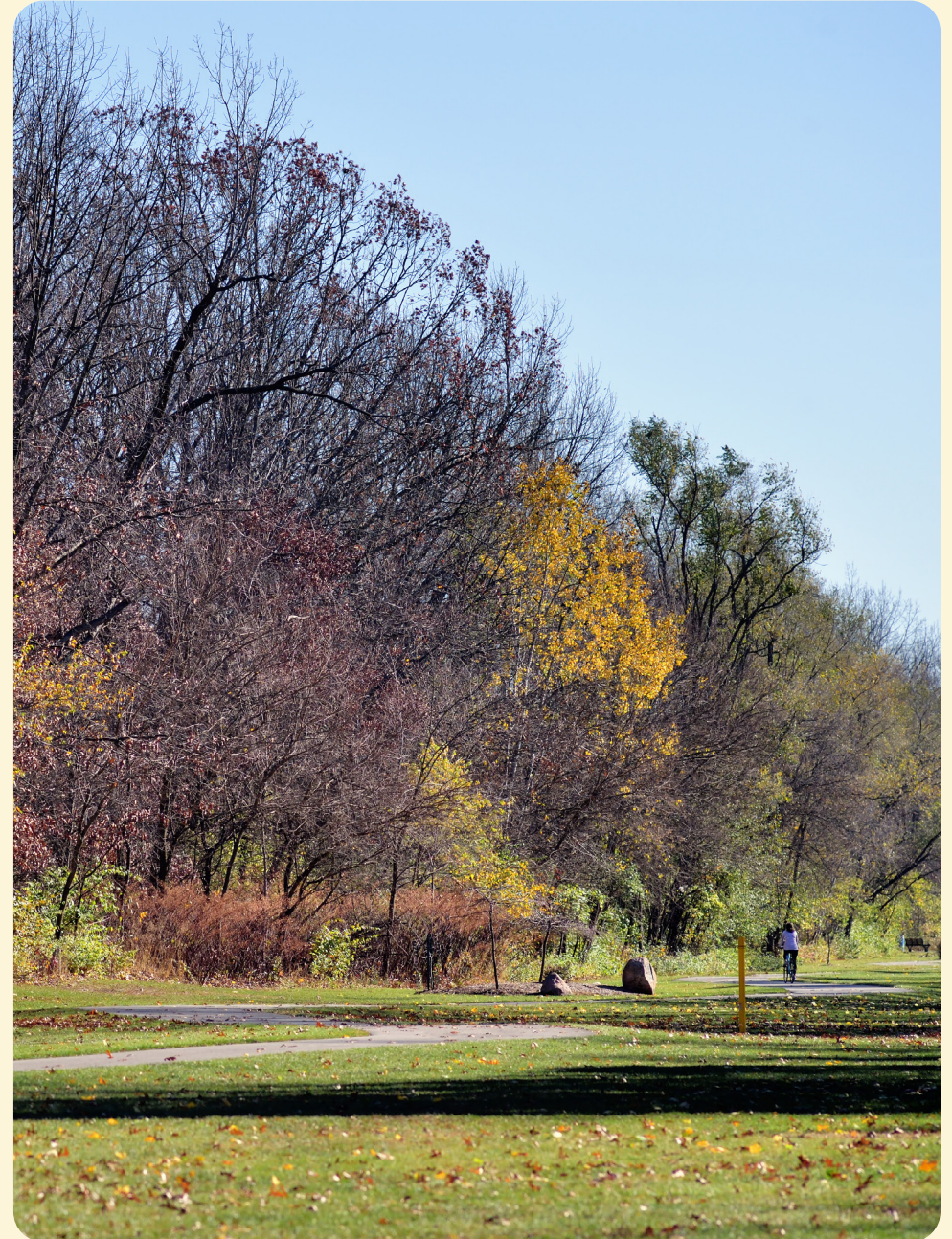
About The Region



Overview

Economy

Cultural and Social Life



Overview

Northwestern Indiana is known as part of “The Region” based on its proximity to the city of Chicago and economic prominence. It is the section of the Chicago metropolitan area that spreads past the Illinois border into three Indiana counties and along the southern shore of Lake Michigan. The Region, notably, is culturally heterogenous which creates a very environmentally diverse and unique place that is far different from any other location in Indiana. The Region has played a crucial role in both industrial development and knowledge exchange between Indiana and Illinois.

At the time of this printing, U.S. Steel has been in the national news and faces an uncertain future. Many diverse industries and employers remain in the region including BP, NIPSCO, Eli Lilly Distribution Center, Cummins, Ingram Micro, Urschel Laboratories, Methodist Hospitals, and Cargill. All have a significant presence in The Region. In addition, several initiatives in neighboring Illinois and within five miles of The Region are kicking off such as the Chicago Quantum Exchange, the Midwest Hydrogen Hub, and the Bloch Tech Hub. Further, Indiana is supercharging its pharmaceutical R&D and manufacturing capabilities statewide with the Heartland BioWorks

grant. All of these emphasize the future of industry for the Greater Chicago metropolitan region: quantum technologies and R&D, the future of energy along with significant investment in technology. How can Northwestern Indiana take advantage of these investments and fuel its own growth using its unique industrial strengths? That is part of what the CEDS brings together: a blueprint for the economic future of Northwestern Indiana over the next five years.

Northwestern Indiana has a unique geographic location and is bounded by Illinois, Indiana, Lake Michigan and the state of Michigan and has numerous major assets.

- Northwest Indiana borders the southwestern edge of Lake Michigan, offering access to waterfronts, parks, and recreational areas like the Indiana Dunes National Park and the Indiana Dunes State Park. These natural attractions are key features of The Region, drawing tourists and nature lovers.
- Counties: The Region includes several counties, with the most notable being Lake County, Porter County, and LaPorte County.

Lake County:

Home to cities like Gary, Hammond, and East Chicago. Lake County is the most industrialized area of Northwestern Indiana. It is Indiana's second most populated county. It includes parts of Indiana Dunes National Park.



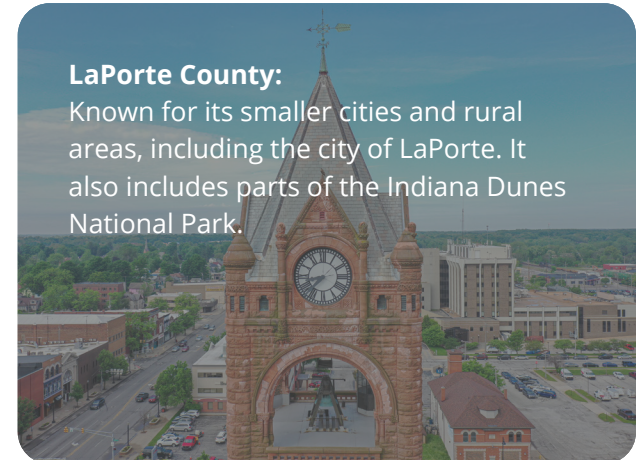
Porter County:

Includes the city of Valparaiso and is known for its natural beauty, including all of the Indiana Dunes State Park with parts of the Indiana Dunes National Park.



LaPorte County:

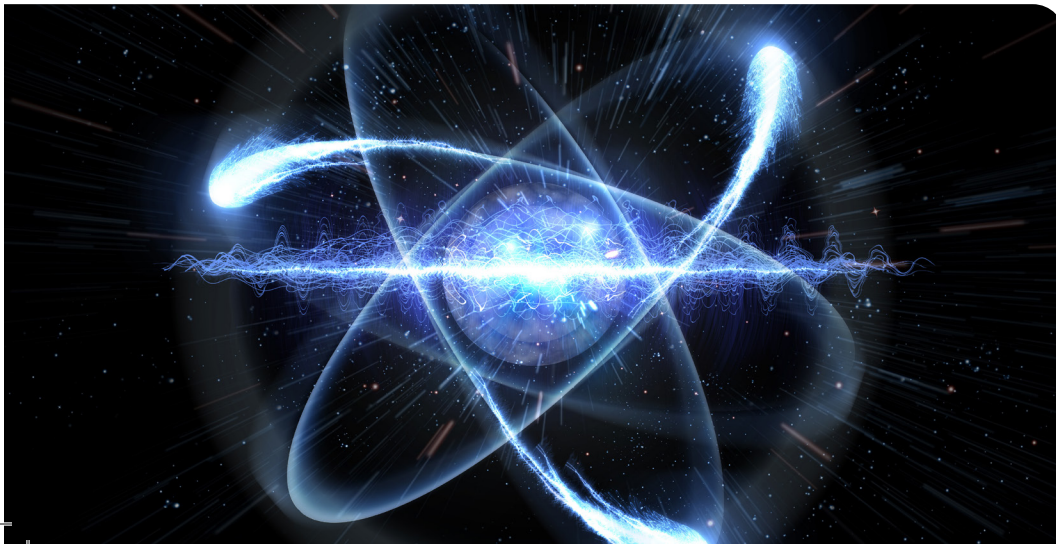
Known for its smaller cities and rural areas, including the city of LaPorte. It also includes parts of the Indiana Dunes National Park.





