

Northside Master Plan

Portage, Indiana



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Acknowledgements

Planning Process

Portage city leadership seized the identified opportunity, and in the spring of 2005 convened the Portage Northside master planning process. They assembled the funding necessary to retain the same consulting team that had produced the Marquette Plan, convened the necessary stakeholders to provide planning input, and guided the planning effort. The planning process included:

- Extensive field analysis and review of available background data to gain a thorough understanding of the study area;
- Two focused stakeholder meetings at which representatives of public and private groups provided detailed guidance as to relevant issues and opportunities;
- Numerous working review sessions with City of Portage Planning Department staff and other key stakeholders;
- One public review meeting at the draft plan and alternatives stage;
- One public presentation at the Portage Redevelopment Commission at the final draft plan stage; and
- The input provided in a variety of ways by numerous stakeholder individuals and groups throughout the planning process.

The Portage Northside Master Plan is the result of the effort of many individuals and the organizations that they represent. The consulting team wishes to thank all of the key stakeholder participants:

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Beach at Portage Lakefront

Next Steps

The following actions are important to keep up the momentum built during the development of the Portage Northside Plan:

- Publicize the Portage Northside Master Plan by different means, including electronically via the Portage website;
- Continue to refer to the Plan in public policy discussions in order to reinforce the city's commitment to it, and to develop even broader public awareness and support;
- Develop an aggressive marketing and awareness campaign to distinctly brand Portage's Northside District as an exciting new development and lifestyle opportunity;
- Identify catalytic projects for public infrastructure investment;
- Develop cost estimates for the identified catalytic projects to aid the appropriation process;
- Pursue a range of public and private funding sources to implement the initiatives identified in the Plan;
- Pursue any and all opportunities to assemble or transfer land as appropriate to facilitate the eventual implementation of the Plan;
- Unite forces and resources with other initiatives working towards a common vision within which the Plan fits; and
- Stay committed!

Background

The Marquette Plan was a collaboration between the lakeshore communities of East Chicago, Gary, Hammond, Portage and Whiting, Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) and the office of Congressman Pete Visclosky, that focused on creating a catalyst for a rebirth through reinvestment along a twenty-one mile segment of Indiana's Lake Michigan shoreline.

Over an eight-month process that culminated in a final plan document that each city ratified in early 2005, the Marquette Plan identified a series of broad goals for the region. During the extensive public process that led to the formation of the Marquette Plan, a consensus vision was developed, which informed the planning process. The Vision was: to **"Create a Livable Lakefront"** as:

- A Place to Live, Work, Play & Stay;
- An Environmentally, Economically and Socially Sustainable Environment;
- A Place for Mixed Uses and New Uses; and
- A Place to Be Proactive and Think and Act Strategically.

While many of the Marquette Plan recommendations were of a large-scale, system-wide nature, such as east-west trails or connected waterways, five sub-areas were identified (one in each of the five cities that participated in the Plan) where there are opportunities for short-term planning projects that would serve as powerful follow-up efforts to the Marquette Plan itself. In each case, these sub-areas present exciting and realistic opportunities to build upon the momentum of the Plan, and provide visible demonstration of the renewed energy and commitment to smart and sustainable development that the Plan exemplified.

The Portage Northside District was one of the identified sub-areas. The catalyst for this sub area is a reclaimed sixty-acre lakefront parcel of land slated to be co-developed between the City of Portage and National Park Service as new lakefront parkland adjacent to lands within the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore. Coupled with its location along the Burns Waterway, proximity to a South Shore commuter rail station, a public marina slated for expansion, and a new waterfront/marina residential development and a new industrial/office/mixed use development already under construction, the opportunity exists for a comprehensive sub-area plan that could include the following:

- A new sixty-acre lakefront park with public facilities and vehicular access to the adjacent Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore;
- A new public riverwalk along Burns Waterway linking the lakefront park to the Portage Marina, a proposed new marina-centered residential development and the existing South Shore station;
- A long-desired trail linkage between the east and west units of the national lakeshore;
- A model for transit-oriented development and proposed new marina-centered residential development if properly executed;
- Park and public access improvements at Portage Yacht Club with potential water trail links on the Little Calumet River; and
- The long-term opportunity for a canal link between the lakefront properties and downtown Portage.

Issues & Opportunities

During the course of the planning process, numerous issues and opportunities were identified that would likely affect redevelopment plans for the Portage Northside. Some of the key issues that provide challenges to area redevelopment included:

- The co-existence of numerous different land use types, such as heavy industry and fragile ecosystems, residential communities and industrial warehousing, or recreational amenities and commercial infrastructure;
- The physical barriers presented by the numerous area roadway and waterway corridors that make movements throughout the District difficult;
- Numerous grade-separation concerns that complicate area transportation and access planning;
- Coordination of District plans with the ongoing economic development initiatives that focus on Portage's traditional downtown a mile to the south; and
- Overcoming the historical self-image of the District as an economically-challenged area that might not support the wide range of land uses being considered as part of the planning process.

