



# **The Countywide Land Development Plan**

***Michigan City, City of La Porte  
and all LaPorte County Communities***

**LaPorte County, Indiana**

**Duncan Associates  
Cooper Consulting Company  
Rundell Ernstberger Associates**

13276 Research Boulevard, Suite 208 Austin, Texas 78750

Telephone: 765/289-5380

Eric Damian Kelly, FAICP, [eric@duncanplan.com](mailto:eric@duncanplan.com)

Connie B. Cooper, FAICP, [cconniecooper@cs.com](mailto:cconniecooper@cs.com)

**January 2008**

---

## Acknowledgements

| Land Development Steering Committee |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Barbara Huston                      | Commissioner, LaPorte County                     |
| Mike Bohacek                        | Commissioner, LaPorte County                     |
| Bill Hager                          | Commissioner, LaPorte County                     |
| Marlow Harmon                       | Commissioner, LaPorte County (deceased)          |
| Jerry Cooley                        | County Council, LaPorte County                   |
| Kathy Chroback                      | Mayor, City of La Porte                          |
| Leigh Morris                        | Former Mayor, City of La Porte                   |
| Chuck Oberlie                       | Mayor, Michigan City                             |
| Pat Boy                             | City Council, Michigan City                      |
| Susan Bietry                        | Visitors Bureau, LaPorte County                  |
| Mitch Bishop                        | County Planner, LaPorte County                   |
| Norm Greiger                        | Utilities Services - Retired                     |
| Tim Gropp                           | Greater LaPorte Econ. Dev. Corp.                 |
| Ray Hamilton                        | Bldg. Commissioner / Zoning Adm., LaPorte County |
| Jim Irwin                           | Retired Farmer                                   |
| Jerry Jackson                       | Wastewater Dept., City of La Porte               |
| Jim Jessup                          | Leadership LaPorte County/ County Park Board     |
| Gene Jonas                          | Residential Builder/SWCD                         |
| Kevin Keift                         | Neigh. Planner / MCEDC, Michigan City            |
| Linda Lane                          | League of Women Voters                           |
| Janet Long                          | Commercial Developer                             |
| Tim Morgan                          | Parks Superintendent, LaPorte County             |
| George                              | Past Farm Bureau President                       |
| Laura New                           | Parks & Recreation, Michigan City                |
| Jay Pouzar                          | Commercial Broker                                |
| John Pugh                           | Plan Director, Michigan City                     |
| Ken Purze                           | Drainage Board, Michigan City                    |
| John Regetz                         | MCEDC Director                                   |
| Pam Ruminski                        | People Engaged in Preservation                   |
| Walt Sell                           | Purdue Extension Office Director                 |
| Casey Sullivan                      | Parks & Recreation, City of La Porte             |
| Mary Jane Thomas                    | City Planner, City of La Porte                   |
| Garry Traynham                      | National Lakeshore                               |
| Al Walus                            | Superintendent, Sanitary District, Michigan City |

# Table of Contents

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>LAPORTE COUNTY LAND DEVELOPMENT PLAN .....</b>    | <b>1</b>  |
| INTRODUCTION .....                                   | 1         |
| <i>Effect of a Land Development Plan</i> .....       | 2         |
| <i>Overview of the Plan Document</i> .....           | 2         |
| <b>AN ANALYSIS OF CURRENT CONDITIONS .....</b>       | <b>3</b>  |
| POPULATION.....                                      | 3         |
| <i>Population Trends</i> .....                       | 3         |
| <i>Population Projections</i> .....                  | 6         |
| <i>Key Issues</i> .....                              | 7         |
| ECONOMY.....   | 8         |
| <i>Economic Trends</i> .....                         | 8         |
| <i>Commuting Patterns</i> .....                      | 10        |
| <i>Economic Forecasts</i> .....                      | 11        |
| <i>Economic Opportunities</i> .....                  | 12        |
| <i>Key Issues</i> .....                              | 15        |
| PUBLIC UTILITIES.....                                | 16        |
| <i>Current Systems</i> .....                         | 16        |
| <i>Community Water Systems</i> .....                 | 16        |
| <i>Public Sewer</i> .....                            | 17        |
| <i>Key Issues</i> .....                              | 18        |
| LAND USE.....  | 19        |
| <i>Land Use Trends</i> .....                         | 19        |
| <i>Key Issues</i> .....                              | 23        |
| NATURAL ENVIRONMENT.....                             | 24        |
| <i>Land</i> .....                                    | 24        |
| <i>Water</i> .....                                   | 26        |
| <i>Air</i> .....                                     | 28        |
| <i>Key Issues</i> .....                              | 29        |
| TRANSPORTATION.....                                  | 30        |
| <i>Roadways</i> .....                                | 30        |
| <i>Rail</i> .....                                    | 34        |
| <i>Air Transport</i> .....                           | 35        |
| <i>Trails, Bikeways &amp; Pedestrian Paths</i> ..... | 35        |
| <i>Key Issues</i> .....                              | 37        |
| PARKS AND RECREATION.....                            | 38        |
| <i>Indiana Dunes</i> .....                           | 38        |
| <i>LaPorte County Parks and Trails</i> .....         | 39        |
| <i>Michigan City Parks</i> .....                     | 43        |
| <i>City of La Porte Parks</i> .....                  | 45        |
| <i>Key Issues</i> .....                              | 46        |
| <b>REGIONAL ANALYSIS OF LAPORTE COUNTY .....</b>     | <b>47</b> |
| OVERVIEW.....  | 47        |
| <i>Plans and Studies</i> .....                       | 47        |
| LAKE MICHIGAN SUBREGION.....                         | 48        |
| NORTHEAST SUBREGION.....                             | 49        |
| EAST CENTRAL SUBREGION.....                          | 51        |



|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| LA PORTE AREA SUBREGION.....  | 52        |
| SOUTHEAST SUBREGION .....   | 54        |
| SOUTH SUBREGION.....  | 55        |
| 421 CORRIDOR SUBREGION .....  | 56        |
| <b>THE PLAN: STRATEGIC GOALS AND OBJECTIVES .....</b>                               | <b>58</b> |
| POPULATION STRATEGY .....   | 58        |
| ECONOMIC BASE STRATEGY.....   | 58        |
| REDEVELOPMENT AND INFILL STRATEGY .....   | 59        |
| COMPACT, CONTIGUOUS DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY .....                                      | 60        |
| ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES: LAND STRATEGY .....  | 61        |
| ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES: WATER STRATEGY.....  | 61        |
| TRANSPORTATION STRATEGY .....   | 62        |
| PUBLIC UTILITIES STRATEGY .....   | 63        |
| PARKS, RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE STRATEGY.....                                      | 64        |
| <b>THE PLAN: LAND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY AREAS .....</b>                              | <b>65</b> |
| OVERVIEW .....  | 65        |
| EXISTING URBAN AREAS.....   | 66        |
| PLANNED URBAN EXPANSION AREAS.....  | 67        |
| PLANNED GROWTH AREAS .....  | 68        |
| PLANNED RURAL ESTATES AREAS.....  | 69        |
| PLANNED RURAL INDUSTRIAL AREAS .....  | 70        |
| TRADITIONAL AGRICULTURE AREAS .....   | 71        |
| TOWNS AND RURAL VILLAGES .....  | 72        |
| AIRPORT INFLUENCE AREAS .....   | 73        |
| ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY OVERLAY AREAS .....  | 74        |
| <b>PLAN IMPLEMENTATION TECHNIQUES .....</b>   | <b>75</b> |
| INTRODUCTION .....  | 75        |
| PLANNING TECHNIQUES.....  | 75        |
| <i>Plan Coordination – Continuation of Land Development Steering Committee.....</i> | <i>75</i> |
| <i>Plan Coordination – Creation of an Area Planning Commission .....</i>            | <i>76</i> |
| INFRASTRUCTURE TECHNIQUES.....  | 79        |
| <i>Adequate Public Facilities Program .....</i>                                     | <i>79</i> |
| <i>Limiting Subdivisions Served by Septic Tanks .....</i>                           | <i>80</i> |
| <i>Capacity Allocation Program .....</i>  | <i>81</i> |
| <i>Impact Fees.....</i>   | <i>82</i> |
| <i>Sewer/Water Plant Investment Fees .....</i>                                      | <i>83</i> |
| <i>Capital Improvements Programs: Priorities for Infrastructure .....</i>           | <i>84</i> |
| <i>Targeted Infrastructure Investment.....</i>                                      | <i>85</i> |
| ZONING TECHNIQUES .....   | 87        |
| <i>General Zoning Update.....</i>   | <i>87</i> |
| <i>Zoning: Minimum Density Standards.....</i>                                       | <i>88</i> |
| <i>Zoning: Cluster Zoning .....</i>   | <i>89</i> |
| <i>Zoning: Overlay Zones.....</i>   | <i>90</i> |
| ZONING ORDINANCE RECOMMENDATIONS .....  | 92        |
| <i>Update or Rewrite Zoning Ordinances – All Jurisdictions .....</i>                | <i>92</i> |
| <i>Zoning Recommendations – LaPorte County .....</i>                                | <i>92</i> |
| <i>Zoning Recommendations – City of La Porte .....</i>                              | <i>92</i> |
| <i>Zoning Recommendations – Michigan City.....</i>                                  | <i>93</i> |
| <i>Zoning Recommendations – Land Development Strategy Areas .....</i>               | <i>93</i> |



|  |     |
|--|-----|
| <i>Zoning Recommendations – Lakeshore Communities</i> .....                | 97  |
| <i>Zoning Recommendations – Downtowns</i> .....                            | 97  |
| <i>Zoning Recommendations – Overlay Districts</i> .....                    | 98  |
| SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS RECOMMENDATIONS .....                              | 99  |
| <i>Update or Rewrite Subdivision Regulations – All Jurisdictions</i> ..... | 99  |
| <i>Subdivision Recommendations – Public Facilities Standards</i> .....     | 99  |
| <i>Subdivision Recommendations – Design Standards</i> .....                | 99  |
| <i>Subdivision Recommendations – Economic Opportunity Overlay</i> .....    | 100 |
| <i>Subdivision Recommendations – Lakeshore Communities</i> .....           | 100 |
| <i>Subdivision Recommendations – Environmental Standards</i> .....         | 100 |
| OTHER TECHNIQUES.....  | 102 |
| <i>Land Acquisition Programs</i> .....                                     | 102 |
| <i>Conservation Easement Programs</i> .....                                | 103 |
| <i>Community Development</i> .....   | 104 |
| <i>Intergovernmental Agreements</i> .....                                  | 105 |

**List of Tables**

|   |    |
|---|----|
| TABLE 1 EXISTING / PROJECTED POPULATION, LA PORTE COUNTY, 1960 – 2030.....                    | 3  |
| TABLE 2 POPULATION IN LAPORTE COUNTY BY JURISDICTION, 2000 AND 2005 .....                     | 3  |
| TABLE 3 EXISTING AND PROJECTED POPULATION, LAPORTE AND REGION, 2000 – 2030 .....              | 6  |
| TABLE 4 PROJECTED RATES OF POPULATION CHANGE, LAPORTE COUNTY AND REGION, 2000 – 2030 .....    | 6  |
| TABLE 5 ALTERNATIVE POPULATION PROJECTIONS FOR LAPORTE COUNTY, 2005 – 2030.....               | 6  |
| TABLE 6 TOTAL WAGES FROM MAJOR NON-FARM, NON-GOV. SECTORS IN LAPORTE COUNTY, 2001 – 2005..... | 8  |
| TABLE 7 TOP EMPLOYERS IN LAPORTE COUNTY, 2005 – 2006.....                                     | 8  |
| TABLE 8 AGRICULTURE IN LAPORTE COUNTY, 1997 – 2004 .....                                      | 10 |
| TABLE 9 UNEMPLOYMENT RATE, LAPORTE COUNTY, 2000 – 2007 .....                                  | 10 |
| TABLE 10 PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT, LAPORTE COUNTY RESIDENTS, 2005.....                             | 11 |
| TABLE 11 ECONOMIC FORECASTS, LAPORTE COUNTY, 2005 - 2030 .....                                | 12 |
| TABLE 12 EXISTING WATER SYSTEMS AND POPULATION SERVED .....                                   | 16 |
| TABLE 13 RESIDENTIAL BUILDING PERMITS, BY INDIVIDUAL LOCATION, 1996 – 2004 .....              | 19 |
| TABLE 14 NEW UNITS NEEDED TO HOUSE INCREASED POPULATION.....                                  | 21 |
| TABLE 15 RESIDENTIAL AND OTHER LAND DEMAND, BASED ON BLENDED GROWTH RATE PROJECTIONS. ....    | 21 |
| TABLE 16 VACANT LAND IN CITIES AND PLANNED SEWER SERVICE AREAS.....                           | 22 |
| TABLE 17 RECREATION FACILITIES IN MICHIGAN CITY .....   | 43 |
| TABLE 18 RECREATION FACILITIES IN THE CITY OF LA PORTE .....                                  | 45 |

**List of Figures**

|   |    |
|---|----|
| FIGURE 1 LAPORTE COUNTY.....  | 1  |
| FIGURE 2 POPULATION CHANGE, LAPORTE COUNTY, CITIES & TOWNS, 1990 – 2000 .....                     | 4  |
| FIGURE 3 POPULATION TRENDS IN THE REGION, 1970 – 2005 .....                                       | 4  |
| FIGURE 4 POPULATION LOSS/GAIN, LAPORTE COUNTY, 2000 – 2004.....                                   | 5  |
| FIGURE 5 OCCUPATIONS IN LAPORTE COUNTY, BY REGIONS, 2000 .....                                    | 9  |
| FIGURE 6 OCCUPATIONS IN LAPORTE AND SURROUNDING COUNTIES, 2000 .....                              | 9  |
| FIGURE 7 WORKERS COMMUTING INTO LAPORTE COUNTY, 2005.....   | 11 |
| FIGURE 8 WORKERS COMMUTING OUT OF LAPORTE COUNTY, 2005 .....                                      | 11 |
| FIGURE 9 EXISTING AND PLANNED WASTEWATER TREATMENT SERVICE AREAS.....                             | 17 |
| FIGURE 10 RESIDENTIAL BUILDING PERMITS, 1996 – 2004 .....   | 19 |
| FIGURE 11 URBANIZED AREAS IN LAPORTE COUNTY (OMITS KINGSFORD HEIGHTS, LA CROSSE AND WANATAH)..... | 20 |
| FIGURE 12 LAPORTE COUNTY LAND USES, 2006 .....  | 20 |
| FIGURE 13 ADDRESSES IN LAPORTE COUNTY, 2006.....  | 20 |

FIGURE 14 VACANT PARCELS .....22

FIGURE 15 SUB-WATERSHEDS IN LAPORTE COUNTY .....24

FIGURE 16 SUITABILITY OF SOILS FOR FARMING.....25

FIGURE 17 ENVIRONMENTALLY SENSITIVE AREAS IN LAPORTE COUNTY.....26

FIGURE 18 LAPORTE COUNTY TRAFFIC VOLUMES AND ROADWAY IMPROVEMENTS .....31

FIGURE 19 LA PORTE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORRIDOR .....33

FIGURE 20 NORTHERN INDIAN PASSENGER RAIL.....34

FIGURE 21 LAPORTE COUNTY BIKEWAYS .....36

FIGURE 22 POTENTIAL TRAILS FOR LAPORTE COUNTY, 2005 .....42

FIGURE 23 REGIONAL ANALYSIS MAP, LAPORTE COUNTY, 2005 .....47

FIGURE 24 DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY AREAS .....65

# LAPORTE COUNTY LAND DEVELOPMENT PLAN

## INTRODUCTION

LaPorte County and the Cities of Michigan City and La Porte and other incorporated towns, working with the consulting firm Duncan Associates, in association with Rundell Ernstberger Associates and Cooper Consulting Company, have successfully created a comprehensive Countywide Land Development Plan to guide the County's land development decision-making processes through the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

The first step of the process involved meeting with a wide variety of local officials, groups, and citizens to identify key issues. Extensive local surveys conducted by the LaPorte County Planner also informed the early stages of the process. Identification and refinement of the issues involved multiple meetings with the Plan Steering Committee, often attended by a number of other interested citizens. The website, [www.laportecountyplan.com](http://www.laportecountyplan.com), kept Plan committee members and the general public updated on the Plan's progress and available documents.

The next step of the Plan's creation, involved collection and analysis of land use, utility service areas, the transportation network, aerial photography, development densities, farmland suitability, forested areas, topography, sensitive environmental areas, major watersheds, development trends, population trends, housing capacity and trends, public utilities, and transportation systems and plans. This also included an extensive set of maps to illustrate data collected and analyzed.

Finally, strategic goals and objectives were developed that guided the creation of land development strategy areas for the countywide Land Development Plan. To support the Plan's concepts, an Implementation Strategies Report was completed to identify the short and long range actions necessary to implement the Plan.

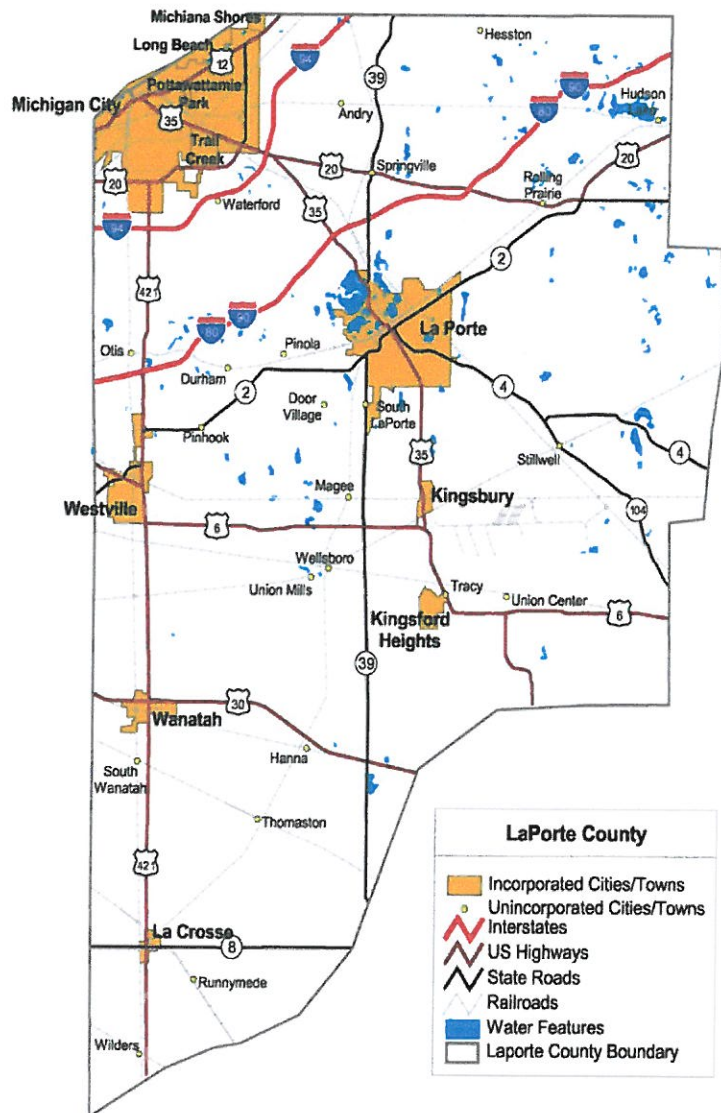


Figure 1 LaPorte County



## **EFFECT OF A LAND DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

The Countywide Land Development Plan serves to guide the land development decisions of LaPorte County and its communities in accordance with Section 36-7-4-504 and other applicable provisions of the Indiana Code.

The major substantive provisions of Section 36-7-4-504 read as follows:

- (a) After the comprehensive plan is approved for a jurisdiction, each governmental entity within the territorial jurisdiction where the plan is in effect shall give consideration to the general policy and pattern of development set out in the comprehensive plan in the:
  - (1) Authorization, acceptance, or construction of water mains, sewers, connections, facilities, or utilities;
  - (2) Authorization, construction, alteration, or abandonment of public ways, public places, public lands, public structures, or public utilities; and
  - (3) Adoption, amendment, or repeal of zoning ordinances, including zone maps and PUD district ordinances (as defined in section 1503 [IC 36-7-4-1503] of this chapter), subdivision control ordinances, historic preservation ordinances, and other land use ordinances.

Under Indiana Code Section 36-7-4-205, the adopted Comprehensive Plan will serve as the official planning policies for LaPorte County and the cities and towns by which it is adopted.

## **OVERVIEW OF THE PLAN DOCUMENT**

The Countywide Land Development Plan includes the following elements:

- An analysis of existing land use, utility service areas, the transportation network, development densities, farmland suitability, forested areas, topography, sensitive environmental areas, major watersheds, development trends, population and employment trends, and land absorption rates;
- A regional analysis of seven subregions within LaPorte County;
- Recommended goals and policies addressing the required elements of a comprehensive plan under state law, plus others of local interest;
- Recommended Land Development Strategies for Existing Urban Areas, Planned Urban Expansion Areas, Planned Growth Areas, Planned Rural Estate Areas, Planned Rural Industrial Areas, Traditional Agriculture Areas, Towns and Rural Villages, Airport Influence Areas, and Economic Opportunity Areas; and,
- Recommended Plan Implementation Techniques that include plan coordination, creation of an Area Plan Commission, an Adequate Public Facilities Program, limiting Subdivisions Served by Septic Tanks, a Capacity Allocation Program, Impact Fees, Sewer/Water Plant Investment Fees, Land Acquisition Programs, Conservation Easement Programs, Capital Improvements Programs, Priorities for Infrastructure, General Zoning Updates, Minimum Density Standards, Cluster Zoning, Overlay Zones, Update or Rewrite Zoning Ordinances and Subdivision standard and specific implementation recommendations related to the strategic planning areas.

# AN ANALYSIS OF CURRENT CONDITIONS

## POPULATION

### POPULATION TRENDS

LaPorte County over the past 45 years has experienced a generally slow growth pattern. In 1960, the Census estimated there were 95,000 persons living in the County. Forty years later that number had increased by only 15,000 people. Although there has been limited gain in population, there have been substantial shifts in where people live within LaPorte County.

From 1960 to 1970, LaPorte County saw its greatest percent and numeric increase in population, with an increase in over 10,000 persons and a 10.8 percent increase. Since 1970, the County has had single digit growth and an actual decline in population from 1980 to 1990. Population projections from 2000 – 2030, completed by the Indiana Bureau of Business Research, continue to anticipate only incremental increases in the County's population (a 4265 person increase over a thirty year period (See Table 1).

Table 1 Existing / Projected Population, La Porte County, 1960 – 2030

|           | Year | Total Population | Population Change Per Decade | Percent Change Per Decade |
|-----------|------|------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Actual    | 1960 | 95,111           |                              |                           |
|           | 1970 | 105,342          | 10,231                       | 10.76%                    |
|           | 1980 | 108,632          | 3,290                        | 3.12%                     |
|           | 1990 | 107,066          | -1,566                       | -1.44%                    |
|           | 2000 | 110,106          | 3,040                        | 2.84%                     |
| Projected | 2010 | 110,376          | 270                          | 0.25%                     |
|           | 2020 | 112,278          | 1,902                        | 1.72%                     |
|           | 2030 | 114,371          | 2,093                        | 1.86%                     |

Table 2 Population in LaPorte County by Jurisdiction, 2000 and 2005

| Place                            | 2000 Population | 2005 Estimated Population |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------|
| Michigan City                    | 32,900          | 32,205                    |
| City of La Porte                 | 21,631          | 21,092                    |
| Kingsbury                        | 234             | 235                       |
| Kingsford Heights                | 1,453           | 1,407                     |
| La Crosse                        | 565             | 561                       |
| Long Beach                       | 1,559           | 1,554                     |
| Michiana Shores                  | 330             | 334                       |
| Pottawattomie Park               | 300             | 302                       |
| Trail Creek                      | 2,296           | 2,205                     |
| Wanatah                          | 1,013           | 990                       |
| Westville                        | 5,221           | 5,219                     |
| <b>Total in Towns and Cities</b> | <b>67,502</b>   | <b>66,104</b>             |
| <b>Unincorporated area</b>       | <b>42,704</b>   | <b>44,177</b>             |
| <b>Total County Population</b>   | <b>110,206</b>  | <b>110,281</b>            |

Table 2 Population in LaPorte County by Jurisdiction, 2000 and 2005, provides the population break down for each incorporated city and town and the remainder of the County. Michigan City is the largest jurisdiction with its 32,205 population comprising almost one-half of the municipal population in the County. The City of La Porte is second with a population of 21,092. From there, the third leading municipal population contender is the town of Westville with 5,219 people; but two-thirds of the town's population is due to the inmates within the state prison. The remaining 7,500 people within municipal jurisdictions are spread among the eight other small towns. Overall population figures have either remained stagnant or fallen within cities and towns from 2000 – 2005. The surprising population issue is the percentage of persons living within the unincorporated areas of LaPorte County --- 40 percent.