Economy

- **Industrial Hub:** As an economic hub, Northwestern Indiana has historically been an industrial powerhouse, particularly due to steel manufacturing and heavy industry. Historically, U.S. Steel and other factories in cities like East Chicago and Hammond have been central to The Region's economy. It is currently among the strongest primary metal industrial clusters manufacturers both in the U.S. and globally.
- **Transportation:** The area has strong transportation infrastructure, including major highways (I-80, I-90), the South Shore rail line, and three class A rail lines (Union Pacific, BNSF, and Norfolk Southern) facilitating trade and commerce. Proximity to the ports of Indiana-Burns Harbor enhances The Region's access to international shipping for steel, agriculture and manufacturing.
- **Transitioning Economy:** In recent decades, the area has seen efforts to diversify its economy beyond traditional steel manufacturing and is looking at opportunities in energy and quantum computing.



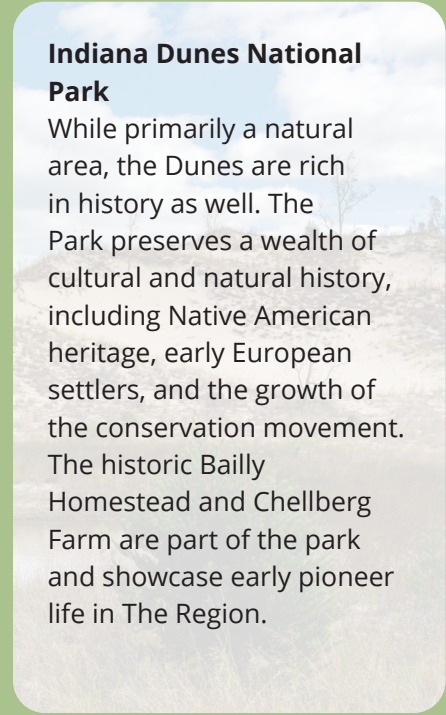
Cultural and Social Life

Diversity: The Region is home to a diverse population, including significant numbers of African American, Latino, and Eastern European communities. This diversity has shaped The Region’s cultural life, including food, music, and festivals.

Education: The Region is home to several universities and colleges, including Purdue University Northwest in Hammond, Indiana University Northwest, Valparaiso University, and Ivy Tech Community College. All of these contribute to the education and research environment.

Historic Significance: The area has a rich history tied to the industrial age, with notable historical sites such as the Gary Works and the Indiana Dunes. Some significant historical sites include:

This plan provides a roadmap to guide regional economic development efforts to build a future-forward robust and resilient economy. It offers Northwestern Indiana the opportunity to leverage its strengths, to expand upon effective programs, bolster partnerships, and to address its weaknesses through a long-term and coordinated effort. Sustainable partnerships and policy alignment are the key. If equitable growth and regional connectivity are embraced, Northwestern Indiana can improve its competitive advantage at the national and international levels.



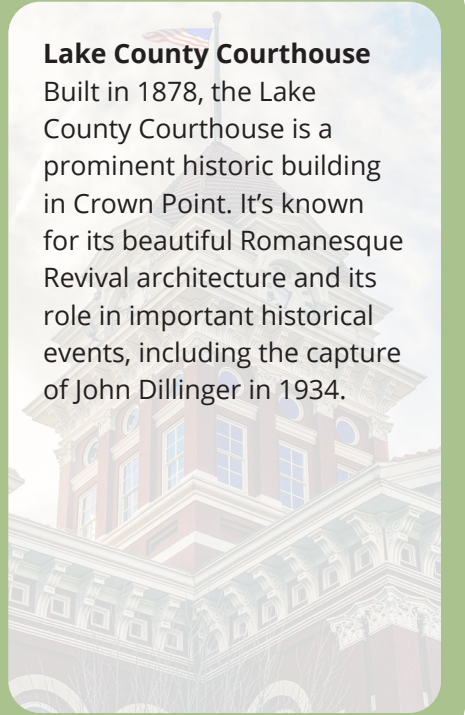
Indiana Dunes National Park
While primarily a natural area, the Dunes are rich in history as well. The Park preserves a wealth of cultural and natural history, including Native American heritage, early European settlers, and the growth of the conservation movement. The historic Bailly Homestead and Chellberg Farm are part of the park and showcase early pioneer life in The Region.

Gary Bathing House Aquatorium
This Gary location in the historic Miller neighborhood houses a Museum of Flight.

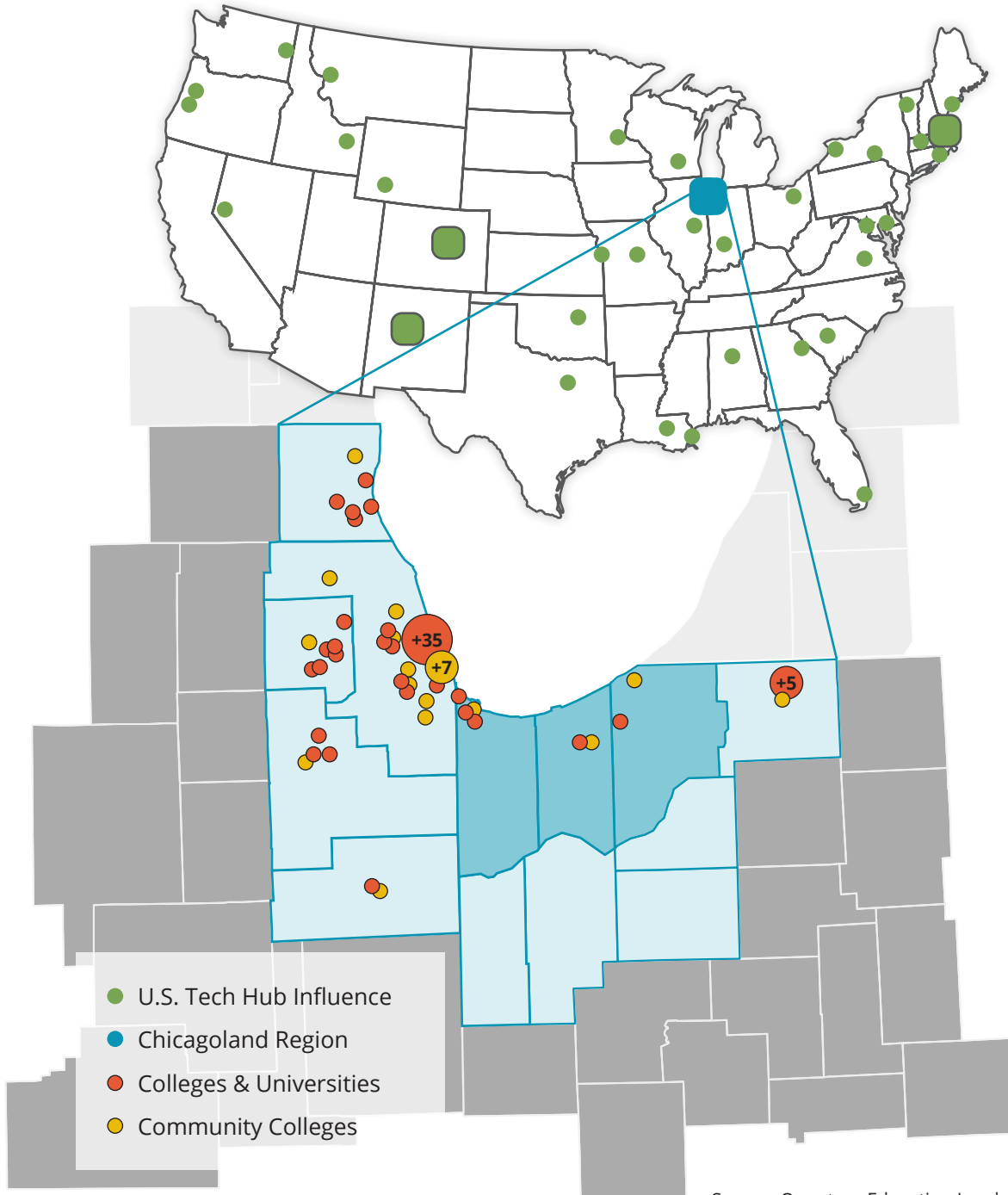
Washington Park
Established in the 1800s, this park is home to the Michigan City Lighthouse, one of the oldest on the Great Lakes. Its history ties to the city’s early maritime and tourism industries.