The planning process also called out the numerous area amenities that provide the basis for District redevelopment opportunities. Some of the identified amenities included:

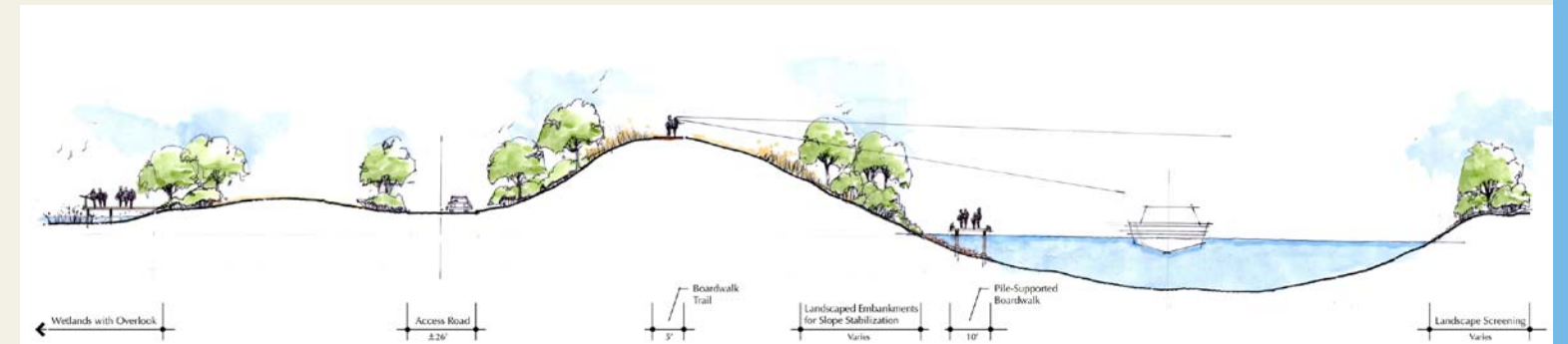
- The Lake Michigan shoreline, sandy beach, clear vista towards the distant Chicago skyline; and the Burns Waterway that links the Calumet and Little Calumet Rivers with the lake;

- The 100+ acre lakefront site that is in the process of being transferred from steel industry use as a water treatment site into an environmentally cleansed public park;
- The South Shore commuter rail station at Ogden Dunes which connects Northwest Indiana and metropolitan Chicago;
- The Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore that provides a regional ecological and passive recreational refuge;
- Numerous greenway, waterway, and open space corridors with potential for incorporation into greater region-wide recreational and environmental networks;
- The existing public and numerous small scale private marinas;
- Extensive roadway infrastructure, including a full interchange off of Interstate 94; and
- Substantial redevelopment opportunities represented by numerous parcels either vacant or primed for redevelopment.

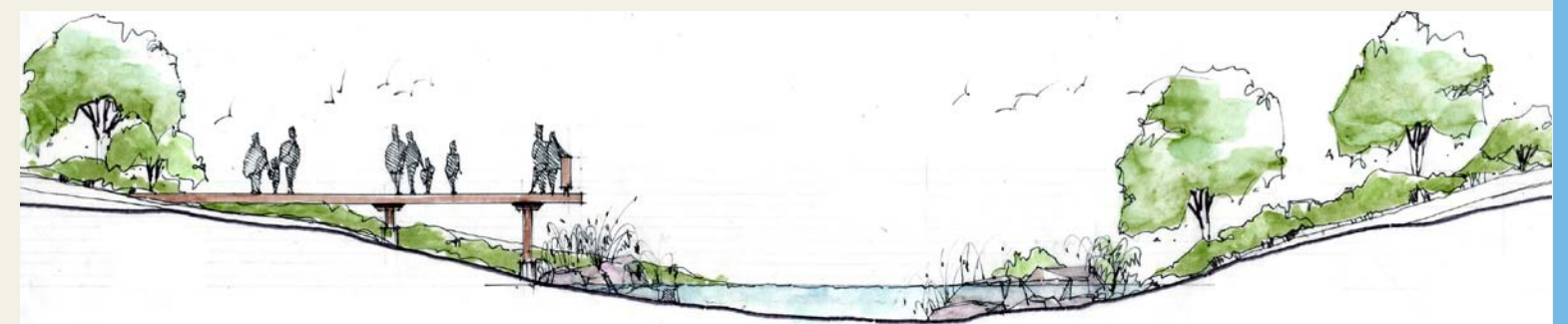


Aerial View of Portage Lakefront (courtesy: Holladay Properties)

Development Character - "Stay"



Proposed section through Lakefront Park and Burns Waterway



Proposed section through a wetland overlook in the Lakefront Park



Proposed section showing use of existing basins in the Lakefront Park to aid in screening of parking



Proposed section through Pavillion at the north end of the Lakefront Park

Development Character - "Stay"

Lakefront Park and Mixed-Use Village

Nearly a half-century after its founding, Portage will finally attain a public lakefront park to serve as a glorious beacon befitting its setting. The park, itself a reclaimed former industrial site, will symbolize Portage's new embrace of its grand lakefront. The park will include passive, environmental-oriented activities, a continuous riverwalk linking the lakefront to the Northside, and educational and interpretative opportunities to place open space into the area's historical land use context. A new LEED-certified park building will provide both needed amenities, a viewing station of the lake and distant Chicago skyline, as well as an access point for a pedestrian link across the Burns Waterway.