Although LaPorte County experienced a 3 percent increase in population from 1990 to 2000, a number of cities and towns within the County lost population. Figure 2 Population Change, LaPorte County, Cities & Towns, 1990 – 2000 shows that Long Beach’s population fell by 24 percent; La Crosse dropped by 17 percent; Michiana Shores decreased by 13 percent; Kingsbury fell by 11 percent; and Trail Creek dropped by 7 percent. However, in contrast, Wanatah grew by 19 percent, Pottawattomie Park increased by 7 percent and the unincorporated areas of the County grew by 12 percent.

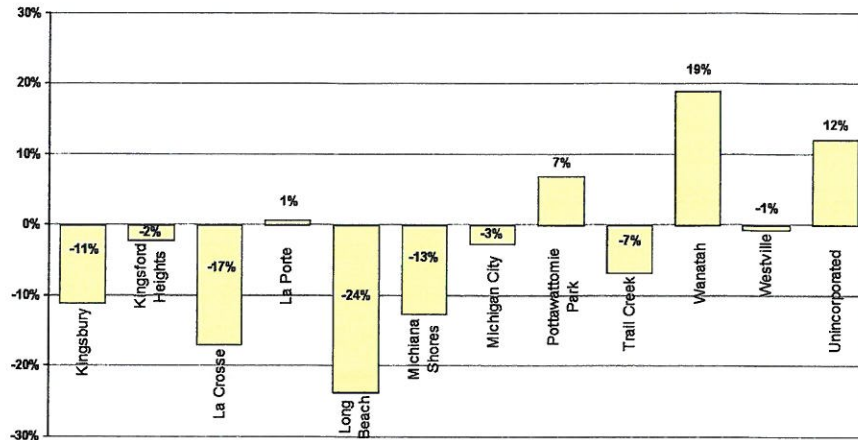


Figure 2 Population Change, LaPorte County, Cities & Towns, 1990 – 2000

Figure 3 Population Trends in the Region, shows population trends for LaPorte County and neighboring counties from 1970 to 2005. Lake County reached its peak population in 1970, but gradually lost population with the loss of industry and people moving out of Gary; however, since 1990, it has seen a modest increase in population. Stark County’s growth over the past 35 years has been fairly constant, not falling nor rising. In contrast, Porter County has had steady growth since the 1980’s, as Chicago regional jobs moved to suburbs and the growth of the metropolitan area made the commute to Valparaiso seem more reasonable. However, St. Joseph County had little growth until 1990, when population increased by 18,500 people within the decade.

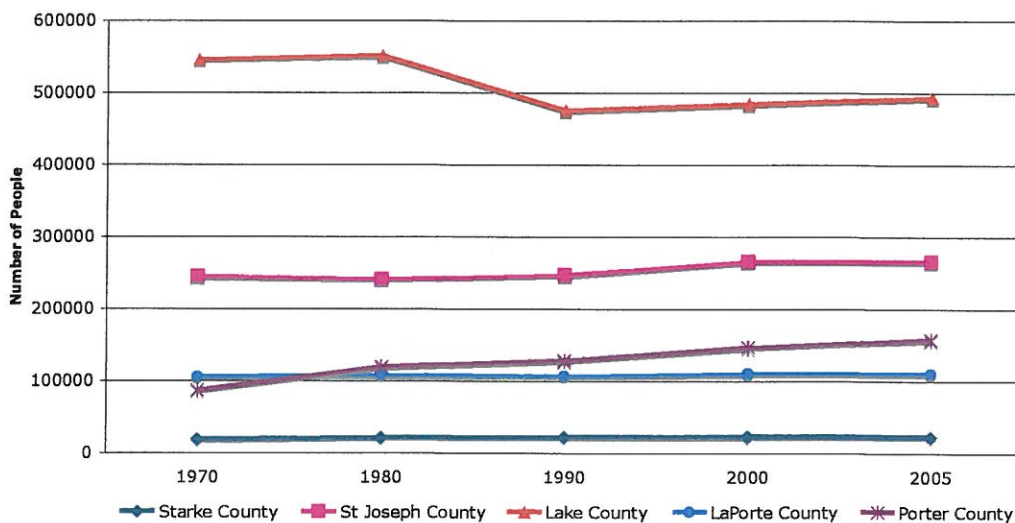


Figure 3 Population Trends in the Region, 1970 – 2005



In 2000, the U.S. Bureau of the Census determined that LaPorte County had a population of 110,106. In 2004, the Indiana University Bureau of Business Research reported that LaPorte County had experienced a population loss of 411 persons; then in 2005, the Research Center estimated there was actually a gain in population of 406 persons.

Although Figure 4 is based on 2004 population gain/loss by city, town and township, versus the revised 2005 estimate, there is no indication that the pattern is much different as a result. From 2000 to 2004, LaPorte County had a slight loss in population; however, substantial population loss was experienced within incorporated areas of the County. In contrast, significant gains in population occurred in unincorporated rural areas of the County, with the largest amount of growth occurring in the southern one-half of the County. This phenomenon will be explored in more depth in the Land Use section of the Plan.

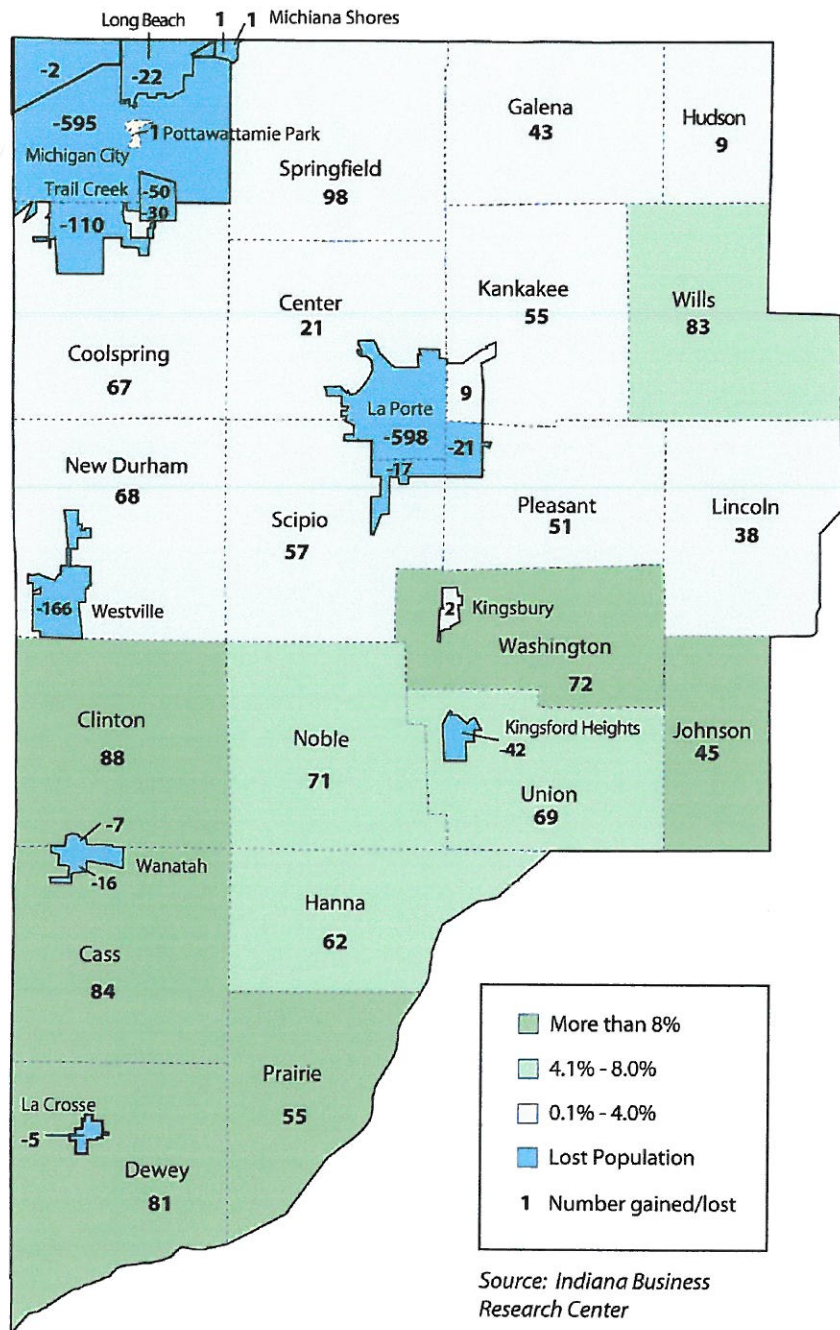


Figure 4 Population Loss/Gain, LaPorte County, 2000 – 2004

## POPULATION PROJECTIONS

Based on population projections for LaPorte County from 2000 – 2030, the County is projected to have an extremely low rate of growth (3.87 percent). Growth rates for neighboring counties and the region over this same period are much higher, as is the statewide projected population increase of 15.5 percent. (See Table 3, Table 4 and Table 5)

Regardless of projected rates of growth, LaPorte County will remain a part of the greater Chicago region and will be influenced by the smaller metropolitan regional center of South Bend. Because the regional commuting patterns are so interwoven and complex, even a large influx of new jobs to LaPorte County is unlikely to lead to a significant increase in population. But new jobs may mean that fewer LaPorte County residents have to commute out of the County for work, and it may mean that more people from neighboring counties will commute into the County.

Table 3 Existing and Projected Population, LaPorte and Region, 2000 – 2030

|                   | 2000    | 2005    | 2010    | 2020    | 2030    | Total Increase<br>2000 - 2030 |
|-------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|-------------------------------|
| LaPorte County    | 110,106 | 109,886 | 110,376 | 112,278 | 114,371 | 4,265                         |
| Lake County       | 484,564 | 481,820 | 483,183 | 492,535 | 504,808 | 20,244                        |
| Porter County     | 146,798 | 152,822 | 156,755 | 161,100 | 164,915 | 18,117                        |
| NIRPC*            | 741,468 | 744,528 | 750,314 | 765,913 | 784,094 | 42,626                        |
| St. Joseph County | 265,559 | 266,160 | 270,266 | 283,885 | 297,557 | 31,998                        |

\*NIRPC – NW Indiana Regional Planning Comm. population figures include LaPorte, Lake, and Porter Counties

Table 4 Projected Rates of Population Change, LaPorte County and Region, 2000 – 2030

|                       | % Change<br>2000-2005 | % Change<br>2005-2010 | % Change<br>2010-2020 | % Change<br>2020-30 | Total<br>% Change<br>2000 - 2030 |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|----------------------------------|
| <b>LaPorte County</b> | <b>-0.20%</b>         | <b>.45%</b>           | <b>1.72%</b>          | <b>1.86%</b>        | <b>3.87%</b>                     |
| Lake County           | -0.57%                | .28%                  | 1.94%                 | 2.49%               | 4.18%                            |
| Porter County         | 4.10%                 | 2.57%                 | 2.77%                 | 2.37%               | 12.34%                           |
| NIRPC*                | 0.41%                 | .78%                  | 2.08%                 | 2.37%               | 5.75%                            |
| St. Joseph County     | 0.23%                 | 1.54%                 | 5.04%                 | 4.82%               | 12.05%                           |
| Blended**             | 0.32%                 | 1.16%                 | 3.56%                 | 3.59%               | 8.90%                            |

\*NIRPC – NW Indiana Regional Planning Comm. population figures include LaPorte, Lake, and Porter Counties.

\*\*"Blended" rate - an average of projected rates of growth for St. Joseph County and the NIRPC region.

Table 5 Alternative Population Projections for LaPorte County, 2005 – 2030

|  | 2005    | 2010    | 2020    | 2030    |
|--|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| LaPorte County (Indiana University)    | 109,886 | 110,376 | 112,278 | 114,371 |
| Population Increase                    |         | 490     | 1,902   | 2,093   |
| LaPorte County ("Blended" Growth Rate) | 110,512 | 111,794 | 115,774 | 119,930 |
| Population Increase                    |         | 1,282   | 3,980   | 4,156   |

\*\*"Blended" rate - an average of projected rates of growth for St. Joseph County and the NIRPC region.



It is likely that some of the sprawling growth that has affected Porter County will begin to overflow into LaPorte County. In addition, because of the attractive character and the strong school corporation in eastern LaPorte County, it seems likely that there will be continued growth in that area among people commuting to work in and around South Bend. The casino-related development at New Buffalo may also contribute to growth, particularly along S.R. 39, including the northern parts of the City of La Porte. Those are factors that suggest that the "Blended" growth rate shown in Table 4 and Table 5 may be more realistic. Using Indiana University or the "blended" rate, LaPorte County's 2030 projected population will range from 114,371 to 119,930 people.

## **KEY ISSUES**

In summary, some of the key population issues in LaPorte County are:

- Since 1960, LaPorte County's population has increased by only 15,000 people.
- With the exception of a few smaller towns, populations in cities and towns dropped significantly from 1990 to 2000.
- From 1990 – 2000, population and development have shifted to the unincorporated areas of LaPorte County has risen dramatically, particularly in the southern area of the County.
- From 2000 – 2030, LaPorte County is projected to grow by only 3.87, while projected growth rates for Porter and St. Joseph Counties and the State are much higher.
- It is likely that some of the sprawling growth that has affected Porter County will begin to overflow into LaPorte County.
- Instead of Indiana's projected 2030 population of 114,371 for LaPorte County, additional factors suggest that a "blended" growth rate may be more realistic, which would result in a 2030 population for LaPorte County of 119,930.



## ECONOMY

### ECONOMIC TRENDS

LaPorte County evolved as an agricultural and industrial economy. Early industrial activity focused along the Lake Michigan shoreline, where goods could be transported by water. As the railroads came to Indiana, the City of La Porte developed along major rail lines. Farmers settled in much of the rest of the County and cleared forests to give them access to the good farmland beneath. With the support of federal programs beginning in the third quarter of the nineteenth century, farmers installed drain tiles to drain the swamps that characterized much of the County. Different economic figures are published at different times, so the most current date used in the following analysis varies with the availability of the data.

That dual heritage continues to influence LaPorte County today, with manufacturing and agriculture constituting important parts of the County's economic base. Service sector employment has grown and is now also a significant part of the economic base, as it is in many other former manufacturing communities in the Midwest. LaPorte County's top five industry sectors based on earnings are: manufacturing, health care/social assistance, retail trade, construction, and transportation/warehousing. Not surprisingly, manufacturing ranks as the highest percent of earnings in the County. (Table 6 below)

Table 6 Total Wages from Major Non-farm, Non-gov. Sectors in LaPorte County, 2001 – 2005

| Industry                        | 2001          | 2003          | 2005          | Percent of Nonfarm Private Wages |
|---------------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|----------------------------------|
| Manufacturing                   | \$478,619,000 | \$464,134,000 | \$511,572,000 | 30.64%                           |
| Health care / social assistance | \$212,820,000 | \$245,988,000 | \$250,706,000 | 15.01%                           |
| Construction                    | \$131,591,000 | \$136,322,000 | \$151,086,000 | 9.05%                            |
| Retail trade                    | \$138,462,000 | \$139,823,000 | \$148,801,000 | 8.91%                            |
| Transportation / warehousing    | \$104,707,000 | \$92,636,000  | \$103,892,000 | 6.22%                            |

Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis/STATS Indiana

Table 7 Top Employers in LaPorte County, 2005 – 2006

Table 7, Top Employers in LaPorte County, shows 2006 employment figures. Four of the top seven employers in LaPorte County are located in the Michigan City. The largest employer in the County is Blue Chip Casino, followed by the two regional hospitals in Michigan City and the City of La Porte. Although not shown as an industrial employer, the Michigan City and La Porte Community Schools are major employers in the County.

| Employers                   | Location         | Employees |
|-----------------------------|------------------|-----------|
| Blue Chip Casino            | Michigan City    | 2,000     |
| La Porte Regional Health    | City of La Porte | 1,500     |
| St. Anthony Memorial Health | Michigan City    | 1,200     |
| Howmet Corporation          | City of La Porte | 630       |
| Sullair                     | Michigan City    | 630       |
| Aero Metals                 | City of La Porte | 425       |
| Federal Mogul               | Michigan City    | 375       |

To better evaluate regional differences within the County, LaPorte County was divided into seven geographical areas. As shown in Figure 5 Occupations in LaPorte County, by Regions, 2000, the types of occupations within the regional areas of LaPorte County are fairly evenly distributed, except for the percentage working within the farming, fishing, and forestry occupations. Across the County, no regional area had more than 3 percent of the occupations devoted to agricultural or forestry activities, despite the fact that almost 64 percent of LaPorte County's land area is used for agriculture.

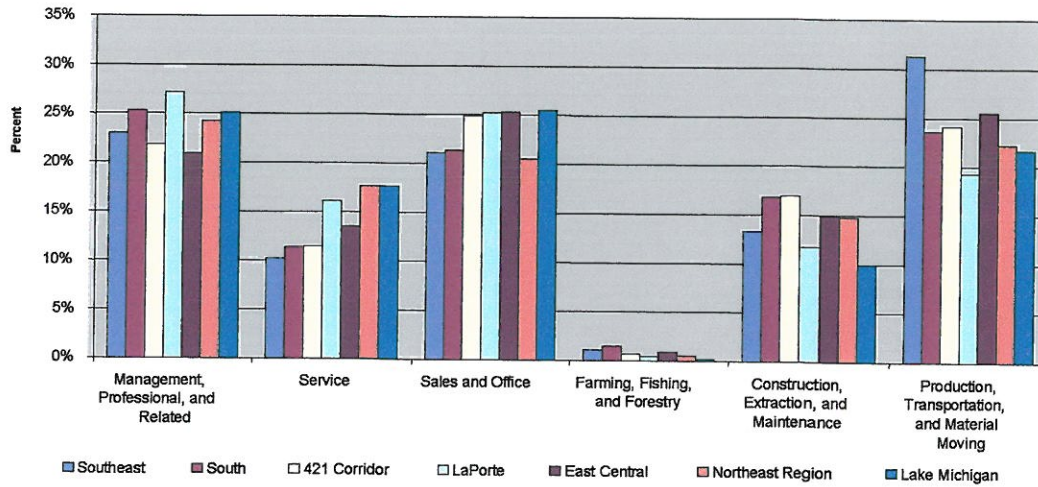


Figure 5 Occupations in LaPorte County, by Regions, 2000

When comparing the occupations of LaPorte County to the surrounding counties, LaPorte County appears to follow similar occupational trends as its neighboring counties. As shown in Figure 6 Occupations in LaPorte and Surrounding Counties, 2000 there are, however, a few subtle occupational differences. LaPorte has less management, professional, and related occupations, especially when compared to Porter and St. Joseph Counties. LaPorte shows a slightly higher percentage of occupations in the production and transportation sector than the surrounding counties, with the exception of Starke County.

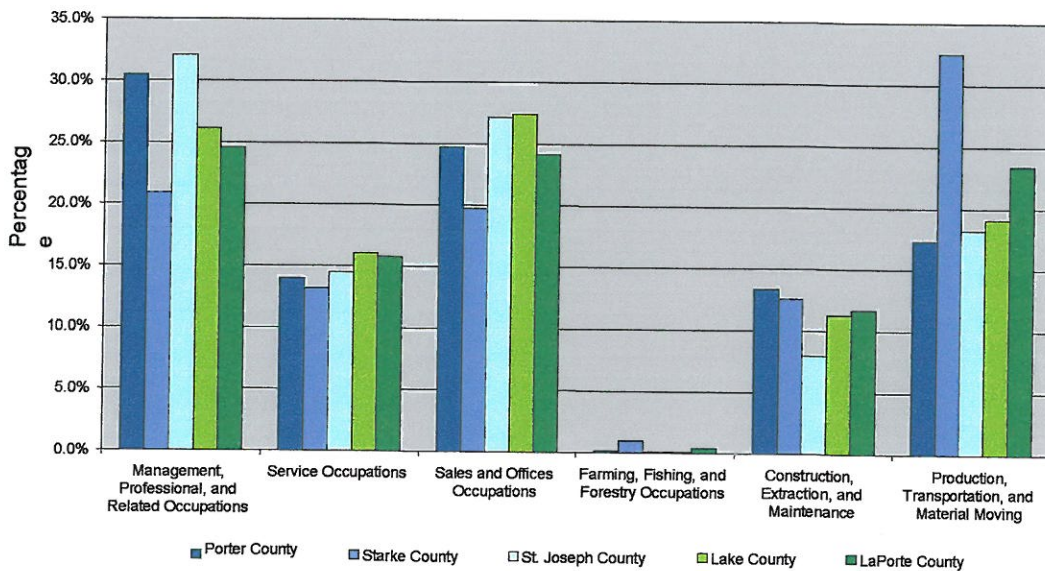


Figure 6 Occupations in LaPorte and Surrounding Counties, 2000



Although not a major employer within the County, agriculture remains an important part of LaPorte County's economy and a major land use. Table 8 Agriculture in LaPorte County, 1997 – 2004, provides some very dramatic data on the agriculture economy. From 1997 to 2002, the total number of farms decreased from 857 to 817, while acreage devoted to agricultural uses dropped by 8,724 acres. However, the market value of production climbed 27 percent from 1997 to 2004. Not only has there been an increase in crop and livestock sales, but government payments have dramatically increased by 157 percent from 1997 to 2004.

**Table 8 Agriculture in LaPorte County, 1997 – 2004**

|  | 1997         | 2002         | 2004          | Percent Change |
|--|--------------|--------------|---------------|----------------|
| Number of farms                              | 857          | 817          |               | - 5%*          |
| Land in farms (acres)                        | 252,171      | 243,447      |               | - 3%*          |
| Average size of farm (acres)                 | 294          | 298          |               | + 1%*          |
| Market value of production                   | \$97,444,000 | \$79,363,000 | \$123,851,000 | + 27%          |
| Market value of production, crop sales       | \$68,041,000 | \$55,688,000 | \$87,379,000  |                |
| Market value of production, livestock sales  | \$27,773,000 | \$23,675,000 | \$36,472,000  |                |
| Market value of production, average per farm | \$113,704    | \$97,139     |               | - 15%*         |
| Government payments                          | \$3,533,000  | \$4,367,000  | \$9,082,000   | + 157%         |
| Government payments, average per farm        | \$7,469      | \$10,972     |               | + 47%*         |

Source: USDA National Agriculture Statistics Service

Like most economies, LaPorte County has experienced fluctuations in unemployment. As shown in Table 9 Unemployment Rate, LaPorte County, 2000 – 2007, the loss of jobs by local employers was reflected in increased rates of unemployment in 2005; however, by 2007, there was a significant drop in the number of unemployed in the County.