Tolleston Indian Mounds
These mounds are remnants of prehistoric Native American burial sites and are significant as part of The Region’s ancient history before European settlers arrived.

Friendship Botanic Gardens
Originally a private estate, this site is a beautiful historic garden, with roots going back to the 1920s. It also includes remnants of The Region’s agricultural and horticultural history.



Lake County Courthouse
Built in 1878, the Lake County Courthouse is a prominent historic building in Crown Point. It’s known for its beautiful Romanesque Revival architecture and its role in important historical events, including the capture of John Dillinger in 1934.



Colleges/Universities with Advanced Computing Related Courses (# of courses offered; 10 or more; IN-ILRegion)

11	Bradley University	IL
11	Northeastern Illinois University	IL
11	Southern Illinois University-Carbondale	IL
13	Illinois State University	IL
13	Loyola University Chicago	IL
13	University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign	IL
14	Illinois Institute of Technology	IL
19	DePaul University	IL
20	Lewis University	IL
25	Northern Illinois University	IL
27	University of Illinois Chicago	IL
33	Northwestern University	IL
66	University of Chicago	IL
10	Purdue University Fort Wayne	IN
10	Indiana University Northwest	IN
12	Purdue University Northwest	IN
13	Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology	IN
16	Ball State University	IN
16	Indiana University-Purdue University-Indianapolis	IN
18	University of Notre Dame	IN
36	Indiana University-Bloomington	IN
39	Purdue University-Main Campus	IN

Source: Quantum Education Landscape - Where are the quantum courses? <https://quantumlandscape.streamlit.app/>



Planning Context and CEDS Structure



Planning Context

Vision

Guiding Principles and CEDS Structure

■ Planning Context

In October 2024, the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC) partnered with the Purdue Center for Regional Development (PCRD) to develop a comprehensive economic development strategy (CEDS) under the guidelines of the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA).

The CEDS serves as a guide for economic development efforts across the Northwestern Indiana region including Lake, Porter and LaPorte counties. With funding from the EDA, this plan focuses on the region's efforts to be more strategic and collaborative in responding to new economic development opportunities and addressing regional challenges. Though a CEDS concentrates on strategies to be implemented over the next five years, the impacts of the Northwestern Indiana region embracing its interconnectedness and working collaboratively to implement these strategies will have a much longer-lasting impact. This CEDS meets the requirements set forth by the EDA to continue to retain Economic Development District (EDD) status.

The project launched in October 2024 with an informational and engagement phase. This included data collection and analysis and stakeholder engagement sessions to identify the region's economic development challenges and assets. Insight from this work, in addition to regular input from the Economy and Place working group, forms the foundation of this plan.

The overall guiding principles, goals and industry cluster focus also emerged from the Economy and Place working group with three goal areas: economic diversification and growth, human capital and quality of place. These goals, along with the strategies and action items, leverage other regional planning efforts for greater coordination, collaboration, and impact.

This CEDS should be viewed as a living document that invites revisions and refinements as economic conditions in the Northwestern Indiana region change. The Economy and Place working group and other partners should meet and discuss goal implementation progress and performance metrics to adapt as needed.



Vision



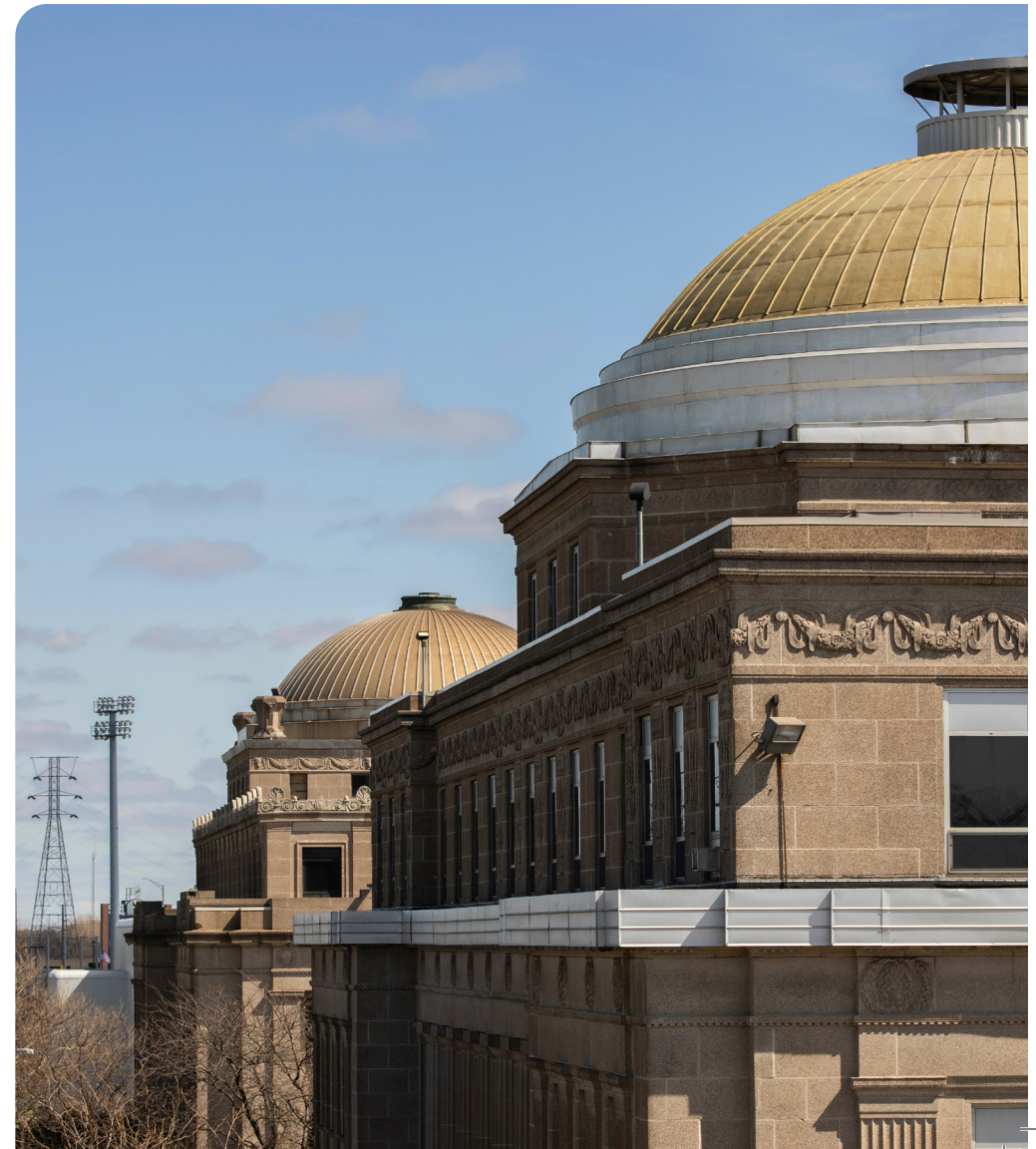
As the cornerstone for a comprehensive economic development strategy, a strong vision statement provides the basis for the plan to capitalize on opportunities and address vulnerabilities. The vision statement describes where the region hopes to be, with the strategies and actions in the plan moving Northwestern Indiana toward this vision. The Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission's CEDS is committed to partnerships that prioritize fair, unified, vibrant and resilient growth.

Guiding Principles and CEDS Structure

The Economy and Place working group identified several industrial clusters to nurture along with current and future initiatives: Primary Metal Manufacturing, Chemicals/Glass and Ceramics (pharmaceuticals), Machinery Manufacturing, and Advanced Computing and Quantum. In addition, they approved guiding principles, (described in further detail below), which are the connections uniting all the goals, strategies, and action items throughout the CEDS. The importance of connective and emerging clusters appears as a guiding principle and as part of the economic resilience framework.

- **Partnerships and Regional Alignment.** Align regional efforts to advance economic opportunity for all and build partnerships across the Northwestern Indiana region.
- **Distributed Growth.** Seek to understand, address, and dismantle the root causes of opportunity disparity along with the historic and existing barriers to participation in the regional economy.
- **Economic Stabilization and Growth.** Target efforts that prepare the region to avoid, withstand, and recover from economic shocks and natural disasters.