Example of proposed sailboat marina and public park



Example of proposed wetland overlook



Mixed-Use Village & Lakefront Park Vision

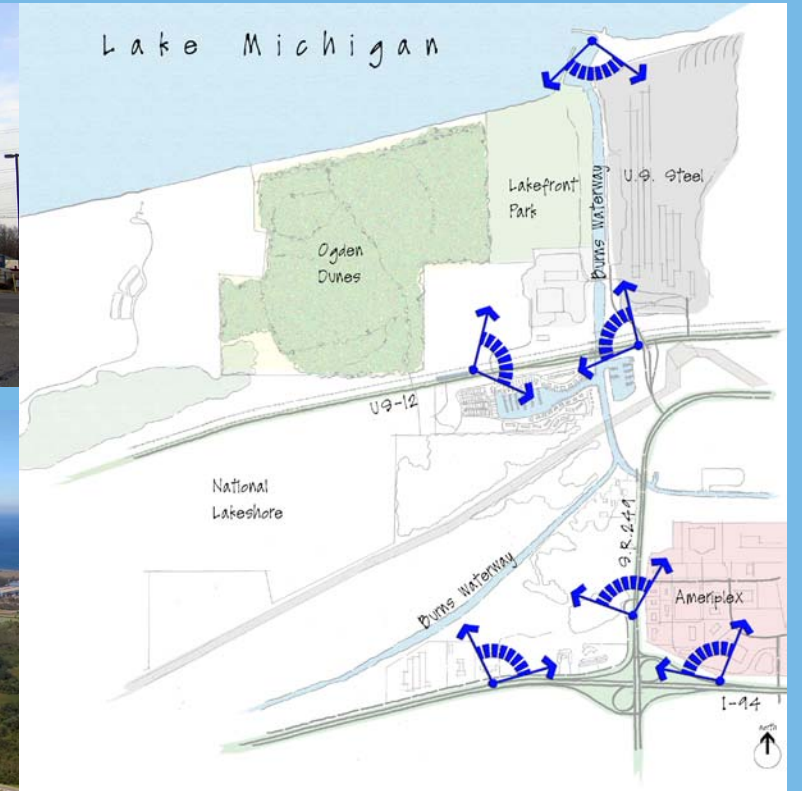
Issues & Opportunities



Issue: physical barriers like rail corridors



Opportunity: Ameriplex Industrial Park



Opportunity: view corridors that need to be maintained and augmented



Opportunity: confluence of Burns Waterway & Little Calumet River



Opportunity: new Portage Lakefront Park (part of the famed Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore)



Opportunity: three potential commercial zones

01 02 03 04 05 06 07 08 Development Character

01 02 03 04 05 06 07 08 Issues/Opportunities

Market Overview

Location

The property is located within the corporate boundaries of the City of Portage, IN, a community of 33,496 people. The City of Portage, the 21st largest in Indiana is 26.5 square miles and is on the southern boundary of Lake Michigan. The development corridor of the Northside Plan included access from the east and west I-80/94 and State Highway 12, and from the north and south State Rd. 249. Additionally the site accessible from the South Shore Commuter Rail Road, which has a terminal located on the northern side of the planning area along Highway 12. Five major interstates cross northern Indiana and they include I-65, I-80, I-90, I-94 and I-69. The property also has access to sanitary, water and waste water, gas and electric. The area is located near the major metropolitan centers of Chicago (35 mi), Indianapolis (160 mi), Milwaukee (130 mi) and Detroit (250 mi).

Incentives and Taxes

The property is located within the boundaries of a Tax Increment Financing District as well as a State of Indiana Enterprise Zone. Other available tax incentives include tax abatements, grant for infrastructure and taxable and tax exempt bond financing. The City of Portage has a very attractive tax rate of \$1.9909 per \$100 dollars of assessed valuation for real property and improvement and a rate of \$2.2536 per \$100 dollars of assessed valuation for personal property.

Labor Force and Income

Within the three counties of Lake, Porter and LaPorte Counties, in 2003 there were 288,580 jobs with the largest percentage of 16.3% in the manufacturing sector and 15.2% in the government sector. Industry showing the most growth in the three county region was health care and social assistance with an increase of 6.7% above 2001 counts.