**Table 9 Unemployment Rate, LaPorte County, 2000 – 2007**

| Category                              | 2000   | 2005   | 2007   |
|---------------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|
| Total Persons in Civilian Labor Force | 53,431 | 54,363 | 53,142 |
| Unemployed                            | 2,311  | 3,751  | 2,846  |
| Unemployed (percent)                  | 4.3%   | 6.9%   | 5.4%   |
| Journey to Work (minutes)             | 22.0   | 19.6   |        |

Source: Bureau of the Census, <http://factfinder.census.gov>

## COMMUTING PATTERNS

The most dramatic illustration of the regional context for future growth for LaPorte County is an examination of commuting patterns. As shown in Table 10, in 2005, some 84 percent of LaPorte County's employed residents lived and worked in the County, while 16 percent were employed outside LaPorte County. Of those working outside the LaPorte County, more than 5 percent commuted east to St. Joseph or Elkhart County, and a little less than 12 percent commuted west to Porter or Lake County or into Illinois. (See Figure 7 and Figure 8) It should be noted that the imputed workforce figures used in analyzing commuting patterns in Table 10 are different from the employment counts that were used for determining unemployment in Table 9. Regardless, the important thing about the employment data is



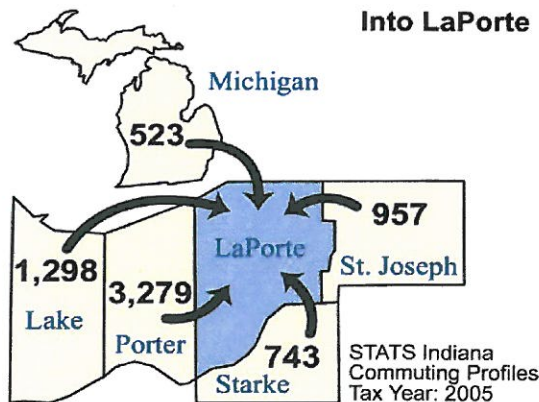
that proportion of people who commute in and out of the County, so the different bases for the two sets of figures is not important to this analysis.

**Table 10 Place of Employment, LaPorte County Residents, 2005**

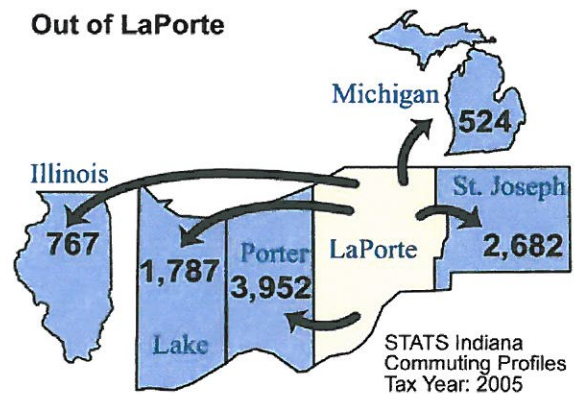
| Category                                   | Employment | Percent |
|--|------------|---------|
| LaPorte County residents who work          | 68,408     | 100.0%  |
| Live and Work in LaPorte County            | 57,393     | 83.6 %  |
| Commute out of LaPorte County              | 11,015     | 16.4%   |
| Total Imputed Work Force in LaPorte County | 65,146     | 100.0%  |
| Live and Work in LaPorte County            | 57,393     | 88.1%   |
| Commute into LaPorte County                | 7,753      | 11.9%   |

Source: Indiana University, Bureau of Business Research, <http://stats.indiana.edu/commframe.html>

As mentioned, Figure 7 and Figure 8 show graphically the data reflected in Table 10. Major commuting destinations for LaPorte residents working outside the County are the adjoining counties of Porter and St. Joseph, but a measurable number of LaPorte County residents commute to destinations in Michigan and Illinois. Not surprisingly, in-bound commuters include significant numbers from Lake County, which has suffered significant loss of industry in recent decades, and neighboring Starke County, which remains largely rural.



**Figure 7 Workers Commuting into LaPorte County, 2005**  
Source: Stats.indiana.edu



**Figure 8 Workers Commuting out of LaPorte County, 2005**  
Source: Stats.indiana.edu

### ECONOMIC FORECASTS

Although the Plan’s projected population growth for the period 2005 – 2030 is anticipated to add only 9,418 new residents to the County’s population (an increase of 8.5 percent over 25 years), the County’s economic outlook is more promising. During this same 25-year time period, the County’s employment is projected to increase by 29 percent through the addition of 17,465 new jobs. (Table 11 Economic Forecasts, LaPorte County, 2005 - 2030)

Table 11 Economic Forecasts, LaPorte County, 2005 - 2030

| Category                                    | 2005          | 2030          | # Change      | % Change   |
|---|---------------|---------------|---------------|------------|
| Services                                    | 19,730        | 29,100        | 9,370         | 47%        |
| Retail                                      | 9,960         | 11,970        | 2,010         | 20%        |
| Manufacturing                               | 9,560         | 9,490         | -70           | -.7%       |
| Government                                  | 7,920         | 10,660        | 2,740         | 35%        |
| Construction                                | 3,560         | 4,730         | 1,170         | 33%        |
| Financial / Insurance / Real Estate         | 3,010         | 3,640         | 630           | 21%        |
| Transportation / Communications / Utilities | 2,550         | 2,910         | 360           | 14%        |
| Wholesale                                   | 1,720         | 2,180         | 460           | 27%        |
| Agriculture                                 | 1,010         | 1,740         | 730           | 72%        |
| Mining                                      | 130           | 170           | 40            | 31%        |
| <b>Total</b>                                | <b>61,155</b> | <b>78,620</b> | <b>17,465</b> | <b>29%</b> |

Source: Woods & Poole employment forecasts, courtesy of the Economic Development Feasibility Study, Bernardin Lochmueller & Assocs., Inc., 2007

However, after examining the economic forecasts in more detail, it is clear that the County does not have a highly positive employment future.

The employment sector forecasted to experience the largest job growth is the "Services" sector, with 9,370 new jobs – almost equal to the number of new residents projected for the same 25-year time period. It is assumed that growth in the casino industry is the mostly likely explanation for this substantial rise in the "Service" sector. Unfortunately, this employment sector is historically one of the lower wage sectors. The "Retail" sector is also anticipated to have a healthy growth of 2,010 new jobs, but once again, a low wage employment sector. Interestingly, the "Government" sector is the second leading job creator with 2,740 new jobs forecasted over the 25-year time period.

Although some participants in the planning process have suggested that the growth of casino-related and other jobs is likely to lead to substantial population growth, the commuting data summarized earlier in this section suggest that people do not necessarily live where they work. That is particularly true for service sector jobs, which often pick up unemployed or underemployed individuals who benefit from the jobs but who are not enriched to the point that they are likely to move to a new location.

The "Manufacturing" sector, a traditionally high wage sector, is anticipated to continue to lose ground, falling by 70 jobs over the 25-year time frame; since 1990, LaPorte County's "Manufacturing" sector has lost over 3700 jobs.

### ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

A critical element in any economic development strategy is to protect the existing economic base. LaPorte County has a long history as an agricultural and manufacturing center, and any economically viable future for the County will involve both of those sectors. Retail trade and health and other services will enjoy natural growth with the population; however, both could expand more rapidly if other strategies, discussed below, are successful.



## **STRATEGIC LOCATION**

LaPorte County's strategic location has attracted serious interest in the County from companies engaged in the transportation, warehousing and logistics businesses. Whether any of the specific projects under discussion on the date of completion of this Plan will reach fruition is unclear, but the factors that have attracted such interest to the County will remain. The availability of large land areas, good access to East-West and North-South Interstate highways, additional connections to four U.S. highways just in the northern part of the County, active tracks on several of the continent's largest railroads, and potential logistics access to Lake Michigan make the County appealing to warehousing companies, trucking companies and logistics companies.

It is possible that few if any new facilities in those industries may be built in the County. There are competing facilities and land areas in Illinois that serve much the same market. It is important, however, to plan for the possibility of such facilities. In many ways, the worst-case scenario for the County would be to attract a handful of large warehouses or trucking terminals at scattered locations, with limited infrastructure and little consideration of land-use impacts. To the extent that such development may take place in the future, it will be important to plan for it. A County taskforce is discussing that issue as this Plan is completed. As the work of that taskforce leads to public policy decisions, those should be considered for possible addition to this Plan as updating amendments.

## **RECREATION AND CULTURAL TOURISM**

Another potential growth opportunity for LaPorte County is recreation and cultural tourism. The Blue Chip Casino in Michigan City and the new casino at New Buffalo in Michigan just north of the County line (see discussion below), represent one form of tourism. Casinos of this type, location and scale typically attract driving customers who come for a day or several. Modestly priced hotels, RV parks and restaurants often develop near such casinos. Tourist-oriented retailers, ranging from souvenir shops to fudge and ice cream shops, are also often found in those areas.

But LaPorte County has more tourism opportunities than casinos. The Trail Creek Marina at Michigan City is a major facility, with a number of large and expensive boats. Owners and guests of owners appear to be a largely untapped market for high-end hotels, restaurants and retailers. The up-scale factory outlet center in Michigan City is one example of the type of facility that can benefit from patrons of a facility like the marina.

On the more natural side of the tourism market, LaPorte County also has a lot to offer. Two major natural resource areas, the Kingsbury and Kankakee Fish and Wildlife Areas, are located in the southern part of the County. These areas are under the jurisdiction of the Indiana Department of Natural Resources.

At the north end of the County adjacent and in proximity to Lake Michigan, the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission is developing the Marquette Plan for the redevelopment of the entire lakefront, with a heavy emphasis on public access and recreational use. At the County's northwestern corner lies the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore. Through private efforts of Save the Dunes, a local environmental advocacy group with a separate, charitable conservation organization, some of the remnant wetlands and other important environmental features in northern LaPorte County are being preserved with private funds. All of these natural areas provide the opportunity for increased tourism of a type that is often called "cultural tourism."

As gas prices increase and air travel becomes increasingly crowded and expensive, many people look for opportunities for vacations and long weekends near home. With three major metropolitan areas (Chicago, Indianapolis and Detroit) within a half-day's drive and several other, smaller metropolitan areas, within similar or closer distances, LaPorte County has the ideal combination of location and natural resources to capture a share of the cultural tourism market. Strengthening tourism's role as part of the County's economic base is extremely important.

To ensure that such tourism remains a viable part of the County's future, it will be important to identify and begin to protect the character of critical, privately owned elements of the County's natural



environment. This could not have been stated any more clearly than in the statements provided in a July 27, 2007 letter to the consultant team submitted by Robert Boklund, Vice President of the LaPorte County Conservation Trust. The following are excerpts from this letter:

The Moraine forest is a large ribbon of semi-contiguous forest stretching from Hudson and Galena Townships southwestwardly to Coolspring and New Durham Townships and into Porter County. Even larger in area than the Indiana Dunes, the Moraine forest is profoundly important to both LaPorte and Porter counties in providing ecological/recreational values, watershed management, timber resources and much of the natural character of both counties. It also may play an important role in future carbon credits trading, relevant to global warming issues. Its disappearance would be an incalculable loss for LaPorte County and Northwest Indiana. Consequently, a number of strategies are being implemented for its long-term preservation.

The area surrounding this forest has been designated by the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) Division of Forestry as the Northwest Moraine Forest Legacy Area. The Forest Legacy Area (FLA) encompassing the Moraine forest is one of only two designated FLA's north of Indianapolis. Because the biodiversity of this FLA is so great, forest tracts within it have much smaller acreage requirements for eligibility in the Forest Legacy Program than those within FLA's in southern Indiana. This program obtains conservation easements from private owners of forest tracts to ensure their preservation.

Within LaPorte County, a number of land trusts are actively securing the protection of sensitive lands and habitats, via acquisitions or conservation easements. These include the LaPorte County Conservation Trust, Save The Dunes Conservation Fund, Shirley Heinze Land Trust and the Woodland Savanna Land Trust. In addition, park and recreation departments play a significant role in preservation of these lands. Furthermore, programs like the IDNR's Classified Wild Lands Program provides tax incentives for landowners to keep wild land wild. Lastly, sensitive lands are being preserved by eco-friendly development practices as implemented by innovative, environmentally-conscious developers, such as Tryon Farms, Avant Gardens and others.

A number of the county's recreational trails and bike paths crisscross the Moraine forest. In doing so, they draw the attention of cyclists to its forest values. A bike path running its length from Hudson Township to New Durham Township (and potentially into Porter County) is also being considered. This bike path would provide a nearly continuous "forest experience" for cyclists—something very rare indeed in the northern half of the state.

Across LaPorte County's north border lies the now world-famous Lake Michigan Wine Country. What all too few people here today realize is that northern LaPorte County was once very much part of that Lake Michigan Wine Country—and grapes are by no means the only fruit crops grown here. Peaches, apples, pears, plums and many other kinds of consumable fruit have long attracted consumers here from all over the Greater Chicago region and beyond. Notably, the Banholzer Vineyard & Winery near Hesston produced high quality table wines a generation ago. Today, most of that vineyard has disappeared under subdivisions. The LaPorte Vineyard still exists along Highway 35 north of LaPorte. Its Concord grapes are used in Welch's Grape Juice, rather than wines. But its potential to serve as a winery located very near the City of LaPorte is still very great. And this would be a very big draw for tourism. The combination of the County's climate and sandy soil creates a fruit farming belt here that is unique within the state of Indiana. Incentives to preserve not only vineyards, but other fruit farms in the northern part of the County are a must.

#### **CASINOS**

A factor that must be added to this regional context is the Four Winds Casino, now under construction in nearby New Buffalo, Michigan. According to a report commissioned by a taxpayers group opposed to the casino but prepared by Anderson Economic Group, a well-regarded organization that regularly performs such economic analyses, the casino is likely to attract 4,501 new workers to the region, requiring an



estimated 2,526 additional housing units.<sup>1</sup> The casino's location is about 20 miles (less than 30 minutes) from downtown Michigan City, the northern part of the City of La Porte, and other areas along S.R. 39, making LaPorte County a likely recipient of some of the growth related to the casino.

Over the long-run, changes like the loss of jobs in manufacturing in Michigan City and the new casino are simply parts of the larger trends on which population projections are based. Thus, the impact of the casino on population and housing in LaPorte County will be absorbed within the trends suggested in the Land Use section of Plan. Over the short-run, however, the new casino jobs and related construction jobs will help to absorb some of the increase in unemployment that has developed in the County in recent years, and it is likely to absorb some of the large number of vacant dwelling units now found in the County; the employment picture had begun to improve by late 2007, despite continued concerns with issues in the national economy. The development of the Four Winds Casino may have the potential to economically impact the Blue Chip Casino in Michigan City. Hoping to fend off competition, Blue Chip Casino recently installed a \$160 million new and larger riverboat.<sup>2</sup>

## KEY ISSUES

LaPorte County and its municipalities currently have strong leadership that is committed to building the economy of the County. As the leaders continue to work toward building a strong economy, they are likely to change the future of the County in many ways. Further, current commuting trends clearly show that LaPorte County has become, in part, a bedroom community for greater Chicago and South Bend. Current population projections may understate the effect of residential growth that depends on the economies of these other metropolitan areas.

In summary, some of the key economic issues in LaPorte County are:

- Need to protect existing economic base, particularly agriculture.
- Need to diversify the economic base.
- Commuting patterns are regional, so increases in population and increases in employment will not necessarily be directly related.
- Opportunities for cultural tourism.
- Need to protect natural resources to ensure that cultural tourism is viable.
- Potential spin-off opportunities from marinas and water-oriented recreation.
- Potential spin-off opportunities from two casinos.

---

<sup>1</sup> The full citation to the report is Anderson Economic Group, "A Critical Review of the New Buffalo Casino Development," prepared for Taxpayers of Michigan Against Casinos, 2004; the cited figures are on page 11 of the report. Additional citations to the report will be abbreviated.

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.thetimesonline.com/articles/2006/06/04/news/top\\_news/dfd66caacb4b4ad86257182007c9d9a.txt](http://www.thetimesonline.com/articles/2006/06/04/news/top_news/dfd66caacb4b4ad86257182007c9d9a.txt)

## PUBLIC UTILITIES

### CURRENT SYSTEMS

Water and public sewer services are important elements of any community. Public water systems not only ensure that users get drinking water that meets federal standards under the Clean Drinking Water Act, but they typically also provide adequate flow and pressure to provide for fire-fighting needs. Although residents are often less aware of the importance of wastewater treatment to them, those systems are critically important to the health, safety and welfare of the entire community. With LaPorte County's many sensitive lands, extensive surface water and high water tables, septic tanks are extremely problematic in the County; although there are some localized, low-tech alternatives to centralized wastewater systems, most of those are effective only with some form of central management.

### COMMUNITY WATER SYSTEMS

With the extensive surface waters in a County that is bounded on the north by one of the Great Lakes and on the south by the Kankakee River (a major tributary to the Illinois River), water is plentiful in the County. Thus, it is no surprise that there are 27 community water systems in the County. Those include:

- 9 municipal systems
- 12 systems that serve mobile home parks or other individual residential developments; and
- 6 systems serving individual users, including the LaPorte County Home.

About 60 percent of the current population of the County is served by public water systems. Another 5.5 percent is served by other community water systems. That still leaves more than one-third of County residents in areas without public potable water. Because some of the small public systems have limited capacity, only about 53 percent of County residents are on public systems with excellent capacity for fire-fighting.

The most significant systems for this report are the public systems, which generally can be and are expanded to meet growth-related needs of the municipalities that they serve. Municipal systems and the number of customers served include:

Table 12 Existing Water Systems and Population Served

| System                                  | Population Served |
|---|-------------------|
| Kingsbury Utility Corporation           | 250               |
| Kingsford Heights Water                 | 1,500             |
| La Crosse Water Department              | 547               |
| La Porte (City of) Water Works          | 22,000            |
| Long Beach Water Department             | 1,634             |
| Michiana Shores                         | 910               |
| Michigan City Department of Water Works | 36,250            |
| Wanatah Water Utility                   | 1,013             |
| Westville Water Department              | 840               |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                            | <b>64,944</b>     |

Source: Reports currently on file with the Environmental Protection Agency, 2006.

A number of public and quasi-public facilities, as well as individual industries, located in rural areas operate their own approved community water system to serve students, workers and others. In reviewing the water systems serving LaPorte County, it was interesting to note that some single-user systems



actually serve more people than some municipal systems. The Westville Correctional Center system provides service to 3500 persons and the Purdue North Central system has a capacity to serve more than 3600 people.

**PUBLIC SEWER**

There are seven public wastewater treatment plants in the County:

1. Michigan City Sanitary District Wastewater Treatment Plant
2. Kingsbury Utility Company Treatment Plan
3. Kingsford Heights Municipal Wastewater Treatment Plant
4. La Porte (City of) Wastewater Treatment Plant
5. La Crosse Municipal Wastewater Treatment Plant
6. Wanatah Municipal Sewage Treatment Plant
7. Westville Wastewater Treatment Plant

There are also four systems serving individual mobile home parks, half a dozen serving individual industries, and individual facilities serving Purdue North Central, the Westville Correctional Center, and a service plaza on the Indiana Toll Road. Service areas for these systems are shown in Figure 9.

Although both the City of La Porte and Michigan City operate large wastewater treatment systems, there is a significant difference between the two. Michigan City has formed a Sanitary District that includes everything in the northwest corner of the County, from Porter County on the west, Lake Michigan on the north, the Continental Divide on the south and roughly S.R. 39 on the east. Indiana State law allows the district to provide service to any point within five miles of the City limits, so the eastern boundary may be moved further east if the City annexes additional territory. Although all of this land is within the planned service area of the Sanitary District, much of the area cannot be served at this time. There is a regional lift station at the intersection of U.S. 20 and U.S. 35, southeast of Michigan City; it has been sized to serve an area extending to S.R. 39, although there is currently no service extending that far. The Sanitary District currently uses only about 60 percent of its treatment plant capacity on a typical day; if service were extended to Long Beach and Trail Creek, neither

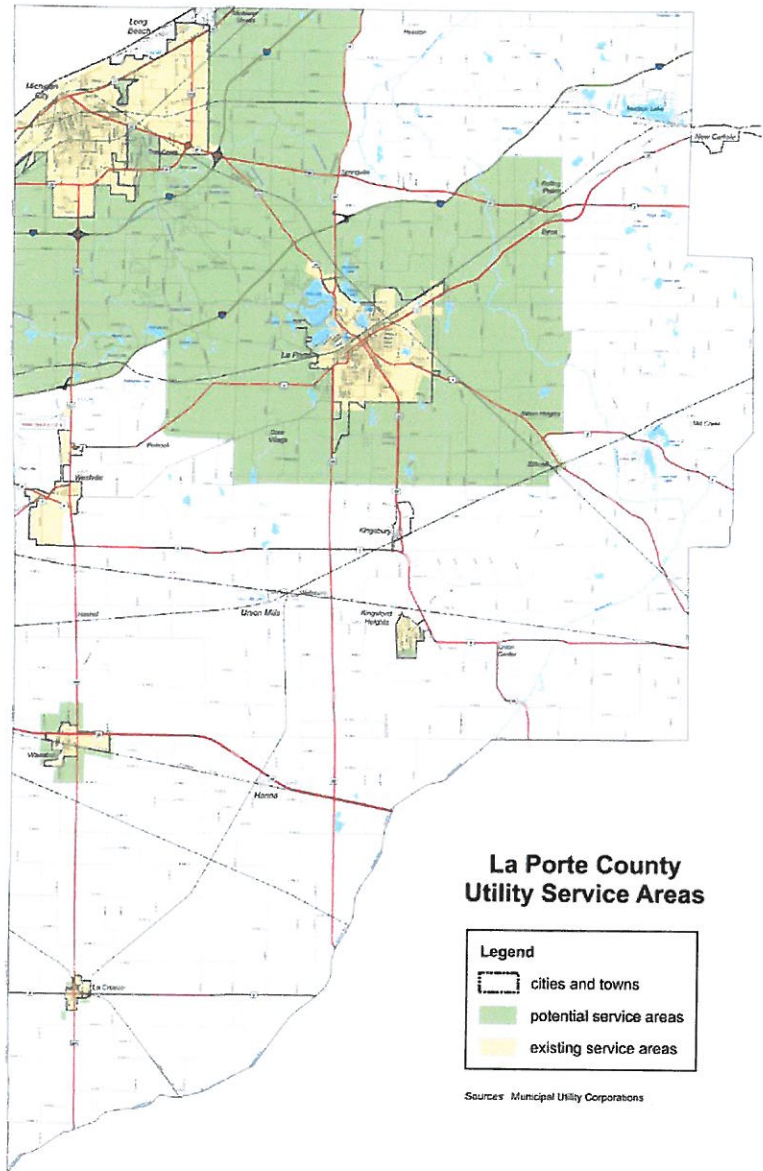


Figure 9 Existing and Planned Wastewater Treatment Service Areas

of which have sewer service, the plant would be at 90 percent of capacity and connections would have to be limited pending a possible expansion of the plant.

The City of La Porte serves primarily areas within the city limits, although it also provides treatment services to the Pine Lake Conservancy District and the 39 North Conservancy District. In cooperation with LaPorte County, City sewer service is being extended to the area west of the City, including the County Home (now on a private system) and at least to the edge of a potential industrial sites near Pinola.

It is significant to note that residents of the Towns of Long Beach and Trail Creek currently do not have public sewer service, although both areas are densely populated and are located in the sensitive Trail Creek Watershed.

A new variable in the delivery of wastewater services is the interest of LaPorte County in creating a County-wide Sanitary District. Such a district would create a legal vehicle for the collection of wastewater in the developing areas outside municipal boundaries. Treatment would presumably be contracted to the cities that now have treatment plants – with wastewater north of the Continental Divide going to Michigan City and that south of the Divide going to the City of La Porte. Retrofitting existing developments will be problematic, however. The very low density pattern of development (typically on lots larger than one acre) will make the extension of services expensive – perhaps prohibitively so. Even where such extensions are financially feasible, district officials may face opposition from residents who oppose digging up streets and yards to provide a service that some residents may not consider important.