Guided by these three principles, the plan structure divides strategies and action items under three goal areas: **Economic Diversification and Innovation, Workforce Resiliency, and Quality of Place.** These three goal areas, strategic action items, and an evaluation framework will be outlined within the CEDS.



Economic Performance Indicators



- Economic Performance Indicators
- Economic Leakages and Opportunities
- Job Growth and Cost of Living
- Industry Cluster Competitiveness and Specializations



Economic Performance Indicators

The NIRPC Region consists of three counties in Indiana, which include Lake, LaPorte, and Porter counties. Located in the northwestern corner of the state, this region serves as Indiana's gateway to the Chicago Metro Area. This region is an economic engine in the state. In 2023, NIRPC Region had a gross regional product (GRP) of \$52.9 billion. This means that the region created almost 53 billion dollars-worth of goods and services in one year. At the same time, the Chicago Metro and the state of Indiana created \$861

and \$476 billion worth of goods and services, respectively. Despite the large differences in the GRP estimates, NIRPC Region emerges competitive when the economic productivity measures are compared to the Chicago Metro and Indiana. For the economic productivity measure of GRP per job in 2023, NIRPC created \$132,508 per job, which exceeded the state of Indiana's value of \$112,787 per job and came at par to the Chicago Metro's value of \$138,583 per job.

	NIRPC (all jobs) (QCEW, non-QCEW, self-employed and proprietors)	Chicago-Naperville-Elgin, IL-IN Metro Area (QCEW, non-QCEW, self-employed and proprietors)	Indiana (QCEW, non-QCEW, self-employed and proprietors)
Jobs, 2018	377,807	5,932,474	3,962,379
Jobs, 2023	399,365	6,211,128	4,218,876
Job change, 2018-2023	21,558	278,654	256,497
% Job change, 2018-2023	6%	5%	6%
Average total earnings per job, 2023	\$60,723	\$79,536	\$63,481
Cost of Living (COL)	93.8	103.0	95.6
COL Adjusted Average total earnings per job, 2023	\$64,737	\$77,220	\$66,403
Establishments, 2023	18,175	253,386	189,164
Sales, 2023	\$123.5 Billion	\$1559.5 Billion	\$973.1 Billion
Gross Regional Product (GRP), 2023	\$52.9 Billion	\$860.8 Billion	\$475.8 Billion
GRP per job, 2023	\$132,508	\$138,583	\$112,787
Exports per job, 2023	\$200,046	\$100,814	\$129,817
Total purchases, 2023	\$ 57.2 Billion	\$ 623.1 Billion	\$422.1 Billion
<i>Within region</i>	39.7%	69.8%	51%
<i>Imported from outside of state/region</i>	60.3%	30.2%	49%

Source: Lightcast- 2024.4 (QCEW + non-QCEW + Self-employed + Proprietorships)

Economic Leakages and Opportunities

The regional businesses and industries purchased \$57.2 billion worth of goods and services as inputs in 2023. Nearly 60% of those inputs or supply chain demands were obtained from outside of the NIRPC Region. Hence, economic leakages or imports were approximately \$34.3 billion in 2023. Such a large magnitude of economic leakages provides opportunities for the import substitution strategies for industry clusters in the region. The fulfillment of regional demand by business and industries within the region can create multiplier or positive ripple effects within the regional economy adding to the jobs and earnings.



Job Growth and Cost of Living

The region had more than 399,300 jobs in 2023, which was 6% more than the total jobs in 2018. In comparison, the jobs in Chicago Metro and Indiana grew by 5% and 6%, respectively, from 2018 to 2023. Note that the NIRPC Region has the lowest cost of living (COL) index of 93.8 compared to Chicago Metro's and Indiana's COL indices of 103 and 95.6, respectively. A COL value of 100 indicates that the cost of living is similar to average of the U.S. The NIRPC Region has a comparative advantage in terms of the COL, hence, despite lower average earnings per job than the Chicago Metro and the state of Indiana, the gaps are reduced for the COL adjusted earnings per job. The lower cost of living can be translated into the lower cost of doing business in the region. In another economic performance indicator related to the exports, the NIRPC Region exceeded Chicago Metro and Indiana in terms of the exports per job in 2023 by large margins.



Industry Cluster Competitiveness and Specializations

Industry cluster analysis was used to assess regional competitiveness of the NIRPC Region. The industry cluster analysis revealed that there were four highly competitive or Star industry clusters in the region. These clusters included chemicals and chemical-based products, glass and ceramics, mining, and machinery manufacturing. The four industry clusters not only increased their specializations from 2018 to 2023, but remained competitive in 2023 with the location quotient (LQ) values higher than 1.0. The LQ measures the concentration of jobs in the industry cluster in a region with respect to the nation. If the value of LQ is more than 1, the industry cluster is specialized in the region, and hence there is capacity for exports or selling the goods and services outside of the region. In addition to the four clusters in Start quadrant, there were five different industry clusters which emerged as Mature or strong but declining clusters in the NIRPC Region for the period of 2018 to 2023. These clusters included primary metals manufacturing, fabricated metal product manufacturing, advanced materials, biomedical/biotechnical (life sciences), and transportation and logistics. Mature clusters mean that industry clusters remained specialized (LQ greater than 1) in 2023, but during the period of 2018 to 2023, the LQ has declined or the growth in specialization is negative. These industry clusters require policy and program support so that their growth in specialization is boosted. The LQ of primary metal manufacturing was 23 in the year 2023, which means that the jobs in primary metals or steel production is 23 times more concentrated than the U.S. average. This cluster provided 15,800 jobs in the NIRPC Region. Refer to Slide 14 of the industry cluster analysis appendix to get a list of industry clusters, specific competitiveness quadrant, jobs, and LQs.

The cluster drill-down reports were prepared for the chemicals and chemical-based products, glass and ceramics, primary metal manufacturing, and machinery manufacturing clusters. The industry cluster drill-down focused on the shift-share analysis or identifying competitive industry sectors driving the specific industry cluster; leakage analysis or the

dollar values of products, goods and services imported within the industry cluster; top occupations working in the industry cluster businesses and industries; and the demographic characteristics of the workforce engaged in the industry cluster. In addition, select data metrics were developed for jobs postings or labor demand specific to the industry cluster.

Several chemical-related manufacturing industries are competitive within the chemicals and chemical-based industry cluster in the NIRPC Region. These include unlaminated plastics film and sheet, clay building material and refractories manufacturing, pharmaceutical preparation, gypsum product manufacturing, etc. The chemicals and chemical-based industry cluster in NIRPC had a total demand of \$157 million in plastics material and resin manufacturing in 2023. Out of \$157 million demand, \$128 million or nearly 82% was being imported from outside of the region. Similarly, 75% of nearly \$70 million of demand was being imported in all other basic organic chemical manufacturing in the NIRPC Region. The staffing patterns revealed that the largest number of workers were engaged in low to middle skill jobs requiring a high school diploma or a post-secondary nondegree award. One in four workers in the labor force engaged in the chemicals and chemical-based manufacturing cluster in NIRPC is 55 years of age or older. Only 6% workers were of 24 years or younger. Remainder were in the prime working age of 25 to 54 years. These data show challenges as there are not enough young age workers in the talent pipeline. The jobs postings revealed a consistent increase in the labor demand after COVID-19 shocks during the first quarter of 2020. In terms of jobs postings, industrial gas manufacturing shows potential with the largest demand for workers. Similarly, in terms of the competitive shift, economic leakages and multipliers, plastics material and resin manufacturing, all other basic organic chemical manufacturing, and pharmaceutical preparation manufacturing show the potential for the largest returns on investments. The detailed drill-down reports for the other three industry clusters are included in the Appendix.