Population and Housing

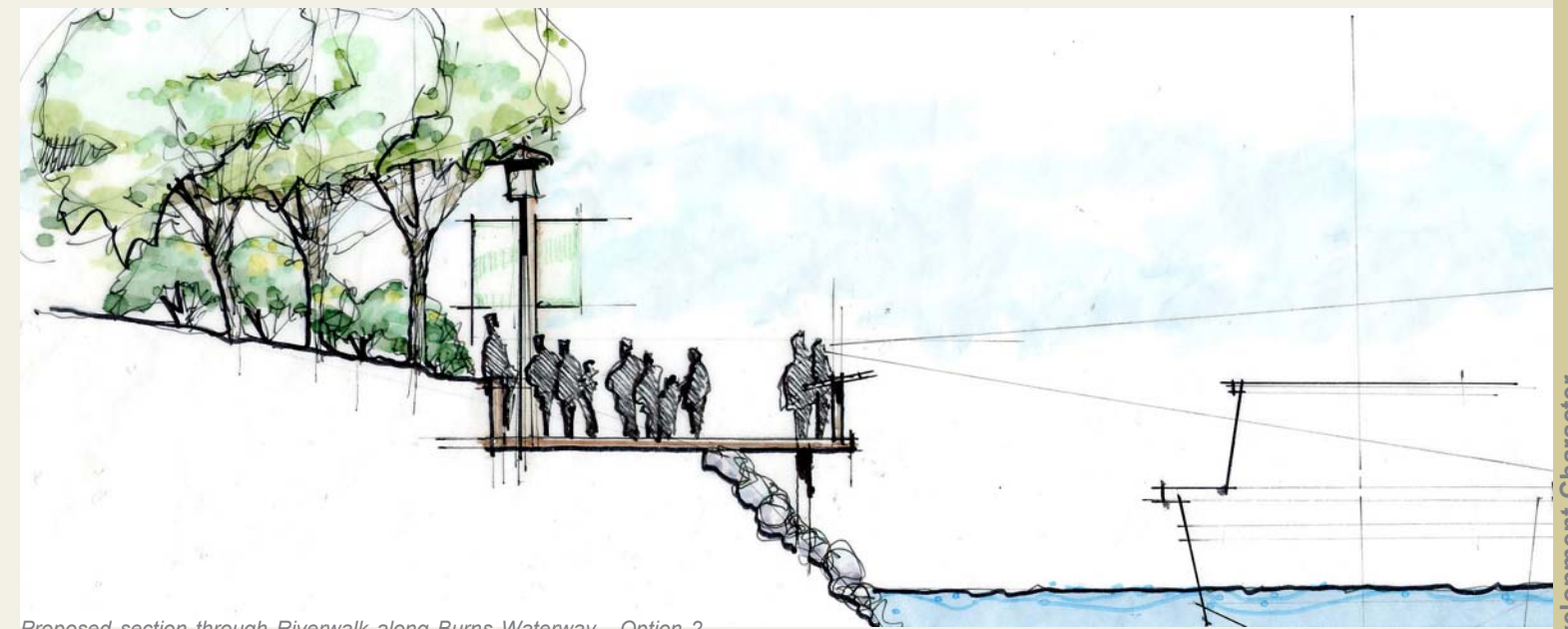
As the table below indicates, Porter County enjoys a strong economic position relative to its neighboring counties, a fact that is reflected by the disparity in the average value of new housing in the three counties. Within Porter County, the new housing in Portage has been necessary to keep up with its recent population growth, as Portage's population grew by over 15% in the decade of the 1990s alone, and by over 75% since 1970.

	Population 2000	Median Household Income	New Housing Units Permitted 2000-04	Average Value of New Housing Units
Lake County	484,564	\$41,829	11,871	\$137,616
Porter County	146,798	\$53,100	5,674	\$148,877
LaPorte County	110,106	\$41,430	1,962	\$113,735

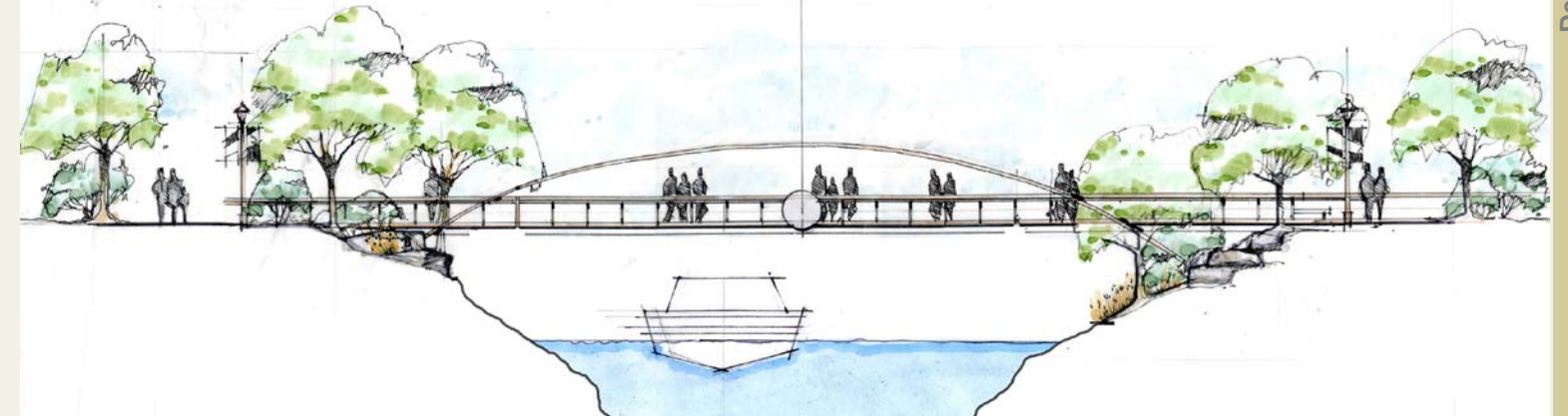
Development Character - "Play"