## **KEY ISSUES**

In summary, some of the key water and waste water issues in LaPorte County are:

- Most recent growth in County is outside the incorporated municipalities, where most public water and sewer service is unavailable.
- There is an apparent and misguided lack of concern by many individual residents with this issue – as long as wastewater leaves their homes, many residents do not worry about where it goes next.
- Development pressure is particularly intense in Springfield and Galena Townships, both of which have high water tables, multiple wetlands and other sensitive lands – and none of the current specific plans for wastewater treatment service extensions include any part of Galena or the eastern portion of Springfield Townships.
- Although in principle the Michigan City Sanitary District, the City of La Porte and the County are all willing to help to provide sewer services to new development in unserved areas, there are practical and fiscal difficulties in accomplishing that with the current scattered patterns of development.
- Existing low density patterns of growth in some areas – particularly between Michigan City and the City of La Porte, along the Continental Divide – will make it difficult and perhaps prohibitively expensive to retrofit with sewer and water service.
- A new variable in the delivery of wastewater services is the interest of LaPorte County in creating a County-wide Sanitary District. Such a district would create a legal vehicle for the collection of wastewater in the developing areas outside municipal boundaries.
- Many residences and some businesses will be served by septic tanks or other on-site systems for decades to come, and many of those are in areas that are less than ideal for such systems; plans for a County-wide district will need to include transition and/or maintenance plans for such systems.



## LAND USE

### LAND USE TRENDS

As was discussed in the preceding sections, LaPorte County is experiencing a very slow rate of growth; however, there is a substantial redistribution of population by geographical areas of the County. It appears existing and new residents, as well as second-home buyers, are opting to locate outside of incorporated communities where existing services are conveniently located into more suburban and rural areas of the County where there are significantly less services.

Figure 10 Residential Building Permits, 1996 – 2004 shows the distribution of where building permits were issued within LaPorte County from 1996 to 2004. During this time period, 4148 building permits were issued for residential dwelling units, the majority of which were issued for unincorporated areas of the County. Although Michigan City and the City of La Porte comprise almost 50 percent of the County's population, only one-quarter of the permits were issued within these two jurisdictions. In contrast, building permits for unincorporated areas of LaPorte County comprised 71 percent of the total permits issued.

Table 13 provides more specific detail as to where the residential building permits were issued. What is particularly interesting is that from 2001 to 2004 there were 1,677 building permits issued; this was the same time period where population estimates were showing a loss in County population. It can be assumed some of the permits were issued for second-homes and vacation rentals, but not to such a degree to fully account for such a large number of residential permits.

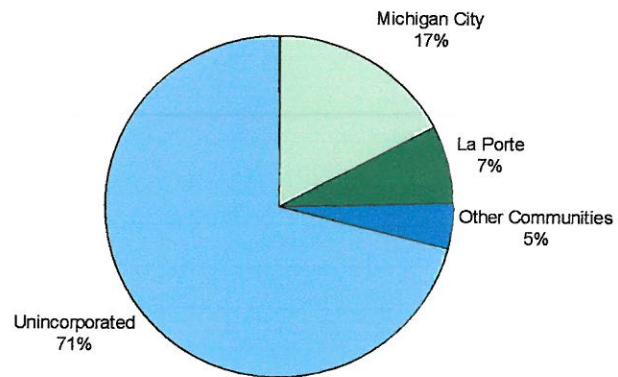


Figure 10 Residential Building Permits, 1996 – 2004

Table 13 Residential Building Permits, by Individual Location, 1996 – 2004

|                     | 1996       | 1997       | 1998       | 1999       | 2000       | 2001       | 2002       | 2003       | 2004       | 1996-2004    | %        |
|---------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|--------------|----------|
| Michigan City       | 68         | 61         | 91         | 105        | 72         | 34         | 97         | 99         | 93         | 720          | 17.4     |
| City of La Porte    | 40         | 53         | 31         | 31         | 28         | 23         | 37         | 24         | 28         | 295          | 7.1      |
| Unincorporated      | 409        | 325        | 365        | 391        | 316        | 337        | 260        | 261        | 282        | 2,946        | 71.0     |
| Kingsbury           | 4          | 1          | 0          | 0          | 1          | 0          | 2          | 2          | 0          | 10           | 0.2      |
| Kingsford Heights   | 0          | 0          | 1          | 1          | 4          | 1          | 1          | 1          | 1          | 10           | 0.2      |
| La Crosse           | 0          | 2          | 0          | 0          | 0          | 0          | 2          | 2          | 2          | 8            | 0.2      |
| Long Beach          | 2          | 3          | 5          | 1          | 5          | 9          | 3          | 16         | 19         | 63           | 1.5      |
| Michiana Shores     | 3          | 3          | 4          | 5          | 4          | 4          | 4          | 4          | 4          | 35           | 0.8      |
| Pottawattomie Park  | 1          | 0          | 0          | 0          | 0          | 0          | 0          | 3          | 0          | 4            | 0.1      |
| Trail Creek         | 4          | 3          | 1          | 3          | 2          | 1          | 3          | 1          | 2          | 20           | 0.5      |
| Wanatah             | 4          | 0          | 7          | 2          | 3          | 1          | 2          | 2          | 2          | 23           | 0.6      |
| Westville           | 0          | 0          | 2          | 2          | 2          | 2          | 2          | 2          | 2          | 14           | 0.3      |
| <b>Total County</b> | <b>535</b> | <b>451</b> | <b>507</b> | <b>541</b> | <b>437</b> | <b>412</b> | <b>413</b> | <b>417</b> | <b>435</b> | <b>4,148</b> | <b>-</b> |

Source: Data for Figure 11 and Table 12 from LaPorte County Building Permit Records



Although a little more than 58 percent of County residents in 2000 lived in municipal areas with full urban services, 69 percent of residential units constructed from 2000 through 2004 were located outside municipal boundaries. It would be optimistic to project that more than 25 percent occurred in unincorporated areas within the urbanized area shown in Figure 11.

Figure 12 shows the distribution of land uses within the County. Figure 13 illustrates how population within the County is redistributing in areas outside Michigan City and the City of La Porte.

- Boundaries**
- State
  - County
  - Place
  - Urban Area
  - Urban Area
  - UA Cen Place
  - UA Cen Place
- Features**
- Major Road
  - Street
  - Stream/Waterbody
  - Stream/Waterbody

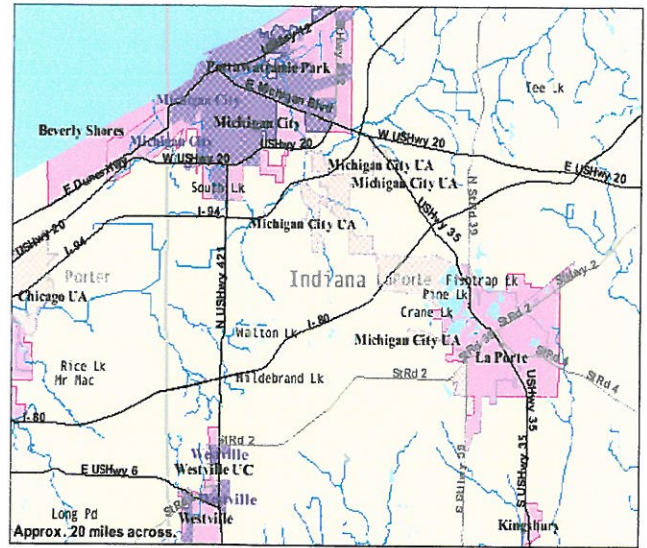


Figure 11 Urbanized Areas in LaPorte County (omits Kingsford Heights, La Crosse and Wanatah)

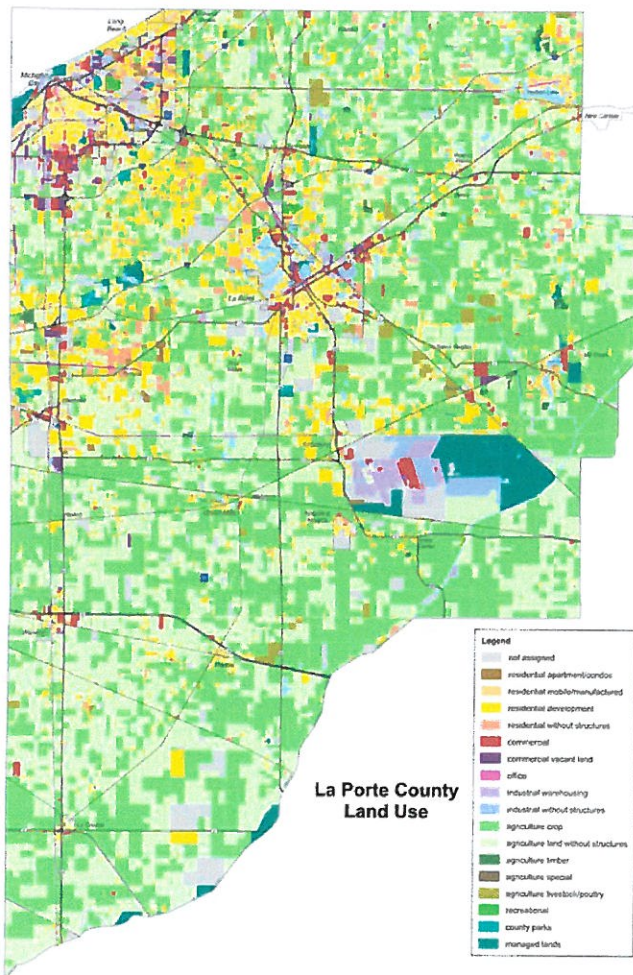


Figure 12 LaPorte County Land Uses, 2006

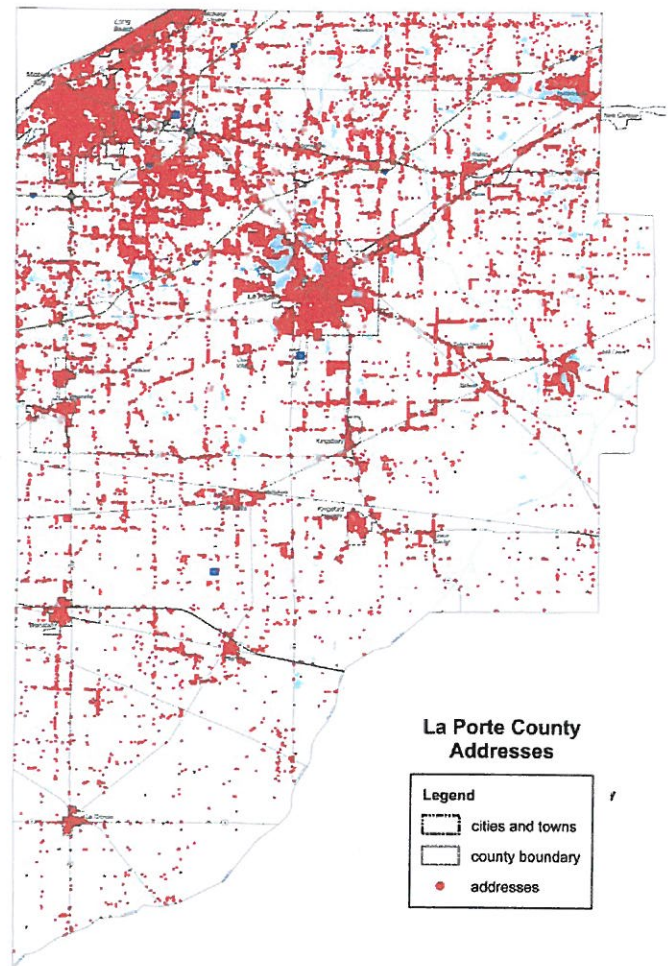


Figure 13 Addresses in LaPorte County, 2006



**PROJECTED LAND DEMAND**

A key element of the Land Development Plan is determining the amount of land needed to accommodate future population growth and to what degree that population can be accommodated in areas where future public services are planned or can easily be provided.

The first step is to convert population projections into projected households to determine the projected dwelling units needed to accommodate future growth. Two sources of population projections were used: Indiana University Bureau of Business Research’s population projections and the “Blended Rate” which is an average of projected rates of growth for St. Joseph County and the NIRPC region (alternative projections). In 2005, Indiana University estimated that LaPorte County had a population of 109,886 persons. Subtracting the 6,490 persons living in group quarters divided by the estimated persons per household of 2.51, yielded 41,194 households. Indiana University projected that by 2030 LaPorte County would have a population of 114,371 and the persons per household would be 2.43, thus the total number of households is projected to be 44,395 by 2030. This is an increase of 3,202 households during the 25-year period or an addition of approximately 128 households per year.

The Blended Rate estimated the 2005 population of LaPorte County at 110,512 persons. Subtracting the 6,490 persons living in group quarters, divided by the estimated persons per household of 2.51, yielded 41,443 households. The Blended Rate projected that by 2030 LaPorte County would have a population of 119,930. Using Indiana University’s 2.43 persons per household, the total number of households is projected to be 46,683 in 2030. This is an increase of 5,240 households during the 25-year period or an addition of approximately 210 households per year.

Table 14 New Units Needed to House Increased Population.

|                            | 2006 - 2010 |             | 2011 - 2020 |             | 2021 - 2030 |             |
|----------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
|                            | Households* | New Units** | Households* | New Units** | Households* | New Units** |
| Indiana Univ. Projections  | 41,654      | 461         | 42,968      | 1314        | 44,395      | 1427        |
| “Blended” Rate Projections | 42,223      | 780         | 44,388      | 2165        | 46,683      | 2295        |

\* Figures for “Households” do not include the 6,490 persons living in group quarters (held constant)  
 \*\* Persons per household used to calculate new housing units for 2010 = 2.49; 2020 = 2.46; 2030 = 2.43

The next step is to determine the amount of acreage the projected additional housing units would consume based on various development scenarios. For the purpose of the Plan, the “Blended” rate projections were used. The calculations assume an urban development density of 1.5 dwelling units per acre (includes public lands, commercial services and some industrial lands) and a rural development density of 1 dwelling unit per 2 acres, a 10 percent vacancy rate and an additional 50 “replacement” dwelling units per year for those housing units torn down. Table 15 provides the projected development acreage demands based on three development scenarios.

Table 15 Residential and Other Land Demand, Based on Blended Growth Rate Projections.

| Development Scenario | Acres Needed 2006-10 | Acres Needed 2011-20 | Acres Needed 2021-30 | Total Rural /Urban Acres | Total Acres By 2030 |
|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|
| 70 percent rural     | 1829                 | 4733                 | 4964                 | 10,085 / 1441            | 11,526              |
| 50 percent rural     | 1524                 | 3944                 | 4137                 | 7204 / 2401              | 9605                |
| 30 percent rural     | 1220                 | 3155                 | 3309                 | 4322 / 3362              | 7684                |



Since the primary concern is whether or not there is sufficient vacant acreage in areas within the designated future public sewer service areas served by the City of La Porte and Michigan City, the next step included an analysis of vacant land within these areas. Table 16 summarizes the available land within the cities and their planned sewer service areas. As the table indicates, there are over 39,000 acres classified as "agricultural", but within the planned sewer service areas there are 1,198 acres vacant residential, 985 vacant commercial and 360 vacant industrial acres for a total of 2,543 acres of potential urban developable land (does not include the agriculture acreage).

Table 16 Vacant Land in Cities and Planned Sewer Service Areas

| Vacant Land* | Number of Parcels** | Acres         |
|--------------|---------------------|---------------|
| Agriculture  | 1448                | 39,375        |
| Commercial   | 135                 | 985           |
| Residential  | 653                 | 1,198         |
| Industrial   | 24                  | 360           |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>2,260</b>        | <b>41,918</b> |

\* Vacant land contains no building

\*\* Parcels smaller than 0.1 acre not included

Finally, combining the vacant residential land with the future residential land demand it makes it possible to project how much growth can be accommodated within a given time period. If LaPorte County were to achieve the "blended: growth rate scenario in which 30 percent of new development took place in rural areas at rural densities (one unit per two acres) and 70 percent occurred at urban densities (1.5 dwelling units per acre and includes public lands, commercial services and some industrial lands), there would be enough vacant land within the planned sewer service areas to accommodate most all of urban development (residential, commercial and industrial) projected through 2030. The more conservative projections show that there is a need for 1,577 acres of urban development land through 2030; the more aggressive growth projections show that there is a need for 2,599 acres of urban development land through 2030.

Official population projections deal with permanent residents, not second home development. When comparing the number of building permits issued to the population growth along Lake Michigan, it is clear that there is significant growth in second homes along the lakefront. Second homes do not impose the same burdens on a community as primary homes – they generate only seasonal traffic and they typically use water and wastewater services at a reduced rate. But community services must be sized to meet peak demands during the peak season. Thus, particularly along the lakeshore, the population projections may be inadequate to reflect probable demand for services and land in that area.

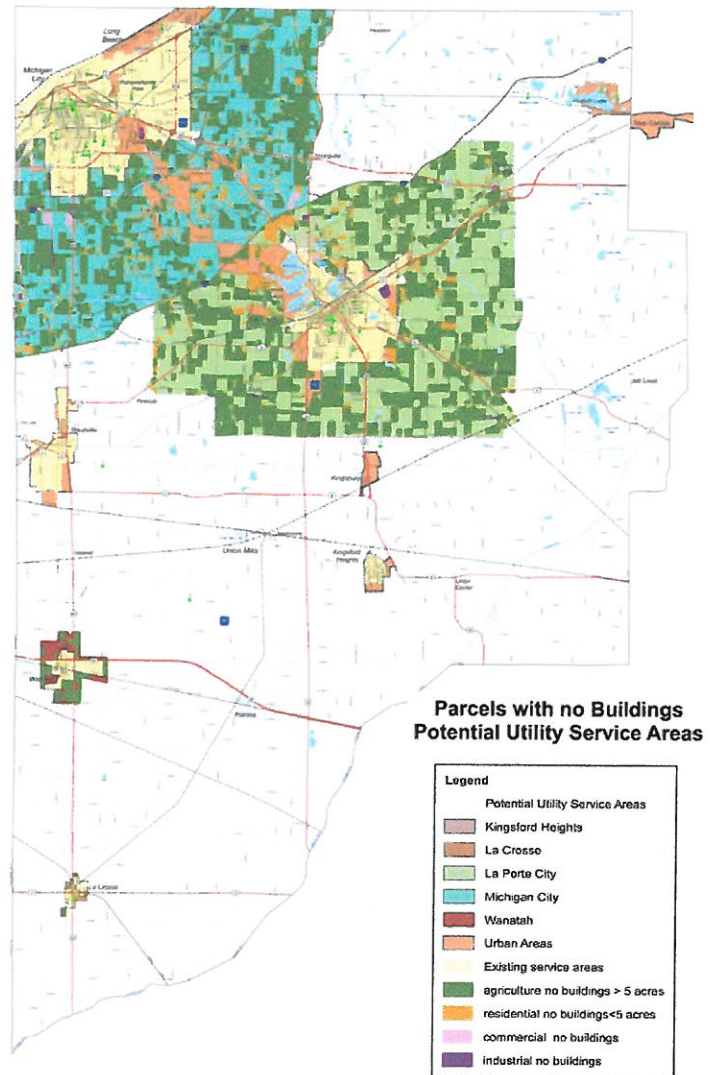


Figure 14 Vacant Parcels



It should be kept in mind that the above tables tend to overstate the land demand under even a rudimentary program of growth management. There are a substantial number of vacant lots in Michigan City and La Porte, and there is vacant but developable land in and near both cities, within their urban service areas and in areas that could easily be served by a new County system. Development of that land would accommodate housing and other needs with little additional disruption of the land stock within the County's rural areas. These figures also assume that all new residential development will be single-family and will consume land at single-family rates; actually, there are multi-family units in several parts of the County, and some future housing needs will undoubtedly be met with such units.

## **KEY ISSUES**

There are several important conclusions that can be drawn from the analysis provided above:

- Recent trends show most new residential units in LaPorte County going into rural areas, in most of which there is no sewer or water service available.
- Substantial amounts of vacant land are available in existing cities and towns and in nearby urbanized or urbanizing areas, where it will be easier than in rural areas to provide sewer service, improved roads and other services and facilities.
- Using land-use regulations and public service policies to encourage growth in urbanized areas instead of in the rural areas can significantly reduce the total amount of land needed to accommodate new development.
- Development scenarios where 70 percent is rural development (1 unit per 2 acres) consume rural lands at almost three times the rate as development scenarios where only 30 percent of the development occurs in the rural area at rural densities.
- Although the scenario showing the highest amount of additional land needed to accommodate new development represents a little over 2 percent of LaPorte County's total land area, future growth patterns that are primarily low density rural development are extremely costly for city and County governments to provide public services such as water, sewer, roads and fire protection.
- Costs of growth are as much a function of location and density of the new development as they are functions of the amount of new development – the recent development patterns are ones that will prove expensive over the long-run.

## NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

### LAND

Like most of Indiana, two hundred years ago LaPorte County consisted largely of forests and wetlands. Today, remnants of both remain, but most of the County is characterized by urbanization and suburbanization in the northwest and central parts of the County, and large expanses of agricultural uses in the southern one-half of the County, with increasing amounts of scattered suburban/rural sprawl throughout the County. Most of the significant wetlands and stands of forest that remain in LaPorte County lie in the area north of Interstate 80, which is also the part of the County that is subject to the most development pressure.

### WATERSHEDS

The major geographic boundaries in the natural environment are defined by watersheds. LaPorte County is divided into two major watersheds by the Valparaiso Moraine, and its ridge top, which is the Continental Divide between the Great Lakes and the Gulf of Mexico. The Little Calumet-Galien Watershed drains generally northwest from the Continental Divide and flows into Lake Michigan; and the Kankakee River Watershed drains south into the Kankakee River and is part of the Upper Illinois River Basin. There are a total of ten sub-watersheds that fall partly or wholly in the County (see Figure 15); of those, the Trail Creek Watershed, which is part of the Little Calumet-Galien Watershed, has been the subject of extensive study.

More than half the land in the County is gently sloping, with slopes of four percent or less. Not surprisingly, most of the steeper slopes in the County are found along the Continental Divide, where there are areas that have slopes of more than 40 percent. Gently sloping land is generally good for both agriculture and development. Steeper slopes make land generally unsuitable for agriculture, although steep slopes may still be suitable for forestry. Development on steeper slopes is possible, but such development is more expensive than similar projects on flatter land, and the drainage and road maintenance issues in steeply sloping areas are complex and often expensive.