Qualitative Input and Public Engagement

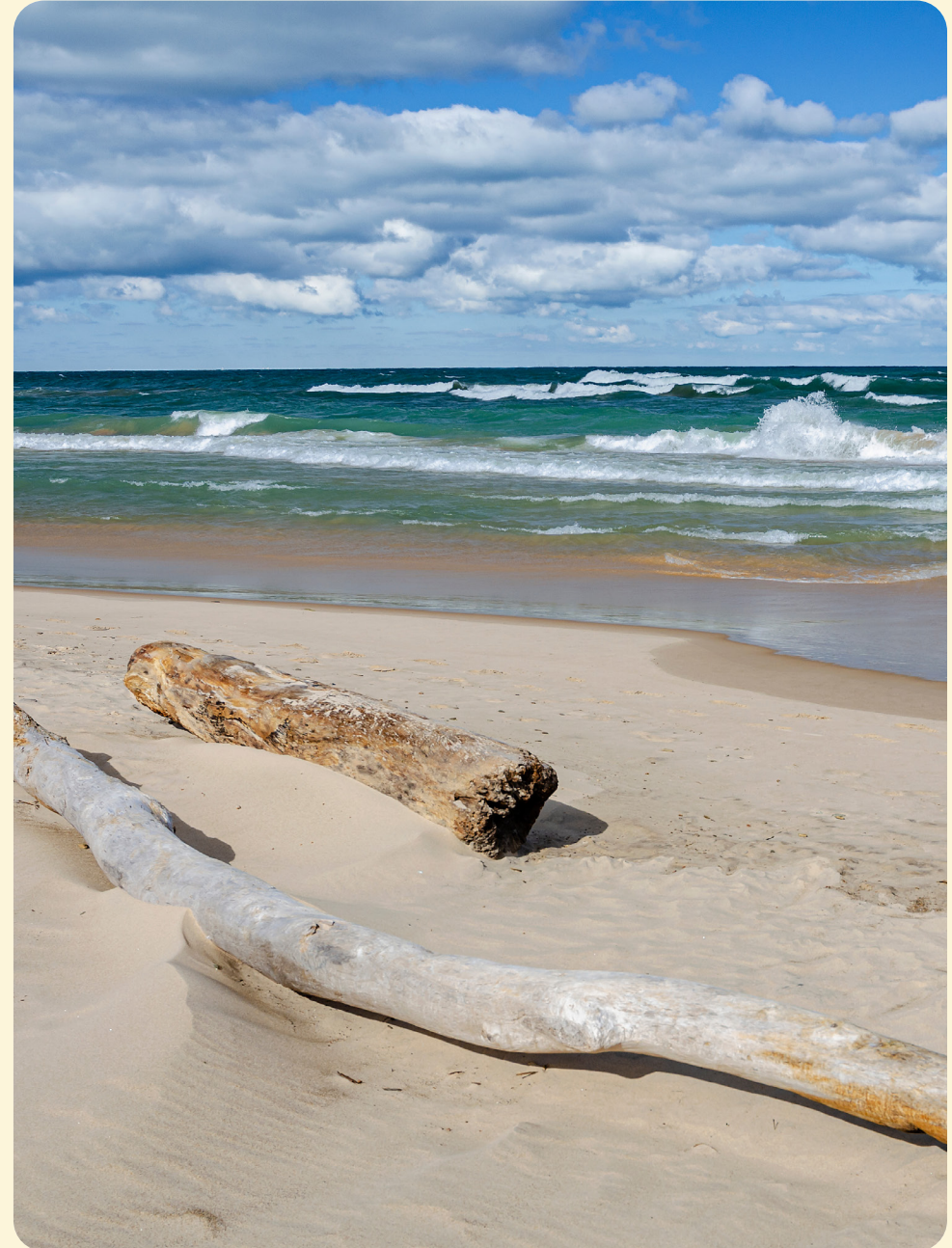


Purpose and Session Development

SWOT Analysis

Initial Discussion Categories

Key Summary



Purpose and Session Development

Public engagement is a very crucial piece of Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) drafting process.

The purpose of public engagement sessions* was to provide multiple stakeholders in the region an opportunity to discuss the current regional economic status and share valuable insights and feedback in the process of building regional economic development plans.

During the initial phase of the CEDS update project meeting in October 2024, Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC) and Purdue Center for Regional Development (PCRD) agreed to host a total of four 2-hour public engagement sessions which would include three in-person sessions (one in each county - Lake, Porter, La Porte) and one alternative virtual session during the months of November and December 2024.

270

Stakeholders Reached



4

Engagement Sessions



42

Session Participants



33

Organizations Represented



*The public engagement sessions featured discussions about multiple topics and reflect the views of the attendees. These have not been altered and are being reported as stated.

The session offerings were as follows:

- Wednesday, November 13, 2024, 6:00 - 8:00 p.m., Hammond Development Corporation (HUB), 5233 Hohman Ave, Hammond, IN
- Tuesday, November 19, 2024, 5:30 - 7:30 p.m., La Porte County Library's Exchange Building Classroom, 807 Indiana Ave, La Porte, IN
- Friday, December 6, 2024, 9:00 - 11:00 a.m., Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission Lake Michigan Rm, 6100 Southport Rd, Portage, IN
- Monday, December 9, 2024, 2:00 - 4:00 p.m. via Zoom Virtual Session



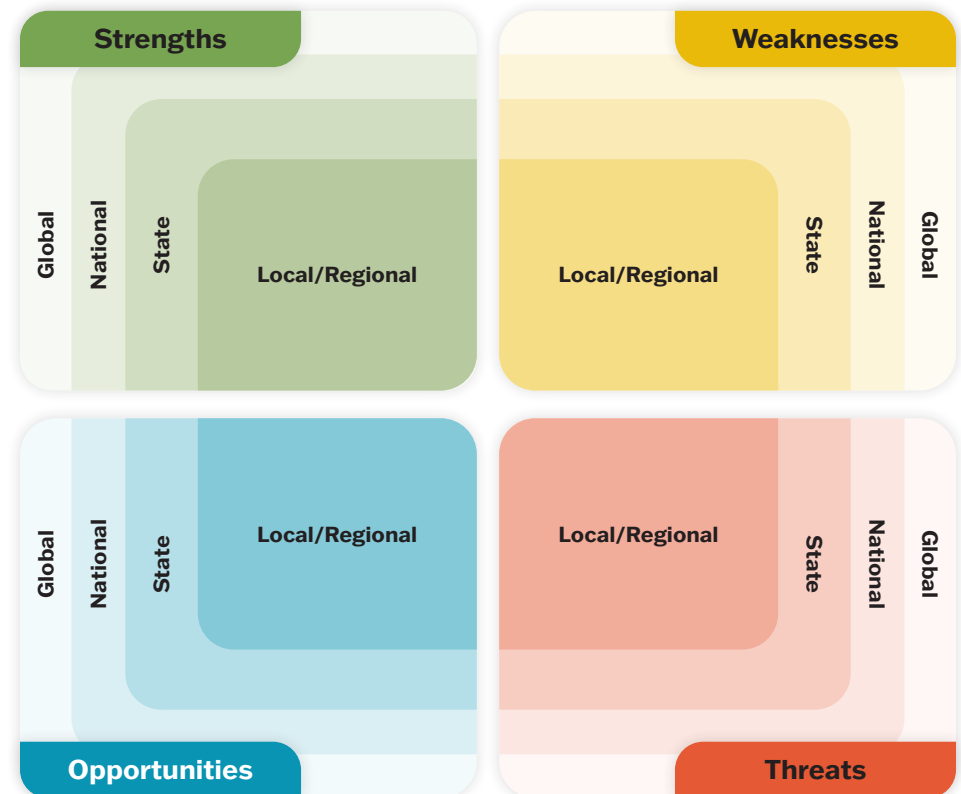
SWOT Analysis

During both in-person and online public engagement sessions, the facilitator led participant discussions based on SWOT analysis format.

CEDS requires a SWOT analysis, which is a commonly used method. The participants from the various backgrounds and current affiliations engage in collaboratively identifying the region's competitive strengths and weaknesses in the various categories of the regional economy and further contemplating opportunities and potential threats ahead based on the regional competitive advantages and external circumstances.

Strengths and weaknesses are internal in nature representing competitive advantages and disadvantages, whereas opportunities and threats are external in nature representing potential positive changes or improvements as well as potential negative impacts or decline, respectively.

A full SWOT analysis can be found in the Appendix.



Initial Discussion Categories

During each session, the facilitator reviewed the general focus areas including infrastructure, transportation, housing, education, workforce, natural resources, industry, local businesses, etc. The participants were engaged in SWOT (Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, Threat) analysis activities which would serve as the crucial elements for building future visions for the next five years.

During the SWOT activities for the first three in-person public engagement sessions, the attendees used sticky notes to jot down their ideas. The ideas for each SWOT category were discussed as a small group and then narrowed down to the top four to five priority items of each small group.

During the SWOT activities for the virtual public engagement session, the attendees were using a shared google document to list their ideas and then casting votes using an annotation function to narrow down to the top priority items for each SWOT category.

The following categories were given to the participants for brainstorming and engaging in-depth discussion:

- Transportation
- Healthcare
- Recreational Opportunities
- Housing
- Education
- Local Business
- Natural Resources
- Tourism
- Energy
- Infrastructure
- Industry Clusters
- Government & Regulations
- Cost of Living
- Arts & Culture
- Finance
- Childcare
- Environmental Quality
- Workforce

Key Summary

Public engagement sessions collected valuable feedback on Northwestern Indiana region’s current economic, cultural, intellectual and physical assets as well as future recommendations which could be broken down into three key areas for the regional economic strategy and prospect in the next five years.