Proposed section through Riverwalk along Burns Waterway - Option 1



Proposed section through Riverwalk along Burns Waterway - Option 2



Proposed section through Burns Waterway showing character of pedestrian/bike bridges

Development Character - "Play"

The Confluence

Another great space, in this instance a blue/green/grey multi-modal one. The area has been designated the Confluence to reflect the convergence of not only the Burns Waterway and Little Calumet River, but also of State Road 249, and a number of new greenway, riverwalk, and open space corridors. This nexus of access will provide the critical mass needed to support an exciting and unique zone offering entertainment, restaurant, commercial and civic amenities. The Confluence will provide an additional destination that will support area tourism and boaters' needs, and will quickly become the best people-watching spot in the region.



Example of proposed entertainment zone at Confluence

(Carrilton Point - GGLO)



Example of proposed entertainment zone at Confluence

(Cambridge Side Galleria - New England Development)



The Confluence Vision

Market Overview

The Market conditions were reviewed to gain additional understanding as to both short and long term opportunities at the Portage Northside Development area. As indicated in this document, currently there are two substantial short term opportunities within the study area. The first is the continued development of the Amerplex at the Port which is a mixture of light manufacturing, destination retail, retail, office and entertainment. The second is the Marina Shores development which represents the first residential marina development project in the market area. The development is a mixture of single family detached and single family attached housing with accommodations for 300 plus slip marina.

Building upon the strong base provided by the existing projects currently under development a long term vision was crafted that includes light rail transit oriented development, medium density residential and an office campus with additional commercial development.

The information reviewed included 2000 census, housing statistics from various sources and regional economic development site data from the Northwest Indiana Forum, and NiSource Industries. The market area included Lake, Porter and LaPorte Counties in Northwest Indiana.

Industrial & Commercial Development:

Northwest Indiana has long been home to heavy industry. The largest employers as well as tax payers included US Steel, Mittal Steel, British Petroleum to name a few. The area has over 383 MM square feet under roof and additional 479MM square feet of vacant land for Industrial and or Commercial Development. The retail trade area includes the Town of Merrillville and the City of Hobart with additional growth areas along US 41 starting in the Town of Highland and extending down through the Town of Schererville.

Residential Housing:

Residential housing has been one of the largest growth industries in Lake, Porter and LaPorte Counties over the past 4 years. Over the last 4 years \$2,701 MM has been invested in the three counties.

That investment represents over 19,000 new housing units. Specifically in Porter County, there were over 5,600 new housing units developed.

Recreational/Marina:

There are currently 4 substantial public marinas that dot the Lake Michigan within the 3 counties. The first, the Hammond Marina, the second Pastrick Marina in East Chicago, the third Portage Marina and the fourth in Washington Park Marina in Michigan City. In a review of the demand for slips on Lake Michigan indicated that in the year 2000, that there was a demand for 1,292 slips.

Tourism and Related Revenues

Porter County boasts one of the State of Indiana largest tourist attractions in the National Lakeshore. Over 3 million tourists visited the State Park and the National Lakeshore and Indiana Dunes ranks 37 (of 353) among all national parks in visitors. While the large numbers of visitors are reported, few amenities are available in and around the National Lakeshore, State Park and the Planning Area.

Potential

There are large available tracts of land, vacant and underutilized structures as well as large business parks that are available within the 3 counties. The Northside development area is the only proposed development or it kind in the market area. This site offers over 1,461 acres of property for mixed use, with a current base of investment by both the private and public sector. Additional key features of this site are proximity to major markets; road rail and water access. This site is the first residential marina and proposed transit oriented development in market area.

As indicated in the Plan, the development corridor is being "anchored" by two private sector developers. These opportunities coupled with the expansion of the National Lakeshore and the lowest property tax rates within the 3 county area will have a significant impact on the City's ability to promote the development corridor.

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Land Use Framework

As various stakeholders articulated their concerns and aspirations for the future of Portage Northside, a number of common themes kept re-emerging. While many of the themes were familiar to the stakeholders involved, the compatibility – rather than the incompatibility – of most of the important concerns and aspirations may have come as a bit of a revelation to many participants. One of the enduring benefits of this process was that various differing visions for the future of the Northside were seen as mutually supportive rather than mutually exclusive. In other words, breaking through an “either/or” view of the future allowed the stakeholders to envision a future that built upon the sustainable strengths of the area without fears of being excluded from its future.