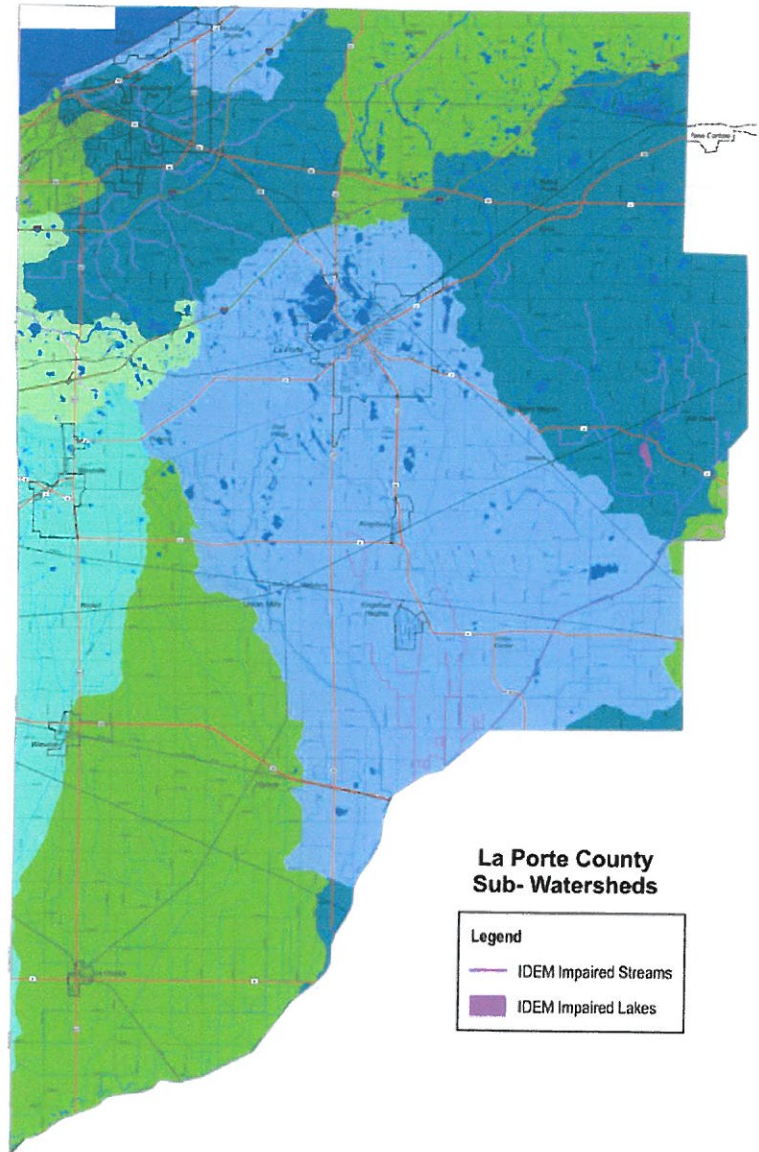


Figure 15 Sub-Watersheds in LaPorte County



**FARMLAND**

Most of the land in the County is considered prime farmland, as illustrated in Figure 16. There is also a significant amount of farmland of statewide importance, generally in the east-central part of the County. Soils in the southern part of the County are suitable for farming only if properly drained – but early settlers installed drain tiles under most of those lands more than a century ago, and today’s farmers maintain those drainage systems. Some other soils in the southern part of the County are suitable for agriculture but subject to flooding. Northern LaPorte County, especially in the western corner, has little prime farmland.

Although most of the land in the urbanized areas is technically considered prime agricultural land, once land has been developed, it loses its effective suitability for farmland. In addition, there are several areas of the County where there has been significant contamination of land from earlier industrial activities; the largest area of such lands is around the old munitions plant at Kingsbury.

The gradual expansion of an existing urban area into agricultural lands is different from leapfrog or scattered sprawl, where small developments pop up in otherwise rural or agricultural areas – a pattern of development that is occurring with great frequency in LaPorte County. Around an urban area, farmers have adapted to coexisting with neighbors; a 20-acre development in such an area will take that 20 acres out of production but may not have significant additional impacts on the land-use patterns. In contrast, in predominantly rural agricultural areas, scattered patterns of urban sprawl not only take the development sites out of agricultural production, but they also impair the suitability of land areas for agriculture. The presence of non-farm residences in an agricultural area creates increased liability risks for farmers using agricultural chemicals, and neighbors sometimes raise formal or informal complaints about the noise, dust and other normal impacts of large-scale farming operations. Further, exurban residents driving their children around in mini-vans on the rural roads may make those roads less useful for farmers, who have traditionally used them to move heavy equipment and to haul farm products in large trucks.

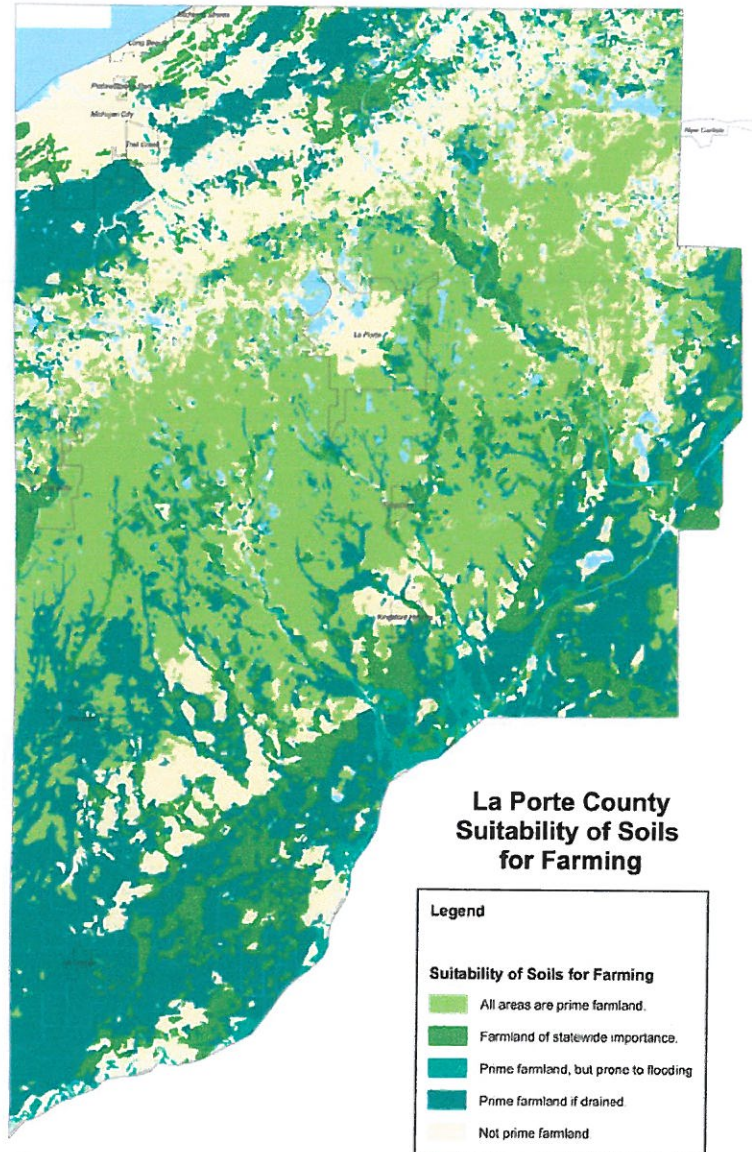


Figure 16 Suitability of Soils for Farming



As development increases, the amount of stormwater runoff also increases, posing significant management challenges. See discussion under next sub-heading, "Water".

**WATER**

Water in many ways defines LaPorte County. It is bounded on the North and South by two of Indiana's most important water bodies – Lake Michigan and the Kankakee River. Much of the County once consisted of wetlands, and there remain significant numbers of wetlands, particularly in the northeast part of the County. (See Figure 17) There are a number of small and midsized freshwater lakes providing significant recreational opportunities in LaPorte County. Two of the more prominent ones, Pine Lake and Stone Lake, are found within the City of La Porte; while other prominent lakes, Hudson Lake and Upper and Lower Fish Lakes, are found within the eastern unincorporated areas of the County. Many other lakes and ponds in other parts of the County add to its aesthetic appeal and offer fishing and other recreational opportunities for residents.

As local governments deal with water supplies and manage wastewater and stormwater, they are constrained by the East-West Continental Divide. Water that exists or falls north of the Divide must flow to Lake Michigan, and water that exists or falls south of the Divide must flow to the Kankakee River.

**CONTAMINATION**

The Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM) conducts periodic studies of water quality, as required under Section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act. In 2006, the IDEM found that 13 waterbodies in LaPorte County were impaired, meaning that they "do not or are not expected to meet applicable water quality standards with federal technology based standards alone." One of those, Trail Creek, is the major waterbody in the LaPorte County portion of the Little Calumet-Galien Watershed. The other 12 impaired waterbodies in the County drain into the Kankakee River. The types of impairment within these waterbodies include cyanide, oil and grease, E. coli, PCBs, ammonia and general impairment of the ecosystem.

Continuing water quality problems in most areas come from what are called "non-point" sources. These include

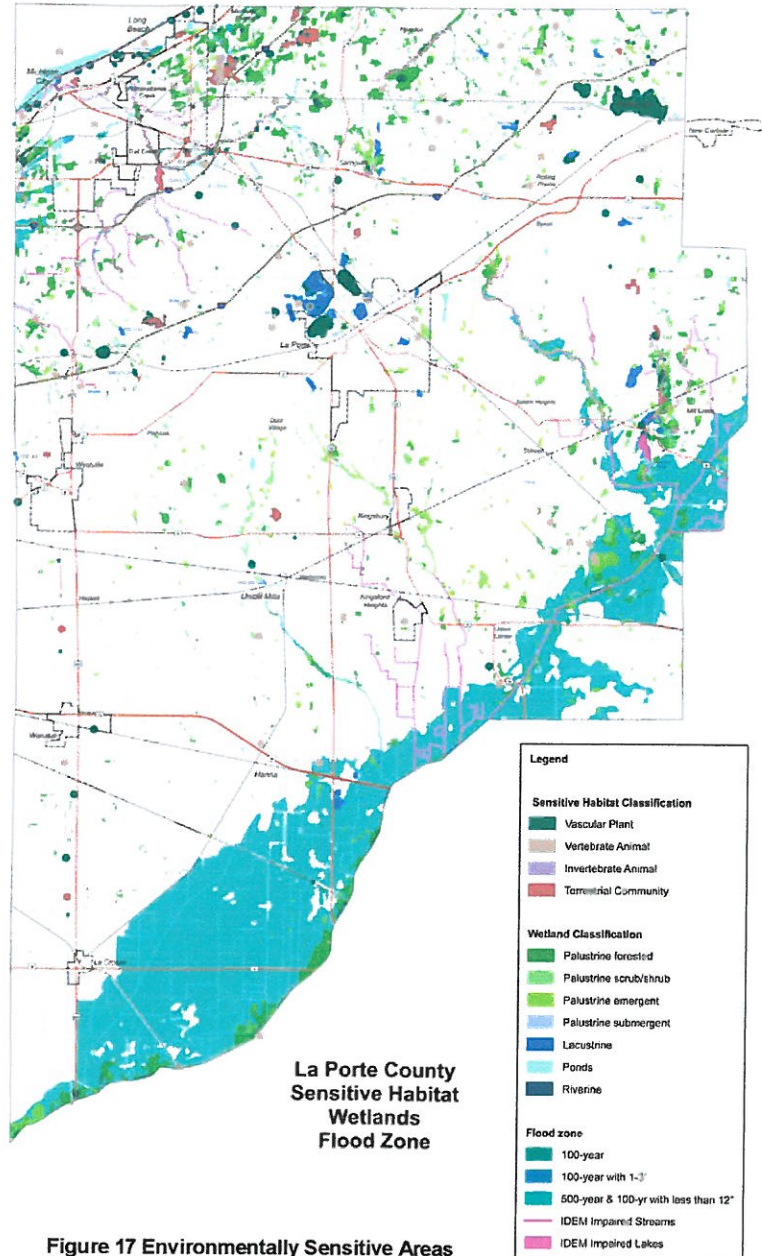


Figure 17 Environmentally Sensitive Areas in LaPorte County



urban stormwater runoff, failing or ineffective septic tanks, wild animals and livestock, and lawn and agricultural management practices that deposit chemicals on the land and ultimately make their way into the streams. Oil and grease in the water typically result from runoff from urban streets and parking lots. E. coli bacteria can come from human waste and/or from farm animals and wild animals. It is likely that in many parts of the County, and in most cases north of the Continental Divide, the major source of e coli in the water is from septic tanks.

Within the County, there are large numbers of dwelling units on septic tanks in densely populated areas. There has been a significant increase in development dependent on septic tanks in the northeast quadrant of the County, and growth pressures are likely to remain strong along the S.R. 39 corridor leading to the new casino at New Buffalo. At this time, very little of that area has centralized wastewater treatment available. Compounding the problem is the large amount of wetlands in this part of the County (high water table). Existing and new septic tanks in the area are likely to cause continued water quality problems, as effluent, untreated except for the settling of solids into septic tanks, flows into the ground and, in many cases, into the surrounding water table.

### **STORMWATER**

Both Michigan City and the City of La Porte have sewer systems that were built as combined systems, handling both stormwater and wastewater. Historically, in urban areas the major goal for managing stormwater runoff was to discharge it into as quickly as possible into the nearest waterway to reduce the flooding of homes, businesses, and roads during heavy rain events.

As cities began to treat wastewater, such systems were problematic, because the large flows after a storm would often exceed the capacity of the treatment plant, and the result would be a discharge from a combined sewer overflow. The City of La Porte and Michigan City have both made significant progress in separating their systems and in adopting improved management methods for the overflows, reducing the incidence of overflow events in each city to about one per year over the last several years.

As major point sources of water pollution were eliminated, it became clear that significant water quality issues remained as a result of stormwater runoff. Urban stormwater runoff carries grease and oil from roadways and parking lots, excess nutrients from the application of fertilizers to lawn and gardens, animal droppings, and anything else that is dropped on the ground and that is small enough or light enough to be washed into a river or stream.

Beginning in 1990, the Environmental Protection Agency began to regulate stormwater runoff in urbanized areas, with much progress being made within municipal areas. However, one of the challenges facing LaPorte County is that the only major, central stormwater management systems are in the City of La Porte and the Michigan City Sanitary District. Those entities can use a combination of public management and simple treatment systems together with regulations to require on-site stormwater management to ensure that runoff from new development does not further impair waterways. There are, however, large developed areas outside the cities where there are no stormwater management systems in place; stormwater simply follows roads and ditches to the nearest stream. Outside the city and the sanitary district, where new development takes place, the County must depend on the design and maintenance of effective on-site management and treatment systems. Although on-site management to eliminate the flooding that can result from peak flows is relatively easy to design, on-site management techniques to improve water quality are somewhat more complex and typically require more maintenance.

### **CONCENTRATED ANIMAL FEEDING OPERATIONS**

Large livestock operations can have environmental implications if they are managed improperly. Proper management techniques ensure the livestock are confined to an area located away from any stream, bank, lake, or other natural aquatic habitat. Not only is it important for the animals to be contained, but also for the manure. The manure from animals can contaminate streams and lakes with E. coli, making them unsuitable for swimming or fishing. E. coli is most likely to appear in waterways when livestock is concentrated.



Potential discharges from large-scale animal agriculture are regulated by the Indiana Department of Environmental Management; the County has recently adopted a supplemental local ordinance to address issues with these facilities.

### **HYDROMODIFICATION**

There are also significant impairments to water quality and to historic wetlands from what water quality analysis and planners call "hydromodification," or the impairment of water flows by human intervention. In LaPorte County the most prevalent forms are stream channelization, dams, filling of wetlands, and erosion of streambanks and shorelines.

### **AIR**

Since the adoption of the Clean Air Act in 1970, the Environmental Protection Agency and state agencies like the Indiana Department of Environmental Management have implemented a comprehensive program for regulating the discharge of air pollution from point sources such as factories. Many non-point sources, such as the use of home incinerators to burn trash, have been eliminated through state laws and regulations. The major air quality problems that remain in urbanized areas are typically those resulting from automobiles, which are collectively considered to be non-point sources.

The air quality in LaPorte County is generally good and conforms to air quality standards established by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The Northwestern Regional Planning Commission regularly reports on and analyzes air quality as parts of its transportation planning process. Its most current report includes this statement about LaPorte County:

La Porte County is designated as marginal non-attainment of the National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS) for "8-hour" ozone. Both non-attainment areas are being considered for redesignation as maintenance areas because air quality monitor data indicate that these areas are meeting the NAAQS.<sup>3</sup>

It concludes with this analysis of the impact of the most recent agency transportation plans on LaPorte County:

The Summer day emissions of the precursors of ozone ... [and the annual direct PM2.5 and nitrogen oxide emissions in the bi-state PM2.5 nonattainment area] ... that result from the implementation of the projects in the Connections 2030 Regional Transportation Plan and Fiscal Year 2008 to 2011 Transportation Improvement Program, as defined by the action scenarios in La Porte County for 2010, 2020 and 2030 are no greater than the 2002 emissions. Therefore, the Connections 2030 Regional Transportation Plan and Fiscal Year 2008 to 2011 Transportation Improvement Program have been found to conform to the requirements of section 176(c) of the Clean Air Act ...<sup>4</sup>

It is important to note that the NIRPC projections regarding air quality are based on the assumption that various traffic improvements will be implemented as part of its transportation plan. Vehicles generate the most pollution when they are operating the least efficiently, which is typically when they are idling or moving very slowly. Thus, the implementation of planned traffic improvements will be essential not only to keep traffic moving, but also to ensure that vehicles operate efficiently and that the generation of air pollution from them is thus minimized.

---

<sup>3</sup> "DRAFT Air Quality Conformity Determination between the *Connections 2030 Regional Transportation Plan*, the *Fiscal Year 2008 to 2011 Transportation Improvement Program*, and the *Indiana State Implementation Plan for Air Quality*," Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission, June 21, 2007, available at <http://www.nirpc.org/pdf/Conformity%20Determination%20Amend.pdf> (accessed May 2007 [June 21 date was on it at that time]), p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> "DRAFT Air Quality Conformity Determination between the *Connections 2030 Regional Transportation Plan*, the *Fiscal Year 2008 to 2011 Transportation Improvement Program*, and the *Indiana State Implementation Plan for Air Quality*," Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission, June 21, 2007, available at <http://www.nirpc.org/pdf/Conformity%20Determination%20Amend.pdf> (accessed May 2007 [June 21 date was on it at that time]), p. 17.



The NIRPC projections do not account for the impact of major industrial facilities locating within the County.

### **KEY ISSUES**

There are several important conclusions that can be drawn from the analysis provided above:

- Direct loss of agricultural land through suburban development
- Additional effects of scattered sprawl on agricultural land uses
- Continued development on steep slopes and other environmentally sensitive lands, particularly along the Continental Divide
- Continued loss of small wetlands and impairment of water quality in others
- Failing and ineffective septic systems in non-rural areas and in developing areas of the County
- Impaired water quality in 13 bodies of water in the County
- Contributions of stormwater runoff from developed areas to impairment of water quality
- Continued suburban and exurban development on septic tanks in areas with high water tables
- Need to rely on NIRPC to monitor vehicle-related air quality issues as additional development occurs

## TRANSPORTATION

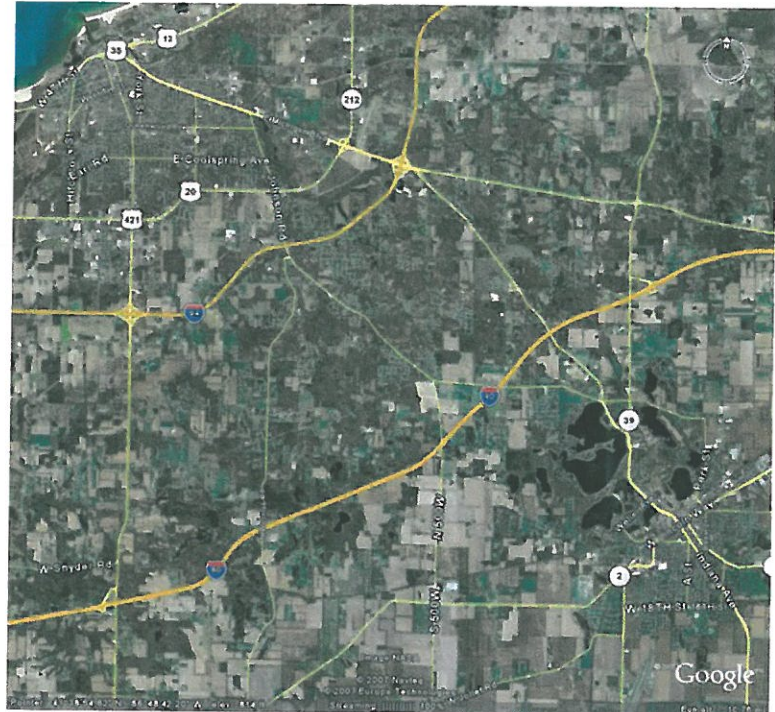
LaPorte County's strategic location on Lake Michigan and along the route of rail lines provided the basis for its early development. Although many trips now occur by road rather than by rail or water, LaPorte County continues to enjoy a strategic location in relationship to multiple modes of transportation.

### ROADWAYS

#### MAJOR ROADWAYS

The two most important roads in LaPorte County are the Interstate Highways,

- I-80/90, also known as the Indiana Toll Road, which enters the County from the West about ten miles south of Lake Michigan and leaves it on the East just a mile or so south of the Michigan State Line. LaPorte County has two entrances to this limited-access roadway: Exit 39 at U.S. 421 and Exit 49 at S.R. 39. I-80/90 provides connections to Chicago and points west; eastward to Cleveland where the routes split and I-90 goes north to Albany and Boston and I-80 continues to Philadelphia and New Jersey.
- I-94 enters the County from the west just south of Michigan City and exits to the north into Michigan. LaPorte County has two entrances to I-94: Exit 34 at U.S. 421 and Exit 40 at U.S. 20. Exit 1 in Michigan connects I-94 to S.R. 39 just north of the Michigan State Line. I-94 to the West merges with I-90 and continues through Wisconsin to the Twin Cities and West through North Dakota; to the East, I-94 goes to Detroit and connects to Canada.



Five U.S. Highways also serve LaPorte County:

- U.S. 421 was the major north-south artery in Western Indiana before the construction of I-65. Today it continues to serve as a major north-south link to and from the exits from I-94 and I-80/90. It is the major transportation link for the entire western half of the County.
- U.S. 30 crosses LaPorte County from east to west well south of the major population centers in the County. It provides good east-west access south of the Interstate highways.
- U.S. 6 crosses LaPorte County from east to west about seven miles north of U.S. 30. It passes near the old munitions plant at Kingsbury and near Westville. It is an important cross-county connector and potentially an important link for mid-county industrial development.
- U.S. 20 is the third east-west U.S. highway in the County. It links Michigan City to South Bend and, serves, primarily via designated city streets, as an alternate route to Chicago.



- U.S. 35 is one of three major north-south arteries in the County. It enters the County from Starke County; it joins U.S. 6 for about five miles, where it jogs to the north through Kingsbury and then goes north into the City of La Porte and then continues northwest to a junction with U.S. 20 near Michigan City; U.S. 35 ends at that point. U.S. 35 is a critical link in the County because it is the only major arterial that links City of La Porte and Michigan City; it is also the best connection from the City of La Porte to U.S. 30 to the south.

Two major state highways serve LaPorte County:

- S.R. 39 runs straight north and south through the center of the County, paralleling U.S. 421 but on a course about 8 miles east. To the North, it links La Porte to both Interstate highways and continues to New Buffalo, Michigan, which is the site of a major new gaming development.
- S.R. 2 is a major east-west connector running diagonally southwest to northeast from Valparaiso, through the City of La Porte to New Carlisle and South Bend. West of La Porte is a mixture of two and four lanes and east it is a four-lane highway.

A network of local County roads crisscrosses the County providing key connections to the transportation network for agricultural and suburban development.

#### ROADWAY IMPROVEMENTS

A major issue that the LaPorte County urbanized area faces is the need for a greatly improved effective arterial roadway between the City of La Porte and Michigan City. Not only is a fully-improved major arterial needed between the two cities, there is also a need to plan for a series of collector roadways within this area. This area has developed as a series of individual subdivisions, each of which feeds onto a minor or major arterial. The limited network of County roads function by default as the collector system in the area. Thus, U.S. 35, Johnson Road, Wozniak Road and N500W not only move traffic into and through the area, but they provide the only connections between neighborhoods within the area. Better interconnections between neighborhoods and a planned system of collector roads would not only facilitate local trips within the area but would prolong the period during which the existing County roads can provide satisfactory levels of service by reducing the number of local trips along them.

In Michigan City there are long-range plans to move the South Shore Line off 11<sup>th</sup> Street to address some local traffic issues.