Goals



Summary

Goal One: Economic Diversification and Innovation

Goal Two: Workforce Resiliency

Goal Three: Quality of Place





Summary

This plan is designed to guide economic development efforts across the NIRPC region over the next five years. The three goals in this CEDS—Economic Diversification and Innovation, Workforce Resiliency, and Quality of Place—are structured to complement and build on one another to create a holistic approach to economic development. Altogether, this plan meets the EDA’s requirements to maintain the three-county region as an EDD. The plan is also designed to allow regional leaders to act swiftly as economic conditions change. This adaptability will require local organizations to maintain cross-sector partnerships and to act in a coordinated manner. Whether building a more competitive local talent pool, supporting industry clusters, or leveraging funding opportunities, regional collaboration and coordination will be essential to the successful implementation of the CEDS.

Goal One Economic Diversification and Innovation

Create a robust network of forward-thinking initiatives around legacy and emerging industry clusters, R&D to fuel innovative growth.

Strategies

- Target industry sectors
- Supply chain
- Business development
- Technology transfer and adoption

Goal Two Workforce Resiliency

Develop, attract and retain a skilled workforce by building on the collaboration among Northwestern Indiana’s education and training organizations, workforce development programs and private sector employees

Strategies

- Workforce pipeline development
- Labor participation increase

Goal Three Quality of Place

Collaborate with and support other regional organizations to improve the affordability/availability of housing for all income levels; brownfield cleanup and redevelopment; and awareness of Transit Development Districts (TDD) and Transit Oriented Development (TOD).

Strategies

- Regional advocacy and awareness
- Provide of educational resources



Economic Diversification and Innovation

Regional specialization of industries through diversification and collaboration.

Industrial diversification, technology innovation, and creating supporting entrepreneurship are essential components to growing a vibrant regional economy. The three-county Northwestern Indiana region has tremendous potential to leverage its assets, along with those in close geographic proximity (interstate) to drive industrial specialization through the adoption of new technologies to support both legacy and emerging clusters. This is a region seeking a bold and transformative change which realizes the potential of Advance Computing and Quantum technologies spillovers from adjacent regions. Technology adoption and innovation has the capacity to change the growth of clusters and the region is primed to take advantage of these computing technologies. This approach also aligns with strategic US national security interests which are set come to the fore such as Advanced Computing, Quantum, Critical Materials, Hydrogen and Biofuels.

This goal lays the economic foundations to support opportunity with forward-thinking initiatives around industry clusters to fuel innovative growth. This will depend on developing collaborative networks within industry groups to drive essential components of Northwestern Indiana's economy. The existing NIRPC economy hosts a number of growing, stable and legacy clusters. In addition, the region is well-positioned geographically to **Advanced Computing and Quantum** technology development in Illinois which would act as a catalyst for what is possible in Northwestern Indiana. This region has a unique opportunity to forge growth by harnessing new technology development in the broader Chicagoland region, including the quantum communications corridor, and merge those possibilities with its high-performing and emerging industrial clusters. This would mean that Advanced Computing and Quantum's potential

for innovative growth should be explored within the **Primary Metal Manufacturing, Chemicals/Glass and Ceramics (pharmaceuticals), and Machinery Manufacturing** clusters.

The region is home to a strong set of legacy, emerging and strong clusters whose specialties can be leveraged in support of productivity growth and cross-sector synergies. This will also require some new technology adoption from advanced computing to potentially harness the possibilities. **Industrial cluster collaboration, along with cross-sector technology adoption, could provide key industrial advantages within the broader Chicagoland region.**

Ecosystems for entrepreneurship and innovation, from a regional perspective, are a positive-sum environment which requires regional coordination. Ecosystems, in this perspective, showcase assets, resources and the social connections in which economic agents (such as entrepreneurs, firms, nonprofit organizations, research collaborations) may thrive. Introductory regional engagement with industrial clusters, in addition, to the exploration of cross-sectoral entrepreneurship opportunities, need to be supported in order to build trust.

NIRPC will focus on the development of three industrial cluster ecosystems and how they segue with Advance Computing technology. The following outlines an effective strategy to engage and sustain them with a combined focus on **policy, action, institutions, and governance.**

■ Goal One Objectives

#1 Ecosystem formation and foundation

- NIRPC would arrange for regional nonprofits and partner organizations to join the industrial cluster groups including representatives from: businesses, academia, governmental entities, and relevant industry associations. Businesses in the cluster could be identified using jobs posting data.
- Build awareness of the ecosystem project and cluster data among potential ecosystem partners and larger groups of partners and form sub-working groups such as those around Data Centers, pharmaceuticals or cybersecurity.
- Support development of, and provide resources, such as data, or industry experts) for the Advanced Computing industry cluster. It should be noted that support will vary from simply hosting and convening meetings to doing cluster specific research. These resources will vary based on feedback from companies and partners.
- Build awareness of the Quantum Corridor to the identified industry clusters and entrepreneurs throughout the region.

Sensor technologies and the industrial Internet of Things (IoT) data offer numerous opportunities for value creation, particularly in manufacturing industries. For small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), along with entrepreneurs, many of those opportunities are inaccessible without cooperation across enterprise borders and the sharing of data, personnel, and IT resources. The formation of data sharing groups can be a novel approach to track regional productivity. A data sharing cooperative is understood as a legal unit within an ecosystem of cooperating SMEs and founded for supporting the members of the cooperative.



#2 Ecosystem cluster strategy, collaboration and innovation

- Evaluate potential projects (such as supply chain leakages or projected job growth) with each industrial cluster ecosystem group to develop a strategy to address them within the region.
- Determine what funding mechanisms and partners may support emerging and traditional industry clusters
- Explore the possibility of holding a Summit with other collaborative partners for all identified clusters and have speakers from the Chicago Quantum Exchange, Indiana BioWorks and the Indiana Semiconductor Hub leaders. Have cross-sector workshops to identify needs, strengths and weaknesses.
- In addition, identify areas where the positive spillover effects may be leveraged within the region. This will encourage more industrial growth within the region.
 - › Encourage joint projects and initiatives among cluster members and have them develop fund seeking strategies.
 - › Seek funding opportunities for research and development activities with regional and state level universities to broaden the training and research capabilities for Advanced Computing.
- Determine what expertise, technology and market information each cluster group would most benefit from and make connections to those who can provide for free or at a reduced cost.
- Identify and work closely with partner leaders within each cluster group who may serve as a unified voice for the industrial cluster in advocating for regional policies which support its growth.
- Continue to help the industry cluster ecosystem group identify high-tech industrial collaborations in advanced computing and energy.

#3 Entrepreneurship and innovation

NIRPC will support the NWI BizHub's regional efforts to build and maintain a strong entrepreneurial ecosystem across Lake, Porter and La Porte counties.

- Participate in regional entrepreneurship meetings in conjunction with ISBDC.
- NIRPC will continue to support small businesses with their revolving loan fund for eligible recipients.
- NIRPC will support the efforts of the Northwest Indiana Forum's goals to build support systems necessary for talented and ambitious entrepreneurs.





Workforce Resiliency

As the region seeks to diversify and specialize the regional economy to meet high-growth areas, the emerging high-technology areas and industrial clusters will require a highly trained workforce to meet the region's needs. Within the economic development realm, the conversation has shifted from solely using an industry-based analysis to also incorporate a focus on occupations and skills, emphasizing the importance of connecting education, workforce training, and economic development to meet regional needs and enhance career pathways. NIRPC has a unique opportunity to work with and support a variety of regional partners including nonprofit