The early stakeholder meetings in this planning process revealed some major consensus points that, in the aggregate, served as the program for the consulting team. The major consensus elements of the program were:

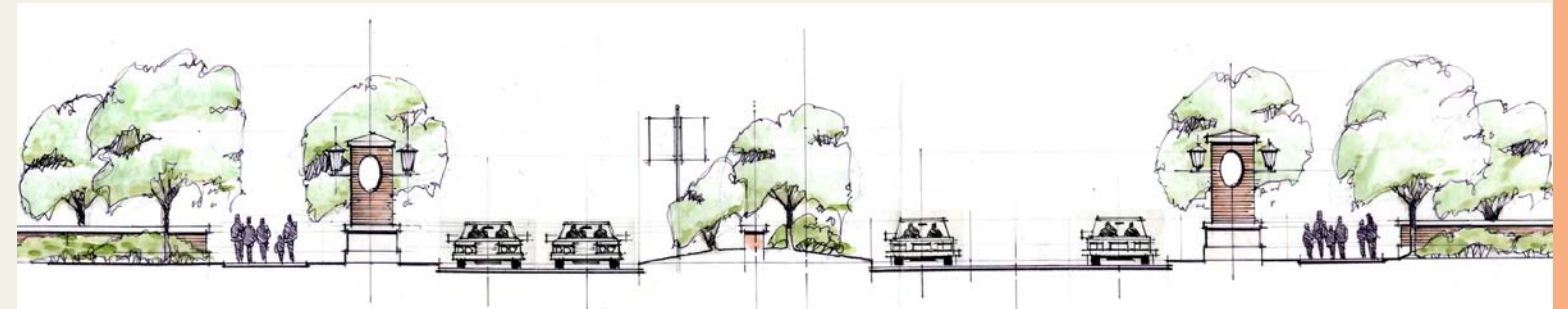
- The importance of maintaining & framing important view corridors into and through the District;
- Augmenting and taking advantage of the region’s open space and environmental network; Capitalizing on the opportunity for a new public park connecting Portage to its Lake Michigan shoreline;
- The benefits of providing extensive pedestrian access along the area’s waterways;
- A need for new roadways to improve access to the area between US-12 & I-94;
- A need for additional investment to support the marina-focused developments in the area between US-12 & I-94;

- Opportunity and potential demand for additional residential neighborhood development in this same area;
- Potential demand for commercial and entertainment uses in the area, particularly at the confluence of the Burns Waterway and the Little Calumet River ;
- An unrealized opportunity for moderate density transit-oriented development to capitalize on the Ogden Dunes station on the South Shore Railroad line; and
- Supporting viable and appropriate industrial and office land uses in order to provide a healthy integration of area land uses.

This led to the development of the Portage Northside Master Plan’s Physical Development Framework which consists of the following key elements:

- The Transit-Oriented Development Zone – The existing Ogden Dunes stop on the South Shore Railroad line should be redeveloped as the linchpin of an exciting new mixed-use neighborhood center, where neighborhood-supporting retail uses, vertical housing forms, active sidewalks and streetscapes, and appropriately placed and scaled parking coalesce;
- The “Marina-Oriented Development” Zone – The area between US-12 and the Burns Waterway should be developed as a new community of low and medium density residential neighborhoods that enjoy marina opportunities and other waterway connections, and the types of greenways and open spaces that befit this new area of choice;

Development Character - “Work”



Proposed section through Burns Parkway showing potential gateway image



Proposed section through office campus showing relationship between buildings, parking and roadways



Proposed section through S.R. 249 showing landscape medians, street lighting and landscaping of edges



Example of possible improvements at existing I-94 /S.R.249 interchange



Example of character of vehicular bridge on Burns Parkway over Waterway

Development Character - "Work"

The Office Campus

Work matters. So does quality of life. The opportunity to have one without sacrificing the other is very compelling. This is the great potential of an office campus wherein an employment center is intertwined with an environmental one. Existing site wetlands can be combined and expanded to serve both a functional and an aesthetic purpose, as a system of open spaces and greenway links defines and connects a collection of environmentally-sustainable, LEED-certified office buildings. Sweeping views from a rebuilt I-94 interchange through the green Office Campus zone will serve to properly frame the Marina-Oriented Development zone beyond, and draw interest to the Northside.