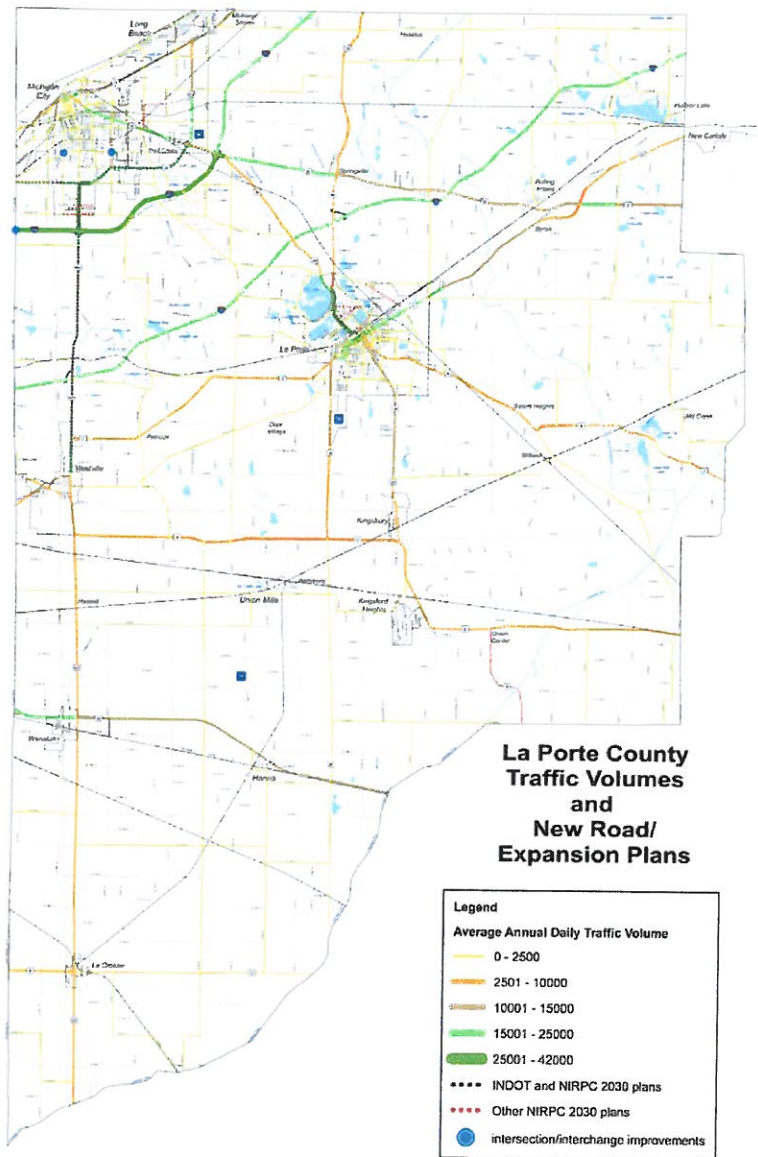


Figure 18 LaPorte County Traffic Volumes and Roadway Improvements



### ***Economic Development Corridor Feasibility Study – City of La Porte***

In the City of La Porte, its major north-south (U.S. 35/Indiana Avenue and Pine Lake Avenue) and east-west (S.R. 2/Lincoln Way) arteries are severely impaired because they function in a dual capacity as the City's "Main Streets" and major throughways. Solutions to this traffic dilemma date back 40 years when Mayor Tom Boyd's suggested a bypass around La Porte to alleviate traffic congestion and enhance industrial development. In 2004, \$250,000 was earmarked by Congress to undertake a feasibility study of an economic development corridor for re-routing through-traffic from the downtown area of the City of La Porte. The adopted project goals were to:

- Reduce congestion in the La Porte's downtown, especially by facilitating the movement of trucks.
- Improve vehicular and pedestrian safety.
- Enhance access to City of LaPorte industrial and commercial locations.
- Facilitate access to new sites for industrial and commercial development.
- Enhance regional transportation development, including improved connectivity between La Porte and Michigan City.

The relation of the new economic development corridor to the possible eastward extension of the proposed Illiana Expressway (planned to connect I-57 to I-65) through Valparaiso, around the south side of La Porte finally connecting to I-94 northeast of that City, was a consideration. Traffic impacts on the City of LaPorte with and without one or more intermodal facilities (rail-to-truck transfer facilities with associated industrial parks) were also examined.

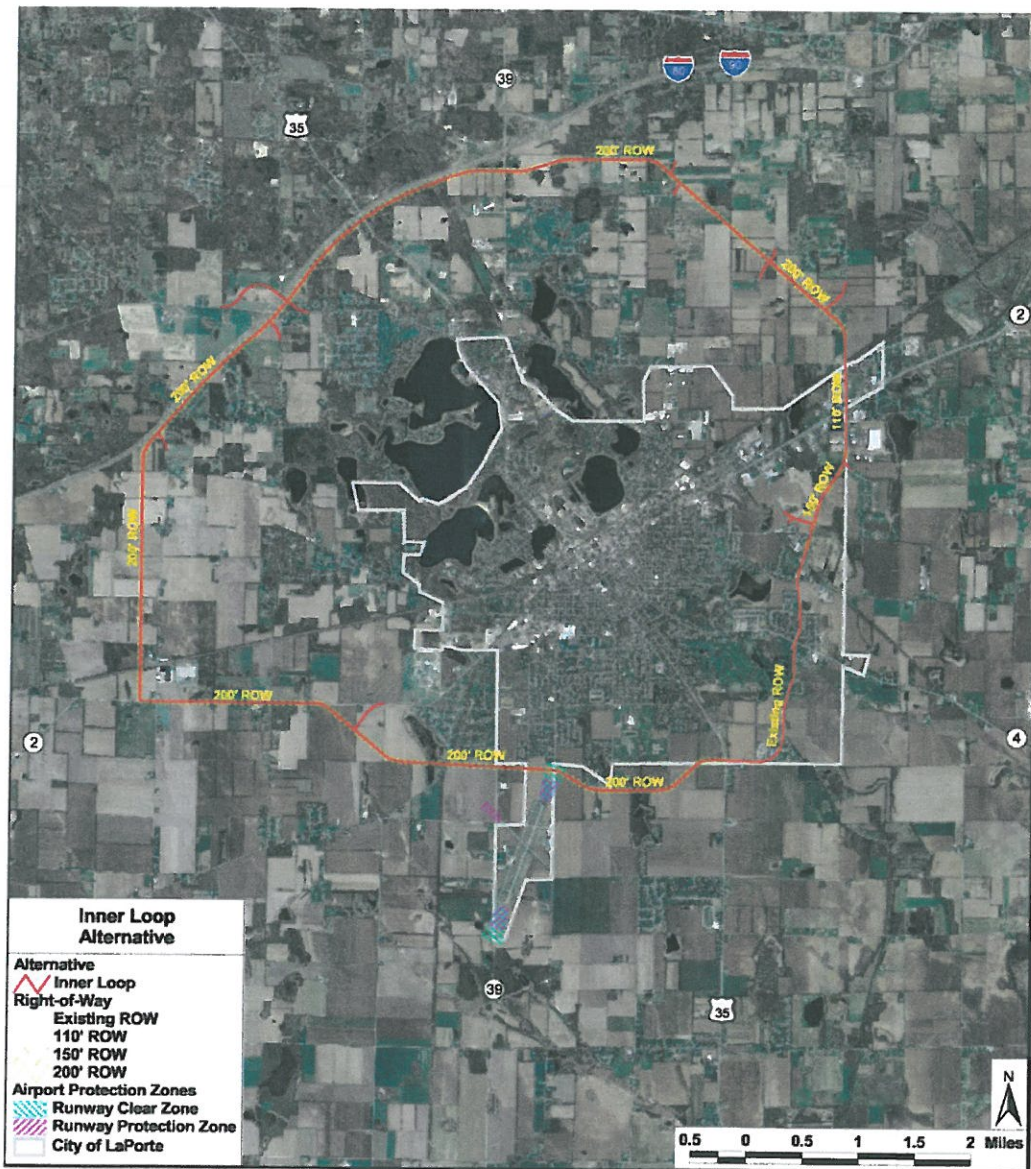
The consulting firm of Bernardin-Lochmueller & Associates was hired to complete the Economic Development Corridor Feasibility Study. Completed in 2007, the study made the following findings, recommendations and observations:

- The Inner Loop alternative best addresses the project goals, is economically justified, is preferable from an environmental and social perspective, and can be financed and managed (project estimated at \$163 million) if built in phases;
- The Inner Loop diverts significant traffic from key intersections in downtown La Porte, but does not remove sufficient traffic in La Porte's central business district to eliminate all downtown congestion problems;
- When the transportation improvements advances into further environmental studies, there is a need to examine adjustments to Inner Loop alignment to avoid and minimize adverse impacts on built and natural environment and to re-examine in greater depth the possible extension of Boyd Boulevard northward from SR 2 (Lincolnway) over the Norfolk & Southern Railroad to Severs Road as an option to the Fail Road alignment for the Inner Loop corridor;
- Include the phased development of the Inner Loop in Northwest Indiana Long Range Transportation Plan -- Connections 2030 Plan -- and include at least one of the phases in the Northwest Indiana Transportation Improvement Program thus enabling programming of funds to proceed with Environmental Impact Study (EIS) for the entire Inner Loop.
- Include the Inner Loop corridor in the Land Development Plan to facilitate right-of-way preservation
- The widening of SR 2 to six lanes through the city fails to meet any of the five project goals, fails to relieve downtown congestion or to divert external traffic, displaces about 50 businesses and homes, adversely impacts historic structures and districts, adversely affects downtown businesses through the loss of on-street parking, makes pedestrian circulation more difficult, and is opposed by the community;
- The Lincolnway/Washington One-Way Pair option achieves an acceptable LOS at key downtown intersections, but it fails to reduce truck traffic or traffic flow impediments, fails to achieve any of the other four project goals, increases traffic in historic districts, makes pedestrian circulation more difficult, and is considered environmentally and socially unacceptable by the community;



- More extreme traffic flow improvements to SR 2 (Lincolnway) within the downtown should be examined such as the prohibition of left-turns on SR 2 at Michigan Avenue and Madison Street or the removal of traffic signals within a block of the SR 2/US 35 intersection and limiting cross-street traffic to right-in/right-out only movement;
- Widen US 421 to four lanes from SR 2 to I-94;
- Avoid adding travel lanes to Johnson Road and prohibit trucks; and,
- The potential impacts to wetlands, historic structures, wildlife habitats and prime agricultural land, subsequent engineering and environmental assessment studies should lead to a full environmental impact statement to further examine alignment adjustments within the corridor to avoid, minimize and mitigate adverse impacts on the community and environment.

Figure 19 La Porte Economic Development Corridor



## RAIL

### PASSENGER RAIL

The Northwestern Indiana Commuter Transportation District operates the South Shore Line, providing passenger service from South Bend to Chicago's Randolph Street Station, with three stops in LaPorte County – one on 11<sup>th</sup> Street in Michigan City, another on Carroll Avenue in Michigan City and the third at Hudson Lake; Hudson Lake is a flag stop, where trains stop only when a passenger signals a desire to depart or a waiting passenger flags the train. The South Shore Line provides excellent weekday and weekend rail service to LaPorte County, with service every hour or two hours depending on the day of the week.

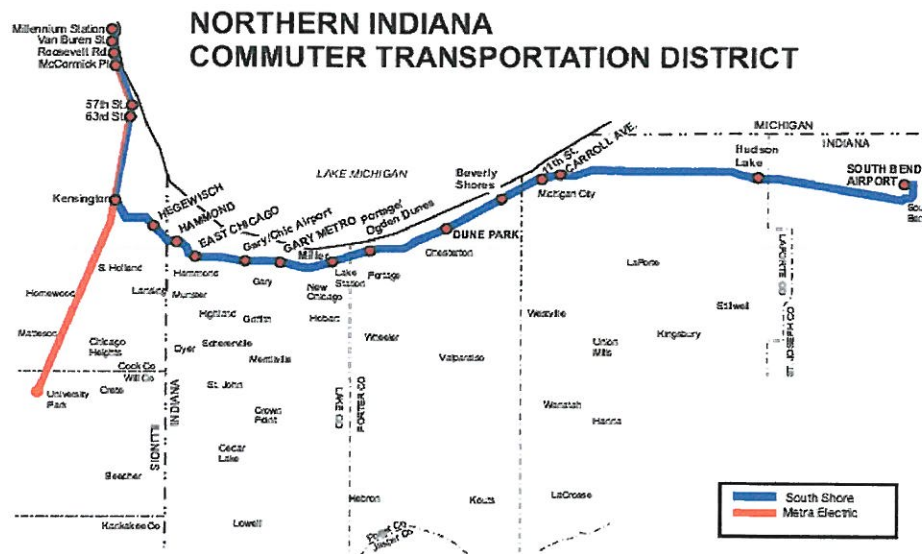


Figure 20 Northern Indian Passenger Rail

The South Shore Line runs through some of LaPorte County's most rapidly developing area on the east side of the County, but there is a nearly 20-mile gap between the 11<sup>th</sup> Street Station in Michigan City and the flag station at Hudson Lake. Planning for one or two additional flag or scheduled stops between the two – with good commuter parking at one of them – would serve the County and its residents well over the long run. There have been discussions about moving the South Shore Line from 11<sup>th</sup> Street in Michigan City, but no source of funding for this proposed project has been identified and plans are not specific. Amtrak also provides daily passenger service connections between Chicago and cities in Michigan with a stop in Michigan City.

### FREIGHT RAIL

LaPorte County has excellent service on several railroads that carry freight:

- **Chicago, South Shore and South Bend Railroad (CSSB).** CSSB line provides freight service along a rail line that runs parallel to the South Shore Line. It links South Bend and Chicago through Michigan City, with interconnections to many other rail lines in Chicago and South Bend. It provides the primary service to deliver fuel to the Northern Indiana Public Service Company power plant at Michigan City, as well as to another plant at Burns Harbor. The CSSB also has a branch line that goes from Michigan City southeast, passing through the City of La Porte.
- **Norfolk and Southern.** Norfolk and Southern has a line running through LaPorte County. It comes from Chicago entering the County at Otis, and swings north, passing through Pinola into



the City of La Porte, then goes northeast through Hudson Lake. Norfolk and Southern has an unused line running from Kingsbury/Stillwell southward to connect to the Old Nickel Plate line at Argos.

- **CSX.** A mainline of the CSX Railroad crosses LaPorte County diagonally, originating in Chicago and entering the County just south of Westville and crossing through Union Mills and Wellsboro before it continues east through Marshall and Kosciusko Counties. A Chesapeake and Indiana short-line serving grain elevators branches south from the mainline at Wellsboro and connects through La Crosse to Malden. CSX also has a line running across Michigan City.
- **Canadian National.** A mainline of the Canadian National Railroad runs from Chicago through the north edge of Valparaiso and enters LaPorte County north of Wanatah. Like the CSX, it passes through Union Mills and Wellsboro. It then continues northeast through Kingsbury and the old munitions plant and on to South Bend, Lansing and on to Canada.
- **Chicago, Fort Wayne and Eastern.** The CFER runs from Gary southeast to Fort Wayne passing through Wanatah and Hannah in southern LaPorte County.

## **AIR TRANSPORT**

LaPorte County has two public airports that serve general aviation traffic:

- The La Porte Municipal Airport is located at 2341 State Road 39 South. It has two runways, one 5000 feet and the other 2800 feet. There is no tower, but night lighting is available and can be activated by pilots by clicking a microphone on a designated frequency.
- The Michigan City Municipal Airport is located at 1300 North Highway 212, east of Michigan City, just north of U.S. 20. It has one runway of 4100 feet and another of 1250 feet. Air traffic information and field lighting is handled through communication with airport personnel when the field is open.

Both municipal airports are in developing areas of the County. Development exists so close to both airports that it is difficult for them to make significant additional land acquisitions. It is important, however, that land-use regulations and their implementation ensure that the development that occurs does not add to the obstructions to flight patterns near both airports.

## **TRAILS, BIKEWAYS & PEDESTRIAN PATHS**

Michigan City adopted a Trails Master Plan in 2005. The plan calls for routes throughout the City which will connect neighborhoods with destinations such as schools, parks, and the YMCA. The new trail system will have seven trails which will combine for a total of 27 miles. There will be five spurs to connect the trail system to the County's bikeway system and to greenways located within Michigan City. Most of the trails are located along the Lake Michigan lake front and Washington Park; however the trails also go as far west as U.S. 12, south as U.S. 20, and east to almost IN 12.

LaPorte County currently has 20 different bike loops which cover the entire County and allow for 420 miles of biking on over 40 different routes. The bike trails allow for connection between different parks, cities and towns throughout the County; however, many of these bikeways share the travelway with motor vehicles.

The Marquette Plan will have an impact on Michigan City and LaPorte County. The Plan calls for a trail connection to Chicago from Michigan City. A connection from Michigan City to Porter County is expected to take place during Phase II of the construction.

A trail network, if effectively planned, can be powerful tool to influence economic development of the greater community, contribute to downtown revitalization and address community health concerns. These benefits are evidenced in many Indiana communities.

### PEDESTRIAN / BICYCLE CONNECTIONS

There are good pedestrian connections through the cities and towns, and there is a region-wide trails plan, primarily for recreational bicycle and pedestrian use. However, 70 percent of recent development is located within suburban areas outside cities and towns. This has created a gap in the connection of pedestrian and bicycle facilities to the existing systems. Particularly in the area between the City of La Porte and Michigan City and in the area north of the City of La Porte and east of Michigan City, there has been substantial exurban and suburban development that mostly lacks any sort of pedestrian or bicycle connections to anything. Thus, residents of those areas are almost entirely dependent on automobiles for even the shortest trips.

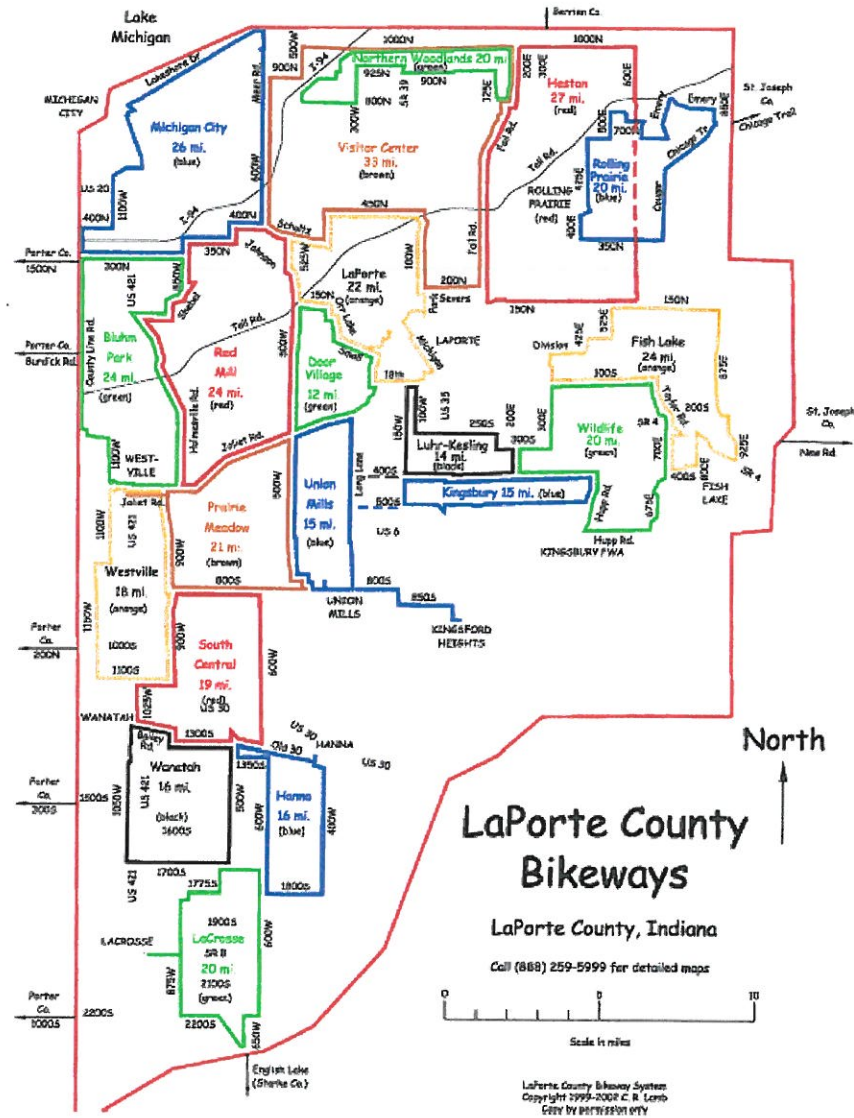


Figure 21 LaPorte County Bikeways



## KEY ISSUES

- Although many trips now occur by road rather than by rail or water, LaPorte County continues to enjoy a strategic location in relationship to multiple modes of transportation.
- The two most important roads in LaPorte County are the two Interstate Highways, the five U.S. highways and the two state routes the crisscross the County.
- This is a major need for a real road network between the City of La Porte and Michigan City as well as a developed system of collector roadways in the rapidly urbanizing area between these two cities.
- Michigan City has long-range plans to move the South Shore Line off 11<sup>th</sup> Street to address some local traffic issues.
- The City of La Porte's major north-south and east-west arteries are severely impaired because they function in a dual capacity as the City's "Main Streets" and major throughways
- The proposed Inner Loop around the south side of the City of La Porte would help to solve the City of La Porte's east-west traffic issues.
- The South Shore Line provides excellent weekday and weekend rail service to LaPorte County, with service every hour or two hours depending on the day of the week.
- Provision of additional South Shore Line stops within the 20-mile gap from 11<sup>th</sup> Street Station in Michigan City to Hudson Lakes would provide an additional mode of travel in this rapidly developing area of the County.
- Development exists so close to both the Michigan City airport and the La Porte airport that it is difficult for them to make significant additional land acquisition; it is important that land-use regulations and their implementation strategies ensure that the development that occurs does not add to the obstructions to flight patterns near both airports.
- LaPorte County currently has 20 different bike loops which cover the entire County and allow for 420 miles of biking on over 40 different routes.
- There is a gap in the provision of pedestrian and bicycle facilities to connect the 70 percent of recent suburban development that has occurred outside cities and towns to the existing systems.

## **PARKS AND RECREATION**

When asked about the strengths of LaPorte County, many people refer to its natural environment and open space. Through multiple systems of parks and open space, residents of and visitors to LaPorte County have multiple opportunities to interact directly with nature and to engage in a variety of outdoor activities, ranging from walking and picnicking to participating in organized sports.

### **INDIANA DUNES**

#### **OVERVIEW**

The Indiana Dunes, along the shore of Lake Michigan, is a major natural feature and a major draw for tourists and local visitors. Stretching west from Michigan City to Burns Harbor, in Porter County, the public areas of the dunes occupy about 15 miles of lakeshore. Although only the eastern-most portion of the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore is in LaPorte County, it is an important part of the future of LaPorte County. Phase II of the Marquette Plan, under preparation by the Northwest Indiana Regional Planning Commission, includes the eastern part of the Indiana Dunes. The public portions of the Indiana Dunes are interrupted by the small residential communities of Beverly Shores and Dune Acres, both in Porter County, and by Burns Harbor, another small town but one that also includes a significant industrial base. The public portions of the Indiana Dunes are actually managed by two separate entities.

#### **INDIANA DUNES NATIONAL LAKESHORE**

The Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore was created in 1966, although the idea of protecting the lakeshore dates to the end of the nineteenth century. The National Lakeshore, which extends into LaPorte County, consists of more than 15,000 acres of land and attracts more than 2,000,000 visitors annually. Swimming is allowed along the beach and many people visit to camp or to hike. The primary activities there, however, focus on studying and enjoying the natural environment. The National Park Services provides this description of that environment:

Immediately inland from the beaches, sand dunes rise to almost 200 feet in a series of ridges, blowouts, and valleys. Extensive wetlands fill many depressions between the dune ridges. The national lakeshore preserves an important remnant of a once vast and unique environment, resulting from the retreat of the last great continental glacier some 14,000 years ago. The park landscape represents at least four major successive stages of historic Lake Michigan shorelines, making it one of the most extensive geologic records of one of the world's largest, fresh water bodies.