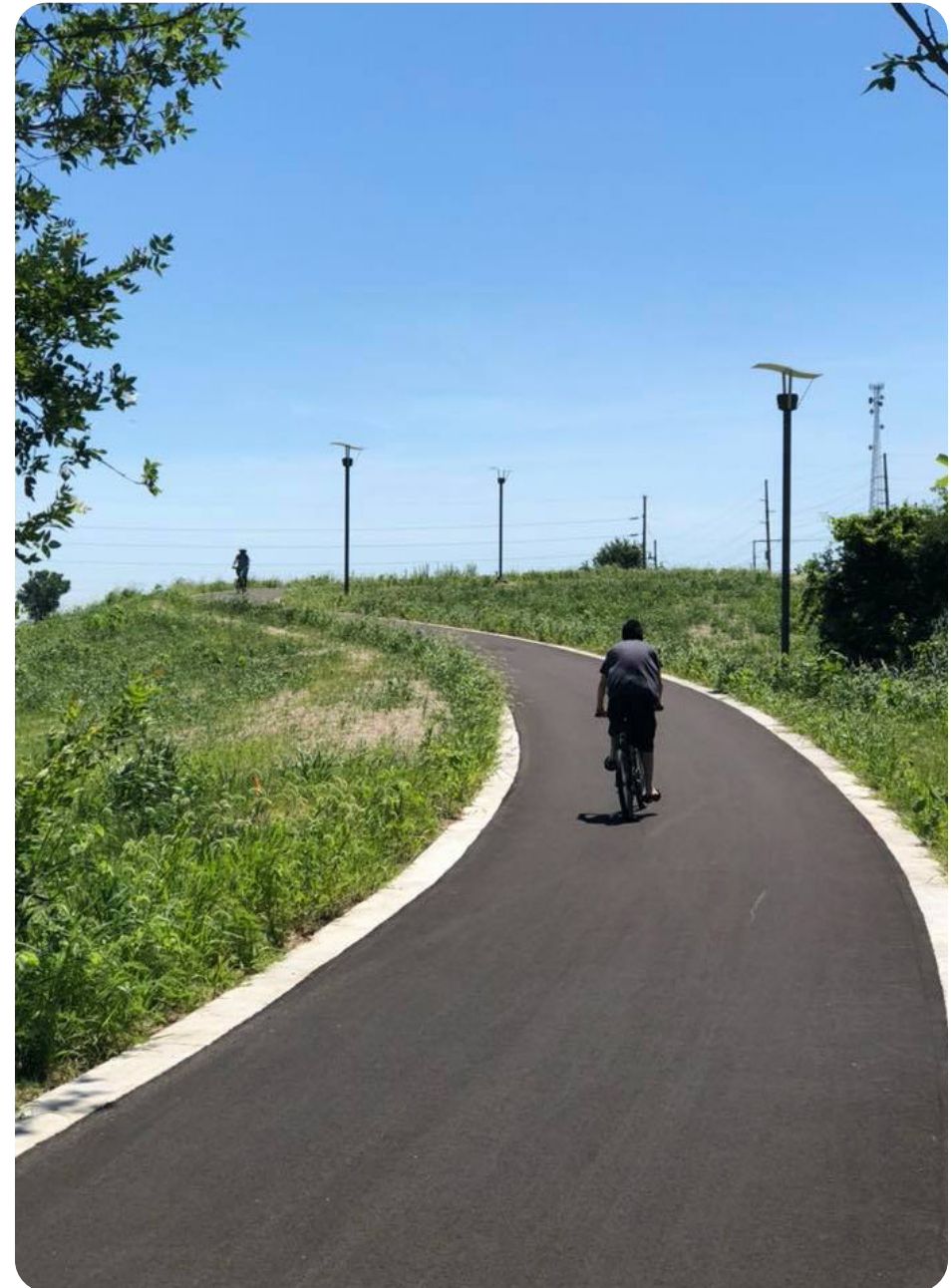
organizations, industries, entrepreneurs to develop a regional workforce pipeline and plan. By building on the economic specialization ecosystem approach, these relationships will help industries to not only identify, address and act on the skills gaps in a way that could change the trajectory of people's lives in the region. The industrial clusters are high-growth, broad and emerging areas in Northwest Indiana. Little data is yet known about the talent, skills and knowledge needed over the next 20 years. As such, the workforce pipeline will take some time to develop and adjust to the growing industrial needs.



■ Goal Two Objectives

#1 Establish a workforce-oriented public-private partnership for emerging industries

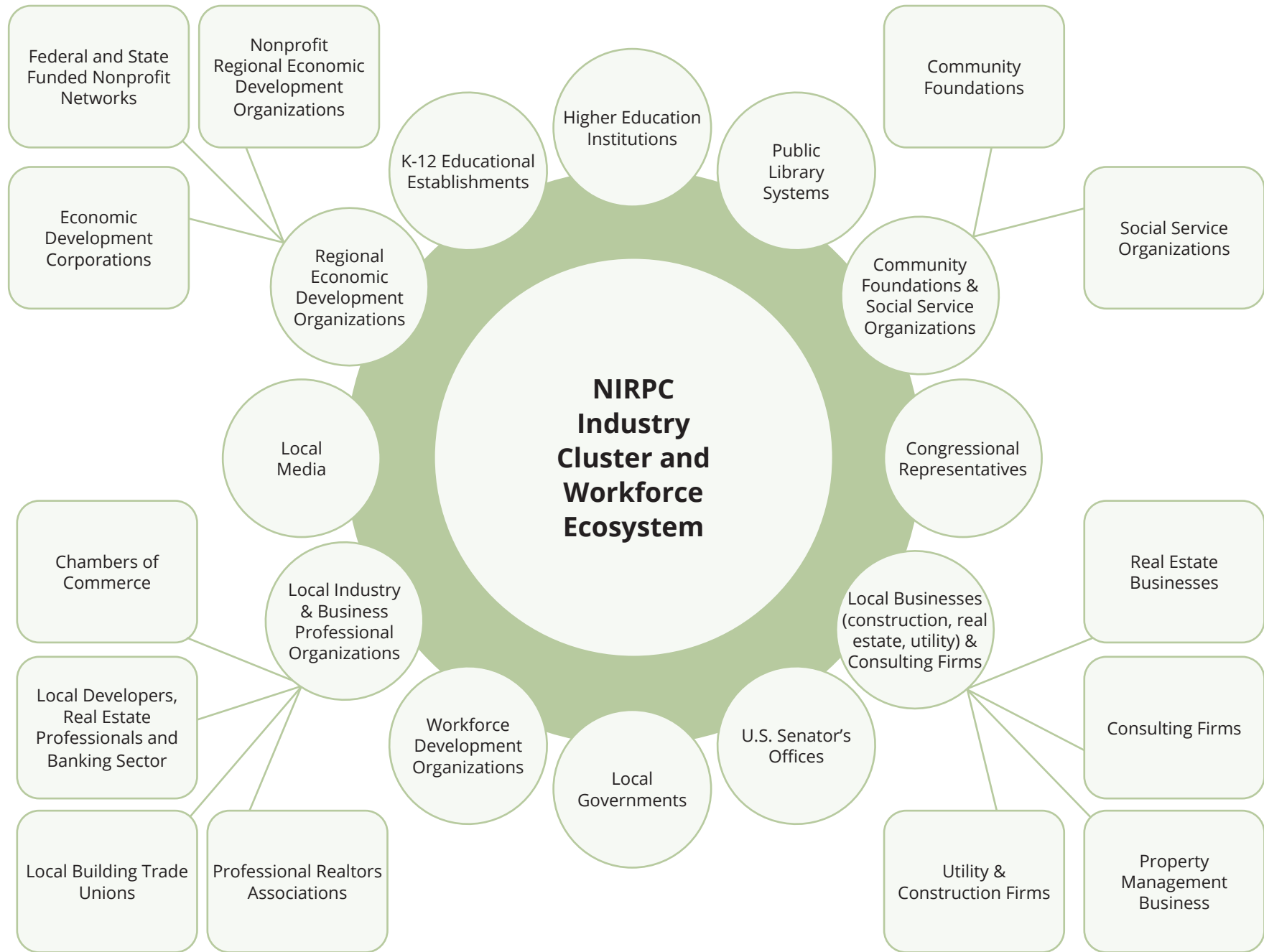
- Contact potential partners including Center for Workforce Innovations (CWI), the Society of Innovators, One Region and the NWI Forum to help drive the development of an industry-led talent attraction pipeline for **emerging industries** (energy, pharmaceuticals, advanced computing/quantum, cybersecurity, data centers) and discuss using the US Chamber of Commerce's Foundation's **Talent Pipeline Management (TPM)** tool.
- Identify all potential partners needed to tackle in the development of the TPM tool, or other tool, for emerging industries and reach out to them.
- Organize a meeting to bring all closely aligned organizations together and discuss this approach to meeting the regional workforce needs. Assess whether TPM is the right tool and approach to the community of partners interested in working on the talent pipeline and recruitment issue.
 - › Organize firms to address a skills gap for critical jobs needed across their company's emerging industries grounded in advanced computing. Starting from the technology side and then adding to the industrial cluster ecosystem groups may be the best approach, however this can be explored by collaborators (Research stage).
 - › Explore the implementation of appropriate next steps identified by a partnership as part of the workforce pipeline strategy developed by the industry and institutional collaborative.