Example of open spaces adjacent to Office Campus along Burns Waterway



Example of character of proposed office buildings

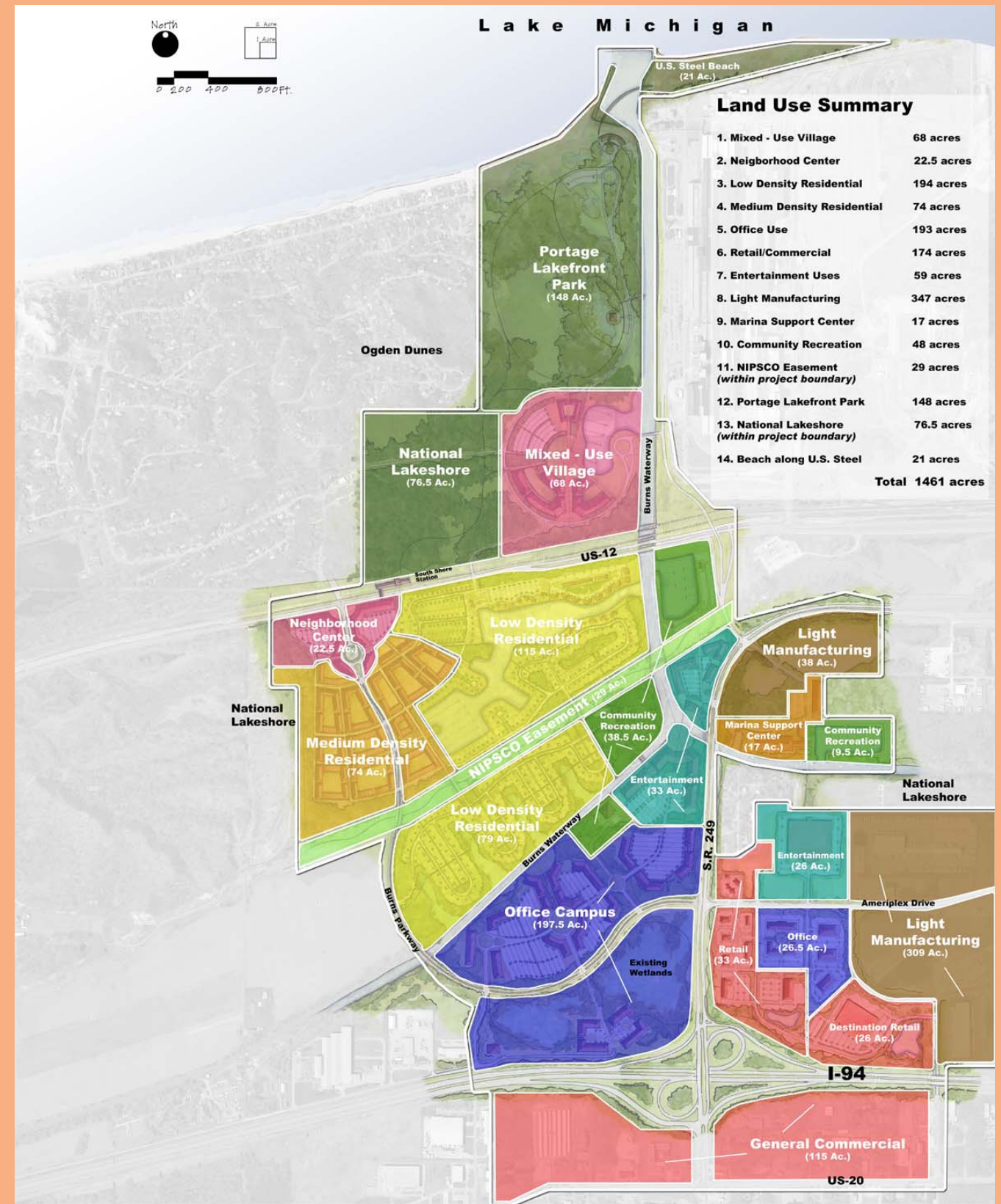
(W.K. Kellogg Foundation - JJR)

(W.K. Kellogg Foundation - JJR)



The Office Campus Vision

Land Use Framework



Land Use Framework Plan

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01 02 03 04 05 06 07 08 Land Use Framework