The biological diversity within the national lakeshore is amongst the highest per unit area of all our national parks. Over 1,100 flowering plant species and ferns make their homes here. From predacious bog plants to native prairie grasses and from towering white pines to rare algal species, the plant diversity is rich.

The wildlife is also diverse. A wide variety of habitats coupled with the moderating effects of Lake Michigan make the region an ideal home for hundreds of animal species. The park is renowned for its bird life; more than 350 species have been observed here. Located on the southern tip of Lake Michigan, the national lakeshore is an especially important feeding and resting area for migrating land and water birds. One area within the national lakeshore has been set aside especially for its value as a great blue heron rookery.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> National Park Service, Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore website,  
<http://www.nps.gov/indu/naturescience/index.htm> (accessed June 2007).



The Indiana Dunes provides a variety of habitat for animals and vegetation. Currently the Dunes support over 1,000 different plant species, 30 percent of which are endangered species.<sup>6</sup>

The Dunes can cause a variety of environmental problems, as they are still changing, growing and shifting. The National Park Service along with other allies in LaPorte County have come together to solve the problems and maintain the beauty and environment of the Indiana Dunes. One problem occurring to the Dunes is erosion. The natural erosion and deposition of sand is westward, however there are currently barriers preventing the natural erosion from occurring properly.<sup>7</sup> The National Park Service is dealing with this problem through a nourishment program, which manually replenishes the sand lost to erosion.

**INDIANA DUNES STATE PARK**

Indiana Dunes State Park occupies three miles of lakeshore and about 2,100 acres in the middle of the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore, just north of Chesterton, in Porter County. Like the National Lakeshore, the State Park emphasizes passive activities, such as hiking and enjoying nature. There is a Nature Center, featuring both permanent and changing exhibits. The Park also includes a campground and swimming beaches. County Parks and Trails

**LAPORTE COUNTY PARKS AND TRAILS**

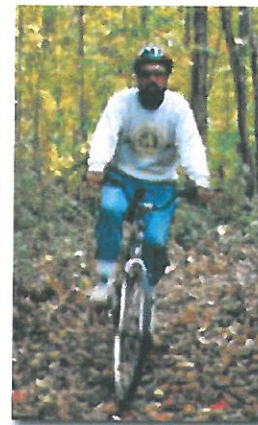
**LAPORTE COUNTY - EXISTING PARKS AND TRAILS**

Currently in LaPorte County there are seven County-managed areas of parks and open space. Four of those provide passive and active recreational activities.

| PARK         | ACRES      | TOWNSHIP               |
|--------------|------------|------------------------|
| BLUHM PARK   | 96         | NEW DURHAM             |
| LUHR PARK    | 74         | SCIPIO                 |
| CREEK RIDGE  | 112        | COOLSPRING             |
| RED MILL     | 160        | COOLSPRING, NEW DURHAM |
| <b>TOTAL</b> | <b>442</b> |                        |

***Bluhm Park***

Bluhm Park was donated in 1992 and is currently 96 acres. The park is located just north of the town of Westville in the township of New Durham. Bluhm Park is off of CR 1100W just north of CR 400S, which offers the park a direct connection to US 421. Activities available for at Bluhm Park include: a large area of spring wild flowers, upland forests, wetlands, prairie land, a pond, nature trails, paved trails, picnic shelter rentals, picnic tables, playground, restrooms, and a dog exercise park. CR 1100W divides the park and activities into two different sections. The east side of the park hosts hiking and walking trails through wetlands, with maintenance facilities, a playground, volleyball court, picnic shelter and dog park being located closer to the road. Across the road in the west side of the park is a larger array of trails that are available for a variety of uses such as walking, biking, cross country skiing, and horseback riding. In 2000 the park was unable to track the number of visitors because it was still in development; however in 2005 the park attracted 19,539 visitors.



<sup>6</sup> National Park Service Website – [www.nps.gov/indu/naturescience/plants.htm](http://www.nps.gov/indu/naturescience/plants.htm)

<sup>7</sup> National Park Service Website – [www.nps.gov/indu/naturescience/environmentalfactor.htm](http://www.nps.gov/indu/naturescience/environmentalfactor.htm)

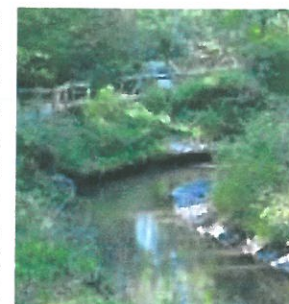
***Luhr Park***

Luhr Park is 74 acres in size with four different ecosystems available for experience: upland forest, wetlands, prairie, and a stocked pond. The park is located in Scipio Township just south of the City of La Porte and north of CR 400S on CR 150W. Luhr Park also has multiple recreational opportunities, such as: a gift shop, paved trails, picnic shelter rentals, picnic tables, restrooms, a fishing pier, a playground, boardwalks and an observation tower. The uniqueness of the park falls in the gift shop and the stocked pond. The gift shop offers a hands-on environmental display and exhibits that are available as an educational opportunity. The stocked pond is the only one within the County. Fishing poles are available for use, and fish can be caught and kept if they met the Indiana Department of Natural Resources regulations. In 2000 the park attracted 3,094 visitors. Since then the number of visitors has increased significantly to 29,736 in 2005.



***Creek Ridge County Park***

Creek Ridge County Park is located in Coolspring Township, south of Michigan City, on CR400N. Creek Ridge Park is different from the other parks in the County because it is not owned by LaPorte County. Instead the park is leased from the state. The lease began in 1992 for the 112 acres that the park consists of. The park is home to deer, foxes, raccoons, and rabbits in the wildlife settings of open field prairies, wetlands, and hardwood forests. Creek Ridge offers more opportunities than just the exposure to wildlife as there are also picnic shelter rentals, playground equipment, volleyball nets, horseshoe pits and nodes along trails which are available for fishing. The trails that exist are nature trails and total more than 1.64 miles. In 2000 Creek Ridge Park attracted 89,785 visitors. Since 2000 the number of visitors has decreased, although it still remains high at 59,409 in 2005.



***Red Mill County Park***



Red Mill County Park is located in New Durham and Coolspring Township, south of Michigan City on Hommersville Road. The park has good access to US 421. Red Hill is the largest of the County Parks, although only 20 of the 160 acres are currently owned by the County Parks Department. The rest of the acreage is owned by LaPorte County Parks Foundation. The 20 acres are being used for the development of multi-use trails, fishing, picnic areas, restrooms and playgrounds. Red Mill County Park did not start counting the visitors until 2002. That year 18,102 visitors used the park. The park has seen a steady increase since then, reaching 25,279 visitors in 2005.

***Kankakee Park***

Kankakee Park is one of the three County Parks which is not available for human access and instead serves as a wildlife habitat. Kankakee is just south of CR 2200S and west of CR 800W is Southern LaPorte County.

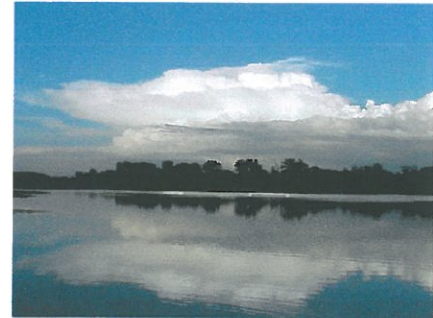
***Mekes Nature Preserve and Sebert Property***

Mekes Nature Preserve is located on CR 900N between CR 300E and 500E. The park is preserved as a wildlife habitat only. Sebert Property also is for wildlife habitat only and is located on the east side of Michigan City on CR 925N.



***Kingsbury Fish and Wildlife Area***

Kingsbury Fish and Wildlife Area is located mostly in Washington Township southeast of the town of Kingsbury. The Kankakee River is the southern border of the area. Kingsbury is 5,198 acres of grassland, crop fields, thick brush marsh and a 20 acre lake. The area was created to provide quality hunting and fishing opportunities. There are other recreational opportunities also available in Kingsbury such as: wildlife watching, camping, hiking, picnicking, shooting range, nuts and berry gathering and photography. The Wildlife Area is not supported by the County parks system, but provides another great recreational opportunity for surrounding residents.



**LAPORTE COUNTY – PLANNED IMPROVEMENTS**

Two County Parks are scheduled to receive improvements.

- The County Parks Department has received a \$150,000 grant to develop the Lincoln Memorial Trail within Bluhm Park. The new multiple-use trail will be 1.5 miles long with unpaved and paved trails. Included in the creation of the trail will also be new parking, benches, picnic tables, hitching post, water fountain, bike racks, bathrooms, landscape plantings, and trail gates.
- The County Parks Department has also received a \$200,000 grant which will be used for the expansion of Red Mill Park. The grant money will be used to acquire a former Girl Scout Camp. About 80 acres will be acquired by the County for the new development, which will include an environmental education center, trails, a group campfire, a fishing node, a playground and restrooms.

LaPorte County has planned 19 potential trails. The plans came as part of the American Discovery Trail Charrette held in November of 2005. The 19 trail pathways are described below and can also be seen on the included map:

1. A trail along the Lake Michigan shoreline and waterfront.
2. A trail along US 12, through all of LaPorte County.
3. South Shore Trail follows the CSS Passenger Rail from Michigan City eastward from Michigan City and is intended to extend to South Bend.
4. The trail starts in Jackson Township in Illinois, goes eastward through Westville and passes just north of Kingsbury, continues straight across to North Liberty in St. Joseph County.
5. The trail starts in Michigan Township in Illinois and enters La Crosse, continues to follow a rail spur southeast, connecting with trail number 6.
6. A rails-to-trails trail, it starts along State Road 8 in Illinois and moves through La Crosse, where it turns southeast moving out of LaPorte County and into Starke County.
7. A trail that moves through the southern tip of LaPorte County from Pleasant Township in Illinois to Starke County.
8. This trail runs along US 421 until just north of Interstate 94.
9. A small trail which comes off of US 421 to Mill County Park.
10. A trail that connects Michigan City to the City of La Porte, that runs mainly along Johnson Road between the two cities.
11. This trail circles around Clear Lake in LaPorte County.
12. A trail across southern LaPorte County which follows US 30, Old US 30, and an old rail line across the County.

13. A trail that enters LaPorte County just north of CR W 1800 S, follows a straight line diagonally through LaPorte County, leaving just south of US 30.
14. A trail that starts in the Kingsbury Fish and Wildlife area and goes south along CR 600E through the County.
15. A trail that goes southeast out of from US 35 just south of Michigan City. The trail passes just north of the City of La Porte and continues until it reaches Walkerton in St. Joseph County.
16. A trail that spurs off of Trail 15 and follows State Road 2 out of the County.
17. This trail is located south of the City of La Porte and travels south along CR S 150W between CR W 250S and CR W 500S.
18. A trail that starts in the City of La Porte to Wellsboro where it connects with the planned trail to La Crosse.
19. The trail starts at Soldier Park in the City of La Porte and runs north along State Road 39 into Michigan.

Figure 22 Potential Trails for LaPorte County, 2005





## MICHIGAN CITY PARKS

### MICHIGAN CITY – EXISTING PARKS AND TRAILS

Michigan City has 21 city parks. The parks are located throughout the City with a large amount located near or with access to Lake Michigan. The City also provides a variety of activities in the parks, as well as a variety of sizes. Some of the parks were created to be used by neighborhoods, while others are meant for regional use. Below is a list of the parks and the services which are offered to local community members and tourist at each one.

Table 17 Recreation Facilities in Michigan City

| Name                               | Location                                 | Acres      | Facilities  |
|------------------------------------|--|------------|---|
| Adams Park                         | 307 Village Road                         | 12         | playground, 2 ball fields, picnic shelter   |
| Beachwalk Park                     | Lake Shore Drive Stop #7                 | 1          | wooden walkway to beach   |
| Canada (Sox) Park                  | 300 Center Street                        | 1          | playground  |
| Cleveland Park                     | 300 Cleveland Avenue                     | 6          | playground, ball field  |
| Gardena Park                       | 900 Gardena Street                       | 12         | 2 ball fields, 3 basketball courts, 3 picnic shelters, walking trail, a playground  |
| Hansen Park                        | 100 East Street                          | 17.5       | basketball courts, playground, picnic shelter, pedestrian trails, observation deck, fishing pads, and canoe launch  |
| Henry Lake Area                    | 630 Southwind                            | 6          | Undeveloped - storm-water retention area  |
| Jerrigan's Hill Park               | 801 East 8 <sup>th</sup> Street          | 1          | Undeveloped - hillside property   |
| Joe Hawkins Memorial Park          | 1501 West 8 <sup>th</sup> Street         | 1          | playground equipment and a picnic shelter   |
| Karwick Nature Park                | 700 South Karwick Road                   | 23.5       | Nature Park   |
| Krueger Memorial Park              | 801 Liberty Trail                        | 37         | hall seating 300 people, basketball court, multiple trails  |
| Millennium Plaza - Washington Park | Along Trail Creek                        | 35         | benches for fishing and visitors, picnic tables   |
| Mott's Woods                       | 2000 Johnrue                             | 35         | undeveloped wooded area   |
| Municipal Golf Course – N          | 675 Warnke Road                          | 66         | picnic shelter, 18-hole executive golf course   |
| Municipal Golf Course – S          | 4000 East Michigan Blvd.                 | 90         | picnic shelter, 18-hole regulation golf course  |
| Oak Hills Park                     | 716 Martin Luther King Dr.               | 5          | playground, ball field, basketball court, and picnic shelter  |
| Patriot Park                       | 2224 North 950 West                      | 120        | playground, 4 ball fields, 3 picnic shelters, 11 practice/game soccer fields  |
| Pinewood Avenue Triangle           | 700 Pinewood                             | 1          | undeveloped parcel  |
| Pullman Park (Skate Park)          | 550 West 4 <sup>th</sup> Street          | 10         | playground, 2 ball fields, 2 full and 2 half basketball courts, a picnic shelter, and a skate park  |
| Ridgeland Park                     | 620 Ridgeland Avenue                     | 1          | playground  |
| Ruby Woods                         | Intersection of Franklin and Barker Road | 35         | pedestrian trails   |
| Tall Timbers Park                  | 300 Springland Avenue                    | 30         | playground, basketball court  |
| Walker Street Park                 | 900 Walker Street                        | 1          | playground, basketball court, picnic shelter  |
| Washington Park                    | 6 on the Lake                            | 99         | playground, 7 picnic shelters, lighthouse, catwalk, fitness trails, tennis courts, historic monuments, swimming beach, marina and boat launch, fishing, outdoor skating rink, amphitheater, gazebo and historic rock garden |
| Water Tower Park                   | 301 Broadway                             | 5.3        | playground, 2 ball fields, a basketball court, tennis courts  |
| Winding Creek Cove                 | 8 <sup>th</sup> and Dickson Street       | 6.7        | native passive park with trails, observation deck, fishing pad, and canoe launch  |
| Zilla Square Park                  |  | 3          | playground, ball field, basketball courts, picnic shelter   |
|                                    | <b>Total Acres</b>                       | <b>661</b> |   |

## MICHIGAN CITY – PLANNED IMPROVEMENTS

### *Planned Parks*

- There is a future nature preserve planned along the CSS passenger railroad in Western Michigan City. Trail Creek also runs through the nature preserve.
- A passive park is planned along 8<sup>th</sup> Street and Trail Creek, just to the west of Krueger Memorial Park.

### *Waterfront Improvements*

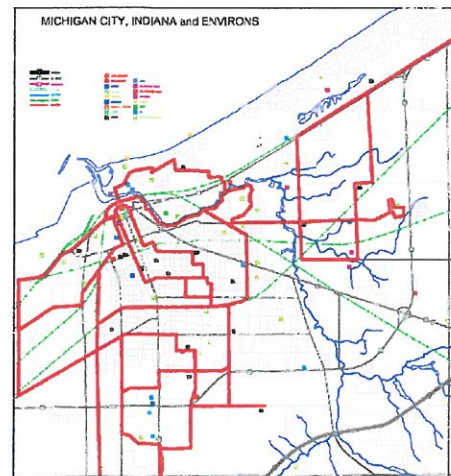
Phase II of the Marquette Plan will extend across the Lake Michigan shoreline in LaPorte County. The Marquette Plan is a plan to restore the waterfront of Lake Michigan across Illinois and Indiana, Michigan City will be directly affected by the plan. The plan calls for the creation of a livable lakefront where people come to live, work, play, and stay. The planned development and preservation along the Lake Front should attract more tourist and permanent citizens to the area, which will affect Michigan City.

### *Planned Trail System*

Michigan City created a Master Plan for a trail system in 2005. The master plan has a list of proposed trails, some from the Singing Sands Plan discussed below; these are trails proposed in the 2005 Master Plan but were not included in the Singing Sands Plan.

- South Shoreline Trail starts at the planned nature preserve and follows the CSS Passenger Rail.
- NIPSCO Greenway starts on Sheridan Avenue just south of 8<sup>th</sup> Street and runs east through southern Michigan City. Once the trail goes through the majority of the city it starts turning north to end at the planned nature preserve.
- Monon Trail runs along the old Monon Rail Line on the west side of Michigan City. The trail starts outside of the city and runs north until it reaches Lake Michigan.
- Peanut Trail spurs off of the Singing Sands Trail in north Michigan City; the trail is short in length and runs to the planned passive park.
- Trail Creek Greenway starts at the planned nature preserve and goes north up to Martin Luther King Jr. Center, then moves westward through Pottawattomie Park, Krueger Memorial Park (the future passive park) and ends at Hansen Park.
- Michigan City/La Porte Trail starts at Gardena Playground and runs south along Woodland Avenue until ending at Michigan City High School.
- Community Connection Trail includes three trails: The first trail starts at Oak Hills Park and runs north in to the State of Michigan. The second trail will run along the CSX Railroad and connect the Martin T Krueger Middle School and Nieman Elementary School. The third trail connects the Singing Sands Trail with the Trail Creek Greenway, just to the west of Krueger Memorial Park.

The Singing Sands Lighthouse Trail and Inner City Bike Loop Plan is a series of proposed trail loops throughout Michigan City. The plan was developed by the Parks and Recreation Department of Michigan City in 2003. There are ten trail loops planned. The trails are proposed to be developed in three different stages. The first stage will develop the western loops of the city and some of the trails in the center of town. The second phase will be the remaining trails of the center loops that were not developed during the first phase, and the third phase will develop the eastern end of Michigan City. When the trail system is complete, one will be able to travel throughout Michigan City.





## CITY OF LA PORTE PARKS

### CITY OF LA PORTE – EXISTING PARKS

The City of La Porte has 18 parks. The parks vary in size, location, and activities available. Over half of the parks are larger than five acres. All of the parks lie within the city limits and are located in areas which allow easy service and access to the entire community. Activities which can be found at most of the parks are ball fields and playgrounds, though some parks have more activities to offer. Please see the listing of parks and activities below for more information.

Table 18 Recreation Facilities in the City of La Porte

| Name                    | Location                      | Acres         | Facilities   |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------|--|
| Allesee Park            | South side of city            | 6             | Activities: ball field, basketball half-court, volleyball, playground, fitness trail, and shelter  |
| Beechwood Golf Course   | 2222 Woodlawn Dr.             | 167           | 18-hole Bent grass course with water in play   |
| Ben Rees                | near the Civic Auditorium     | 1.5           | playground, gazebo   |
| Clarke Field            |                               | 6             | 2 ball fields, shelter, volleyball, basketball half-court, playground  |
| Fox Memorial            | North end of Clear Lake       | 170           | 3 ball fields, playgrounds, picnic shelters, fishing, boating, tennis court, basketball court, amphitheater, trails, picnic facilities   |
| Kesling Park            | A and 18 <sup>th</sup> Street | 90            | 4 ball fields, 2 outdoor racquetball courts, playgrounds, a volleyball court, basketball court, tubing hill, soccer field, fitness trail, picnic facilities, walking trail, and nature trail |
| Kiwanis-Teledyne Park   | US 35 and State Road 39       | 4.5           | picnic shelter, walkway to the lake, floating piers  |
| Koomler Park            | Southern La Porte             | 4             | ball field, basketball, volleyball, playground   |
| Larson-Danielson Field  | Central Avenue                |               | t-ball field   |
| Lindewald Memorial Park | On Lower Lake                 | 9.4           | picnic shelters, playground, ball field, volleyball courts, and horseshoe pits   |
| Monroe Tot Lot          | Monroe Manor                  | 1             | playground   |
| Rumely Park             |                               | 4             | basketball, tennis, playground, picnic facilities, fishing   |
| Scott Field             |                               | 5             | None   |
| Soldiers Memorial       | Stone Lake                    | 556           | swimming, playgrounds, a ball field, volleyball, cross country skiing, fishing and boating   |
| Warsaw Tot Lot          |                               | <1            | playground   |
|                         | <b>Total Acres</b>            | <b>1026.4</b> |  |

### CITY OF LA PORTE – PLANNED IMPROVEMENTS

The City of La Porte has multiple park and recreation improvements planned. Some of the improvements are planned for the next five years while other will not take place for up to 20 years.

- Allesee Park -- renovate basketball court and pave the parking lot and drive within the next five years; long term plans include creating a mini-splash park.
- Ben Rees Park -- walkway, drinking fountain, and basketball court in the planning for the neighborhood park; long-term plans include landscape enhancements, new concrete bench pads, and restrooms.
- Clarke Field -- updating drinking fountains and bleachers within the next five years; long term plans include constructing new sidewalks and upgrading the baseball diamonds.
- Fox Memorial Park -- six updates to take place in the next five years including: renovation to parking lots, trail development around Clear Lake, new drinking fountains, erosion control along roads and restroom construction. There are also seven improvements planned for the next 20 years including improvements to the amphitheater, parking lots, walking trails, ball fields, walking paths, and fish accessibility to Clear Lake.

- Kiwanis-Teledyne Park -- two improvements planned, both of which will take place in the next five years; the plan is to renovate the north shelter on the property and to complete renovation plans.
- Koomler Park-- remove or convert the current building, install security lights, and install additional trash cans within the next five years; long term plans include resealing the play courts and constructing a mini-splash park.
- Kelsing Park -- three updates are planned for the next five years, including: new restrooms, improve site lighting, install lighting on ball diamonds. There are 13 long term improvements planned which vary from new construction to making renovations to current features.
- Lindewald Memorial Park (City Park) -- additional security lighting in the next five years; long term plans include paving the parking lot and drive and the construction of a mini-splash park.
- Rumely Park -- remove tennis court fencing and clean up the landscaping in the next five years; in the long term the park plans on resealing and stripping the basketball court.
- Scott Field -- install security lighting to Scott Field in the next five years and construct a small parking lot within the next 20 years.
- Soldiers Memorial Park -- seven improvements planned to occur in the next five years. These improvements include: restoration of the shoreline of Stone Lake, develop a trail through the park, remove the existing trail, new parking lot, improve street parking, renovate the current beach, and mountain bike trail improvements. The long term improvements vary from new construction to renovation of existing features.
- Warsaw Park -- two improvements planned for the next 20 years; these include repairing the perimeter fence and adding new play equipment.
- Beechwood Golf Course -- five projects planned over next five years. These improvements include clubhouse renovations, controlling the current goose problems, sand trap and tee renovations, and pond edge shaping. Additional improvements over a 20-year period include new construction and signage or renovating current features.