#2 NIRPC will support CWI's efforts to increase labor force participation, close the skill gap, and build talent pipeline capacity for existing, in-demand, and emerging quality jobs in Healthcare and Social Assistance, Manufacturing, HEART (Hospitality, Entertainment, Arts, Retail and Tourism), Construction, Transportation & Warehousing, Agriculture and Professional, Scientific and Technical Services.

- NIRPC will support CWI's job and career exposure and readiness coaching with wrap around supports and basic computer skill training as feasible.
- NIRPC will support CWI's efforts with Adult Career and Technical Education in a region-wide network of opportunity hubs located within distressed urban and rural communities dependent on capacity.
- NIRPC will support CWI's efforts with work-based learning experiences, on the job training, apprenticeships, and employer supported skills training programs dependent on capacity.
- NIRPC will support the coordination of cross-sector, employer-led, industry consortia such as education (READY NWI), advanced manufacturing (FAME), healthcare, and technology to co-create recruitment, training and placement strategies with employers, educators, and community based organizations as feasible.







Goal Three

Quality of Place

A region's quality of life is profoundly shaped by the synergy between diverse housing options, accessible transit, and in some locations, the responsible redevelopment of brownfield sites in some locations. There are many factors which influence Quality of Place within a region, however, NIRPC will concentrate on specific ones which also link to the broader economic vision of the CEDS. NIRPC has recently undertaken a Housing Plan for 2050 to help its communities understand the regional needs and challenges. As the region continues to grow, NIRPC should seek to

increase the awareness of transit-oriented developments and districts; support diverse and affordable housing needs across a wide range of income groups; and provide resources on the reclamation of brownfield sites. Redevelopment of brownfield sites transforms neglected areas into valuable community assets by mitigating environmental hazards and promoting sustainable growth. By prioritizing these interconnected elements, regions can cultivate healthier, more equitable, and resilient communities, enhancing the overall well-being of their residents.

Goal Three Objectives

#1 Housing: Build awareness of NIRPC's Housing Plan for 2050

- NIRPC will build awareness of the region's projected, future housing needs across communities.
 - › Communicate with local governments in the region to help educate staff and elected officials on affordable housing options and future land use needs which align with regional goals outlined in the Housing Plan for 2050.
 - › Foster more missing middle housing, encourage municipalities to establish new land-use categories that permit higher densities while mandating smaller building sizes in walkable areas.
 - › Promote the analysis, findings and recommendations outlined in the Housing Plan for 2050 to municipal planning staff.





#2 Brownfields: Continue to work on the mitigation and remediation of brownfield sites

- NIRPC will continue to build awareness of brownfield finances, sites and the Regional Development Authority's (RDA) revolving loan fund.
- Explore the development of a website with regional brownfield resources information to be a resource to local governments on mitigation process. Website may include high priority sites, redevelopment strategies and capital ideas necessary for implementation.

#3 Land use, housing and transit connection

- Continue to plan for needed infrastructure to support walking, bicycling, and transit in locations with historic downtowns and older retail corridors.
- Identify key arterial roadways, including state highways and other arterials that can be reimagined to enhance the livability of NWI communities.
- Collaborate with the RDA to establish materials which communicate the importance of Transit Oriented Development, Transit Development Districts and land uses which support existing and future transit needs.
- Support the RDA in its mission to build on the awareness in the region to understand the TODs and TDDs and what is required to meet the housing and transit goals.



Evaluation Framework



Cross-sector Partnerships

Stakeholder Engagement Focus

Planned Work and Progress

Outcomes and Impacts

Industrial Cluster and Workforce Ecosystem Metrics

Evaluation Framework



The evaluation framework is designed to assess planned work and progress as well as longer-term outcomes and impacts. This CEDS will evaluate the impact of NIRPC's work toward building an effective regional ecosystem which fosters economic stability and growth. This is predicated on cross-sector partnerships, stakeholder engagement, governance, and securing grants in the process.

Cross-sector Partnerships and Stakeholder Engagement Focus

An effective ecosystem will recruit and sustain an interdependent innovation ecosystem that draws in expertise, involvement, and synergy across a wide range of partners, stakeholder groups, and communities. Partners and stakeholders may include institutions of higher education (IHEs), for-profit industry including small businesses, capital investors, entrepreneurs, local and state governments, national and regional laboratories, labor and workforce development organizations, nonprofits, the creative industry, and community-based organizations. The ecosystem should build on the strengths and capabilities of its partnership network

and work to bring together the interests of the entire region through stakeholder engagement both regional and community-wide to participate in setting mini-goals for industrial specialization, workforce development, and quality of place efforts. The expectation is that the core partnerships will emerge to support wider regional interests and community needs in impactful ways. The evaluation centers on how NIRPC progresses to foster a regional collaborative framework to strategically align public sector investments from federal, state and local sources, as well as private, nonprofit and philanthropic partners.



Planned Work and Progress

Several activities are proposed in this document. Progress and action on each of these can be summarized and reported annually by each dimension as part of the evaluation and monitoring framework. Documented progress may include regional efforts as well as localized community activities that align with the CEDS priorities.

Outcomes and Impacts

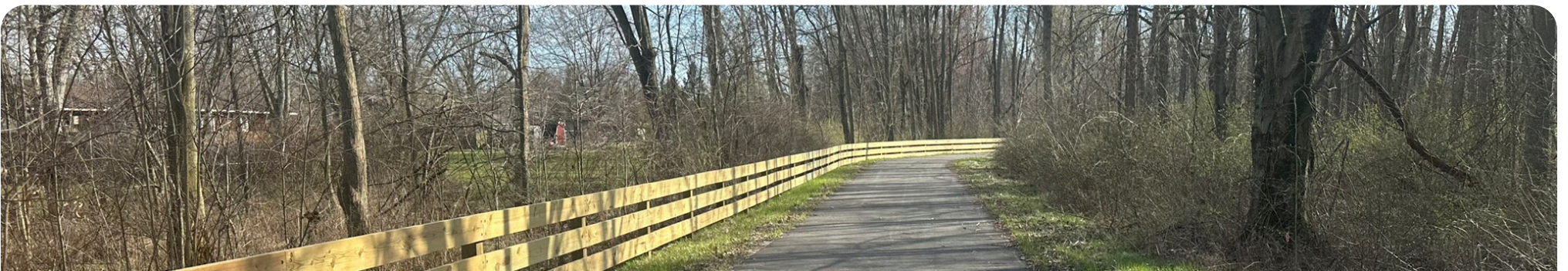
Longer-term outcomes and impacts can be assessed using secondary data sources. Indicators to evaluate longer-term results from CEDS related activities are documented in and include a baseline measure and five-year goal. Each metric should be collected monthly and reported on a biannual basis.

Industrial Cluster and Workforce Ecosystem Metrics

These measures should be tracked on a quarterly basis to identify strengths, gaps and the documentation of asset and resource capacity building. Keep track of the following metrics throughout the 5-year CEDS implementation period:

Regional Development and Engagement

- Number of identified potential industrial clusters and entrepreneurial partners
- Number of industrial cluster members contacted
- Number of industrial cluster members in regular contact with NIRPC
- Number of regional organizations contacted about NIRPC's industrial diversification, workforce, and entrepreneurship efforts
- Number of new organizations who have responded to NIRPC's outreach
- Number of industrial cluster engagement attendees
- Number of meetings held with external industrial cluster partners
- Number of new industrial cluster partners
- Number of NIRPC sponsored or partner meetings pertaining to housing, brownfields, industrial clusters, entrepreneurship, and workforce development
- Number of Midwest organizations contacted about NIRPC's diversification and entrepreneurship efforts
- Number of other organizations contacted within the U.S., but outside of the Midwest
- Number of other midwestern (outside of Northwest Indiana) organizations engaged in regional meetings hosted by NIRPC
- Number of entrepreneurs assisted which include directing to resources, providing information, or holding meetings



Workforce Development

- Number of identified potential workforce development partners at the regional level
- Number of firms contacted to be part of this effort
- Number of firms committed to workforce development effort in emerging industries
- Number of new group goals outlined by workforce development collaboration
- Number of placements in apprenticeship or entry level positions within collaboration group
- Number of upskilled employees within collaboration group
- Number of industries represented in workforce collaboration group
- Number of job placements, new employees, and apprenticeships for individuals from locally targeted areas because of engagement efforts

Governance and Management

- Number of grants application submitted with partners
- Number of grant meetings held with collaborative partners
- Number of grants secured
- Amount of grants secured toward projects which align with the CEDS regionwide
- Studies initiated relating to any of the CEDS topics in the region
- Completed studies related to any of the CEDS topics in the region



Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy by



Center for Regional Development