## KEY ISSUES

- Total public park and recreational space in LaPorte County exceeds 2,100 acres, or about 2 acres per thousand persons. Although the National Recreation and Park Association no longer recommends specific ratios, common planning guidelines suggest a need for 4 to 6 acres per thousand persons – or more.
- With about 5 acres per 1,000 residents, the City of La Porte has the most recreational land resources per capita; Michigan City, with about 2 acres per 1,000, matches the over-all County ratios.
- Suburban and exurban development outside the cities and towns has significant implications for County officials. Only 20 percent of the publicly controlled park and recreation lands is in the unincorporated parts of the County, but 40 percent of current residents and 70 percent of new residential units are in the unincorporated areas.
- Historically, many rural residents have worked for a living in their fields and thus have had far less interest in public open space to provide for recreational opportunities. Many of the new rural and exurban residents in LaPorte County, however, are demographically suburbanites who will, over a period of time, expect and perhaps demand typical suburban services, including substantially more park lands.
- Although the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore protects some of the most sensitive land in LaPorte County, there is significant local interest in protecting other environmentally sensitive areas, include remaining wetlands, streams and old-growth forests. Although LaPorte County has acquired three small sites for habitat and Save the Dunes has been able to preserve some lands along Trail Creek, the current efforts to preserve such lands fall far short of the opportunities and potential demands for such preservation.



# REGIONAL ANALYSIS OF LAPORTE COUNTY

## OVERVIEW

LaPorte County is a large and complex geography, with more than 613 square miles of total area and more than 598 square miles of land area. This section of the plan breaks the geography down into seven subregions and analyzes each of those separately. The areas were delineated based on a combination of factors: existing land use, development trends, availability of infrastructure (particularly major roads and public sewer), soil and other natural characteristics.

## PLANS AND STUDIES

There are a number of studies that have examined LaPorte County public facilities and services countywide and within many of the subregions discussed within this section of the Plan; listed below are some of the more significant ones:

- Economic Development Corridor Study (underway)
- Marquette Plan Phase II (underway)
- Blueways-Greenways Plan (underway)
- Cost of Community Services Study (completed draft)
- Possible future County study of expansion of sewer service areas
- Watershed Management Framework Development Plan for Lake, Porter and La Porte Counties
- Regional Watershed Management Plan for Lake, Porter and La Porte Counties
- Trail Creek Watershed Study
- NIRPC 2030 Connections
- U.S. 421 corridor expansion
- U.S. 20 corridor expansion from County line to "Y" with 212
- U.S. 35 corridor expansion from S.R. 2 to "Y" with U.S. 39
- Air Quality Conformity for Regional Transportation Plan
- Indiana Coastal Nonpoint Pollution Control Program
- Michigan City Greenways Master Plan
- 2006-2010 Master Plan for La Porte County Parks
- Northwest Indiana Regional Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan

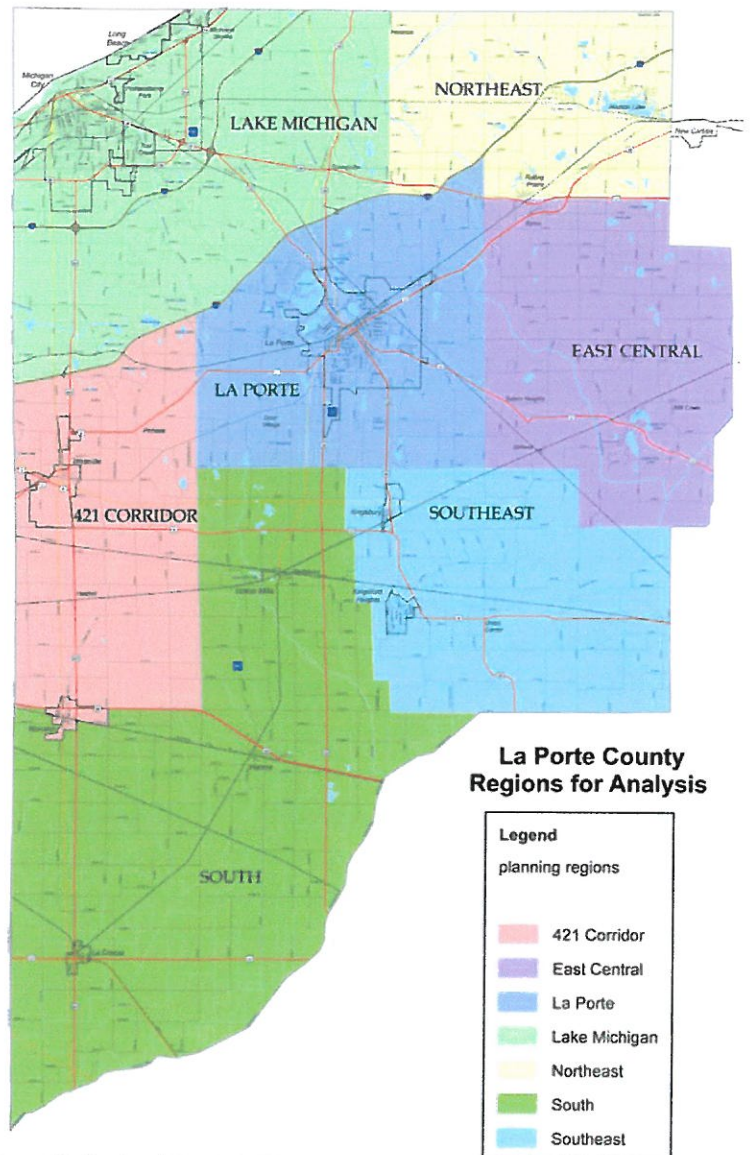


Figure 23 Regional Analysis Map, LaPorte County, 2005

## LAKE MICHIGAN SUBREGION

### COMMUNITIES INCLUDED

- Long Beach
- Michigan City
- Michiana Shores
- Pottawattamie Park
- Coolspring Township
- Michigan Township
- Springfield Township
- Center Township – (included all unincorporated Center Twp for population)

### POPULATION

- 2005 Estimate 55,095 (-0.8% since 2000)

### ZONING

- Typical urban zoning in incorporated cities
- County zoning includes concentrated general business zoning adjacent to U.S. 421 and Interstate I-94, with a mixture of industrial and residential zoning in other areas



### STRENGTHS

- Lakefront
- Additional tourism draw with riverboat casino gambling
- Access to South Shore Line
- Direct access to I-94 and good access to I-80/90 and other major regional roads via U.S. 421
- Excellent public utilities available, with good capacity
- No remaining combined sewer overflows in Michigan City
- Good mixture of land uses, allowing residents to satisfy most retail and service needs in region
- Extensive outdoor recreation facilities, including excellent public park system in Michigan City, county parks, and access to Indiana Dunes

### ISSUES

#### *Environmental*

- Surface water quality issues (Trail Creek Watershed study includes recommendations)
- Multiple industrial waste sites
- Multiple leaking underground storage tanks
- IDEM-identified septage waste sites in the town of Trail Creek and along 421 south of I-94
- Significant development outside Michigan City without public sewer and not ideal for septic systems
- Air quality – within a non-attainment area
- Significant areas of wetlands, woods and natural habitat with few guidelines for protecting them
- Brownfields

#### *Infrastructure*

- Lack of collector roads in developing area outside Michigan City
- Lack of regional stormwater management program outside Michigan City
- Potential environmental implications of multiple on-site stormwater detention and retention facilities
- South Shore Line routing and future station locations



**Land Use**

- Need for continued revitalization of urban neighborhoods
- Displacement of existing housing stock for second homes
- Revitalization of downtown Michigan City
- Vacancy rates and continued strong construction trends suggest growth in second-homes, confirmed by observations of development along lake front
- Brownfields – need to reuse
- Inefficient development on large lots outside city
- Riverboat and related development in Michigan may increase development pressures in Springfield Township, where there is currently no sewer service

**OBJECTIVES**

- Create 20-year expansion plans for Michigan City wastewater system into developing areas
- Adopt regional stormwater management plans – could be funded as utility and/or through impact fees
- Amend subdivision regulations to include strong connectivity policy for new subdivisions
- Adopt interim County zoning tools to encourage more efficient use of land that does not currently have access to sewer but that can easily be served in the foreseeable future
- Adopt cluster zoning tools to encourage developers to “Design with Nature” and work around sensitive lands and natural resources

**NORTHEAST SUBREGION**

**COMMUNITIES INCLUDED**

- Galena Township
- Hudson Township
- Note: Population data only included Galena and Hudson Townships, but probably should include portions of Kankakee and Wills Townships north of U.S. 20

**POPULATION**

- Estimate 2005 3,708 (+2.46% from 2005)



**ZONING**

- Mile-wide strip of industrial zoning along railroad and southeast of Hudson Lake
- Residential and some business zoning at Hudson Lake
- Rest agricultural

**STRENGTHS**

- Access to South Shore Line
- Direct access to I-94
- Good access to I-80/90 and other major regional roads via U.S. 20
- Attractive rolling terrain with many wooded areas remaining





## **ISSUES**

### ***Environmental***

- Surface and ground water quality issues, in Lake Michigan and Little Calumet-Galien Watersheds
- Degradation and loss of environmentally sensitive lands
- IDEM-identified septage waste sites on C.R. 1000 North in central Galena Township and on County Road 800 East, south of Hudson Lake
- Scattered residential development on septic tanks in sensitive environmental areas with soils that are generally poorly suited for them
- Significant areas of wetlands, woods and natural habitat interspersed with development, with few guidelines to protect the natural resources
- Density of development at Hudson Lake likely to lead to water quality issues over the long run
- Loss of environmentally sensitive lands

### ***Infrastructure***

- Lack of wastewater treatment system – existing or planned
- County may create Countywide Sanitary District, and this area should be a priority for service
- Subdivisions along existing county roads may gradually impair the function of those roads
- South Shore Line location and stations

### ***Land Use***

- Inefficient patterns of scattered, large-lot development inconsistent with possible future efforts to provide infrastructure
- Land ownership is fragmented, making it unlikely that much of the land will be used for agriculture over the long run
- Riverboat and related development in Michigan may increase development pressures in area

## **OBJECTIVES**

- Consider new approach to wastewater management for area where some continued development is likely
- Possible negotiations to connect Hudson Lake to New Carlisle system
- If County forms Countywide Sanitary District, consider including mandatory management service for septic and other individual treatment systems in this area (could include East Central area, also, and possibly Southeast area); such service should be funded with user fees
- Establish county standards and goals for constructed wetlands as alternative treatment system in this area – to be managed by regional district
- Amend zoning to limit density outside Hudson Lake area, because of character of area and improbability of wastewater service
- Implement cluster zoning tools to encourage developers to “Design with Nature” and work around sensitive lands and natural resources in developing areas southeast of city
- Improve subdivision regulations to prevent/discourage using county arterial and collector roads as local roads, with direct driveway access
- Identify ways to supplement efforts of Save the Dunes to identify and protect most important environmentally sensitive lands

## EAST CENTRAL SUBREGION

### COMMUNITIES INCLUDED

- Kankakee Township (east half, south of U.S. 20)
- Wills Township
- Pleasant Township (east half)
- Lincoln Township

Note: Population figures for Kankakee and Pleasant Townships were divided evenly between this area and La Porte area

### POPULATION

- 2005 Estimate 6,423 (+4.12% since 2000)

### ZONING

- Largely agricultural with some industrial between S.R. 2 and U.S. 20 and mixture of small-town zoning at Rolling Prairie and R-2 and R-3 at Fish Lake

### STRENGTHS

- Access to South Shore Line
- Good access to I-80/90 and other major regional roads via U.S. 20
- Excellent agricultural area with good access to markets

### ISSUES

#### *Environmental*

- Small number of leaking underground storage tanks
- Several livestock feeding operations, three of them near the Little Kankakee River
- IDEM impaired waterways and lake (Fish Lake)

#### *Infrastructure*

- Lack of wastewater treatment system – existing or planned
- Subdivisions along existing county roads may gradually impair the function of those roads
- South Shore Line location and stations

#### *Land Use*

- Density of development at Fish Lake likely to lead to water quality issues over the long run
- Residential, second-home development around Fish Lake, with no long-range prospects of public wastewater service
- Potential conflicts between animal agriculture and scattered residential development in area

### OBJECTIVES

- Consider new exclusive agricultural zoning districts in areas with intensive animal and other agricultural
- Consider limitations on future subdivisions in areas designated for exclusive agricultural use
- Possible County limitations on smaller livestock operations, not subject to IDEM permits





- Stream setbacks
- Waste handling
- Adopt improved zoning tools for probable continued development pressure around Upper and Lower Fish Lake
- New approach to wastewater management for area, where some continued development is likely
- Consider using proposed Countywide Sanitary District to manage septic and other individual treatment systems in this area (could include East Central area, also, and possibly Southeast area)
- Establish county standards and goals for constructed wetlands as alternative treatment system in this area – to be managed by regional district
- Amend subdivision regulations to prevent/discourage using county arterial and collector roads as local roads, with direct driveway access
- Identify ways to supplement efforts of Save the Dunes to identify and protect most important environmentally sensitive lands

## LA PORTE AREA SUBREGION

### COMMUNITIES INCLUDED

- La Porte
- Scipio Township
- Kankakee Township (west half)
- Pleasant Township (west half)

Note: For population purposes, Kankakee and Pleasant Townships were divided evenly between this and La Porte region

### POPULATION

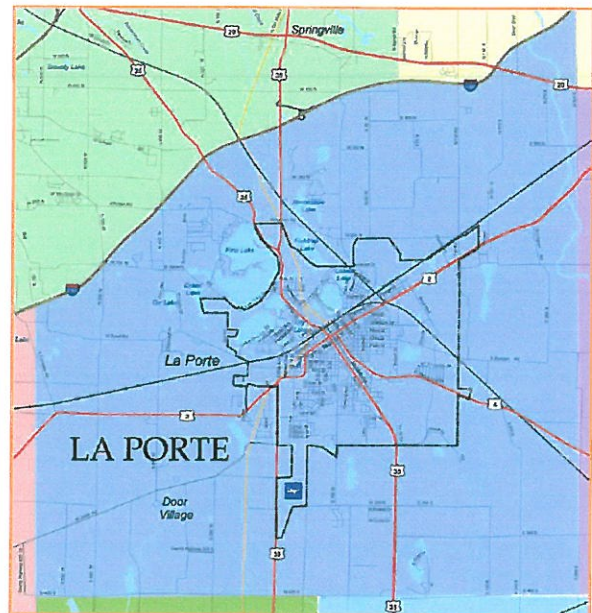
- 2005 Estimate 26,663 (-1.33% since 2000)

### ZONING

- Typical urban zoning in incorporated cities
- Large areas of R-2 residential zoning on all sides of the City of La Porte, with additional R1 to the northeast
- Scattered industrial and commercial zoning on all sides of the City of La Porte
- Southern part of Scipio is mostly agricultural

### STRENGTHS

- Good access to I-80/90 via U.S. 39
- Good access to 421 and other regional roads via S.R. 2
- Public wastewater treatment system in La Porte, with expansion plans
- Excellent public utilities available, with good capacity
- Good mixture of land uses, allowing residents to satisfy most retail and service needs in region
- Extensive outdoor recreation facilities, including excellent public park system in LaPorte County parks, and access to Indiana Dunes



## **ISSUES**

### ***Environmental***

- Surface water quality issues
- Multiple industrial waste sites
- Multiple leaking underground storage tanks
- Significant development outside the City of La Porte without public sewer in less than ideal conditions for septic systems
- Traffic-related air quality issues
- Significant areas of wetlands, woods and natural habitat interspersed with development, with few guidelines to protect the natural resources
- Numerous brownfields

### ***Infrastructure***

- Lack of collector roads in developing area northwest of the City of La Porte
- Function and appearance of S.R. 2 Corridor
- Lack of regional stormwater management program outside City of La Porte
- Issues with truck traffic through downtown
- Need for improved truck route to link industrial areas to major regional roads
- Protection of important S.R. 2 corridor west of town from excessive curb and median cuts

### ***Land Use***

- Need for continued revitalization of urban neighborhoods
- Definition and revitalization of downtown La Porte
- Brownfields – need to reuse
- Inefficient development on large lots outside city

## **OBJECTIVES**

- Develop specific expansion plans for La Porte wastewater system into developing areas
  - Current City-County cooperative project in extending services West to County Home, toward Pinola, could serve as a model
- Establish regional stormwater management plans
  - Could be funded as utility and/or through impact fees
  - Less urgent here than in Lake Michigan Region, because this area drains away from Michigan City
- Establish strong connectivity policy for new subdivisions
- Adopt interim County zoning tools to encourage more efficient use of land that does not currently have access to sewer but that can easily be served in the foreseeable future
- Adopt cluster zoning tools to encourage developers to "Design with Nature" and work around sensitive lands and natural resources in developing areas southeast of city
- Identify ways to supplement efforts of Save the Dunes to identify and protect most important environmentally sensitive lands



## SOUTHEAST SUBREGION

### COMMUNITIES INCLUDED

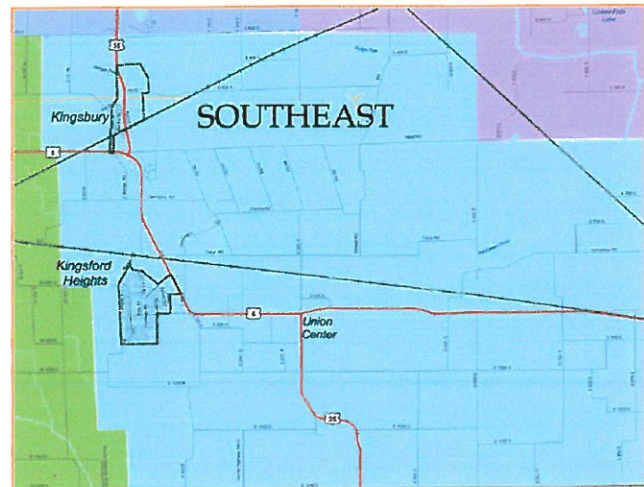
- Washington Township
- Johnson Township
- Union Township
- Kingsbury
- Kingsford Heights

### POPULATION

- 2005 Estimate 4,017 (+5.49% since 2000)

### ZONING

- Substantial areas of industrial zoning around former weapons plant
- Residential zoning near Kingsbury and continuing along south edge of weapons plant
- Rest agricultural



### STRENGTHS

- Good access to regional road system via U.S. 30 and U.S. 6
- Good basis for road system within former weapons plant
- Most residential development concentrated around Kingsford Heights and Kingsbury
- Excellent rail access, particular around the weapons plant and in Union Township
- Permitted wastewater treatment systems at former weapons plant and at Kingsford Heights
- Many large parcels in landholdings

### ISSUES

#### *Environmental*

- Large floodplain area along the Kankakee River
- Multiple industrial waste sites
- Two IDEM-identified septage waste sites
- Brownfields and unknown cleanup issues

#### *Infrastructure*

- Road and utility infrastructure around weapons plant is arguably underused, while other entities are funding expansions in other areas

#### *Land Use*

- Somewhat fractured land ownership limits opportunities for major industrial development at old weapons plant
- Lack of compatibility provisions in zoning ordinance

### OBJECTIVES

- Designate portions of eastern part of this area for exclusive and intensive agricultural use
- Consider limiting future subdivisions in areas designated for exclusive agricultural use
- Consider possible county limitations on smaller livestock operations, not subject to IDEM permits

- Stream setbacks
- Waste handling
- Identify and protect corridors for collector roads in developing areas
- Amend subdivision regulations to include strong connectivity policy for new subdivisions
- Identify ways to supplement efforts of Save the Dunes to identify and protect most important environmentally sensitive lands
- Adopt new industrial overlay zoning district to allow large-scale planned industrial development at a point of confluence of major highways and railroads

## SOUTH SUBREGION

### COMMUNITIES INCLUDED

- Cass Township
- Dewey Township
- Prairie Township
- Hanna Township
- Noble Township
- La Crosse

### POPULATION

- 2005 Estimate 5,121 (+10.21% since 2000)

### ZONING

- Mixed zoning in La Crosse
- Rest mostly agricultural, with industrial sites along railroad tracks at Union Mills and Hanna and near U.S. 39 at southern end in county

### STRENGTHS

- Good road access to region via U.S. 30, which is divided, four-lane route
- Excellent agricultural soils
- Many large landholdings, consistent with long-term, viable agricultural uses

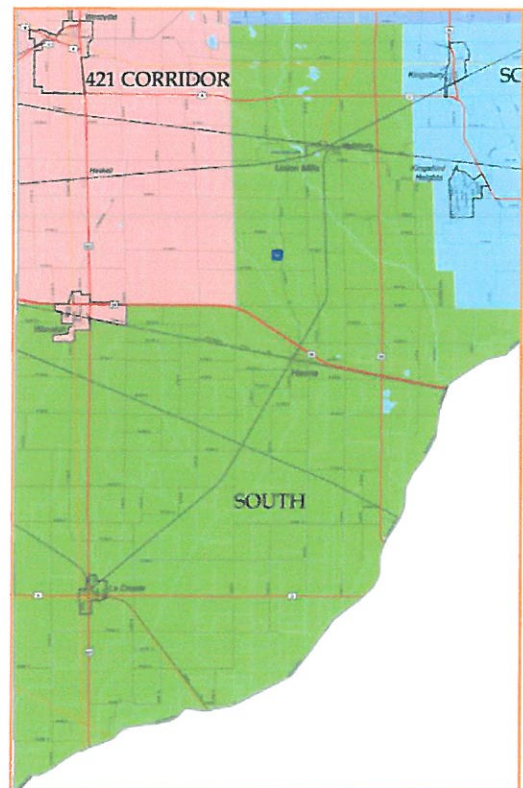
### ISSUES

#### *Environmental*

- Large floodplain area along the Kankakee River
- Multiple livestock operations
- Brownfields and unknown cleanup issues
- IDEM impaired waterways
- Agricultural runoff
- Sedimentation

#### *Infrastructure*

- Public wastewater systems available only at Wanatah and at La Crosse, and both have limited capacities





**Land Use**

- Scattered small-scale residential development, with little prospect of future infrastructure to serve it
- Inconsistency between residential development and long-term agricultural uses
- Development pressures along U.S. 30 from the west may affect this area
- Subdivisions along existing county roads may gradually impair the function of those roads

**OBJECTIVES**

- Consider amending County zoning regulations and map to designate much of this area for exclusive and intensive agricultural use
- Consider adopting limits on future subdivisions in areas designated for exclusive agricultural use
- Amend zoning to facilitate residential development around existing Towns and to discourage it in other areas
- Consider possible County limits on smaller livestock operations, not subject to IDEM permits
  - Stream setbacks
  - Waste handling

**421 CORRIDOR SUBREGION**

**COMMUNITIES INCLUDED**

- New Durham Township
- Clinton Township
- Westville
- Wanatah

**POPULATION**

- 2005 Estimate 9,446 (+2.12% since 2000)

**ZONING**

- Primarily agricultural, with a mixture of commercial, residential and industrial along U.S. 421

**STRENGTHS**

- Good road access to region via U.S. 421, U.S. 30, U.S. 6, and I-80/90
- Purdue campus located on 421
- Public wastewater systems at Wanatah and Westville

**ISSUES**

**Environmental**

- Small number of leaking underground storage tanks
- One known industrial waste site

**Infrastructure**

- Lack of comprehensive plan for wastewater treatment along much of this developing corridor
- Lack of designated corridors for minor arterials and collector roads



- US 421 from SR 2 in Westville to I-94 will become a seriously congested two-lane road if not widened to four-lanes

***Land Use***

- Development pressures from Valparaiso and Porter County may lead to unplanned sprawl in this area
- Possible strip commercial development along parts of corridor, particularly north of Westville

**OBJECTIVES**

- Possible identification of corridors for minor arterials and collector roads in developing areas
- Improved zoning and subdivision controls to encourage nodal development rather than strip development along corridor
- Tools to focus new residential growth around established communities with utilities
- Need to establish areas conservation for environmentally sensitive lands