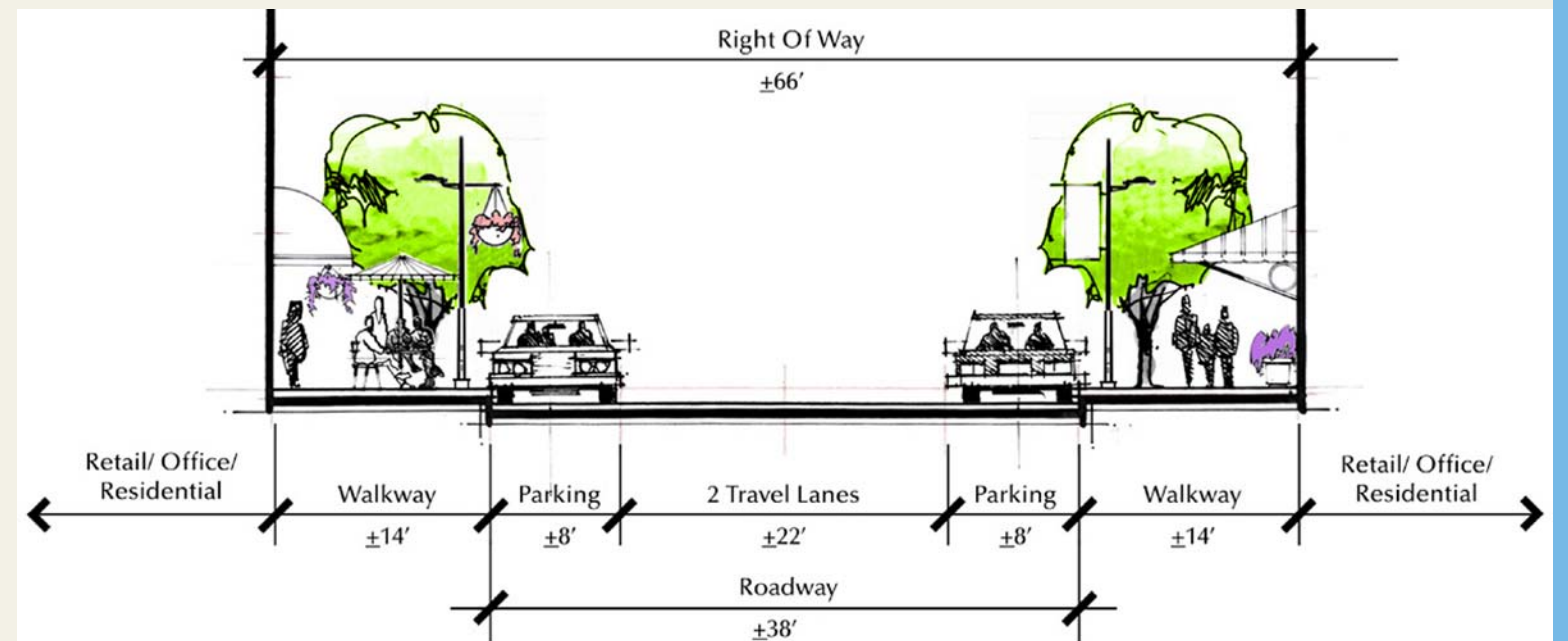
Concept Plan

- Burns Parkway – A gracious new curving and heavily landscaped boulevard will link SR-249 to the new Transit-Oriented Development at US-12, simultaneously providing access and a utility corridor that will help facilitate new area development, and eliminating much of the area’s traffic conflicts between residents, visitors, and service vehicles for the area’s existing industries;
- Office Campus – The northwest quadrant of the US-94 interchange should be recognized as an important functional and symbolic gateway to the District, and should be developed over time as a sustainable combination of low-rise office buildings within an environmental zone containing wetlands and green spaces;
- Portage Lakefront Park – The opportunity to finally connect Portage to the Lake Michigan shoreline with a public park is very exciting, and the 148-acre site should be designed as an alluring gateway to the District from Lake Michigan, and as an important connector to the existing residential, industrial, waterway, and environmental zones, and the proposed mixed-use village that surround it;
- Three Distinctive Commercial Zones – The new development that comprises the Portage Northside Plan will support significant new commercial opportunities, three of which are identified. In addition to the Transit-Oriented Development, the vehicular-oriented and destination retail zone at the western end of the Ameriplex development at the northeast quadrant of the US-94 interchange will further support the Office Campus and the area’s general convenience retail needs. The zone at the confluence of the Burns Waterway and

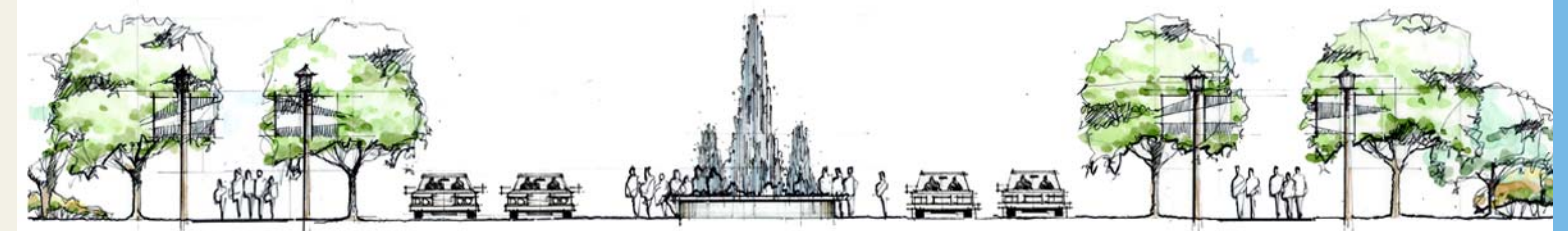
the Little Calumet River should be developed as a special entertainment/commercial zone, where a unique blend will entice people to come by all means of transportation – by boat, car, bicycle, and on foot. Each of these commercial zones will be distinct, and none will replicate the commercial mix planned for Portage’s nearby downtown;

- Roadway & Infrastructure improvements – In addition to the new Burns Parkway, the area should receive several new bridges and a series of upgrades to the existing roadways and public infrastructure, including new signage, lighting and landscaping;
- Open Spaces – The character of Portage’s Northside District should be one of the integration of the various lifestyle components (Live! Work! Play! Stay!) in a green and blue/ landscape and waterways setting. All plans for the future of the District must recognize, appreciate and capitalize on its many natural assets by emphasizing and preserving its gracious open spaces; and
- View Corridors – The distinctive amenity assets of the District should be celebrated by preserving significant views into and through the District from key vantage points, such as from Lake Michigan, approaching the I-94 interchange that provides important area exposure, and through the Office Campus zone into the “Marina-Oriented” and Transit-Oriented Development zones.

Development Character - “Live”



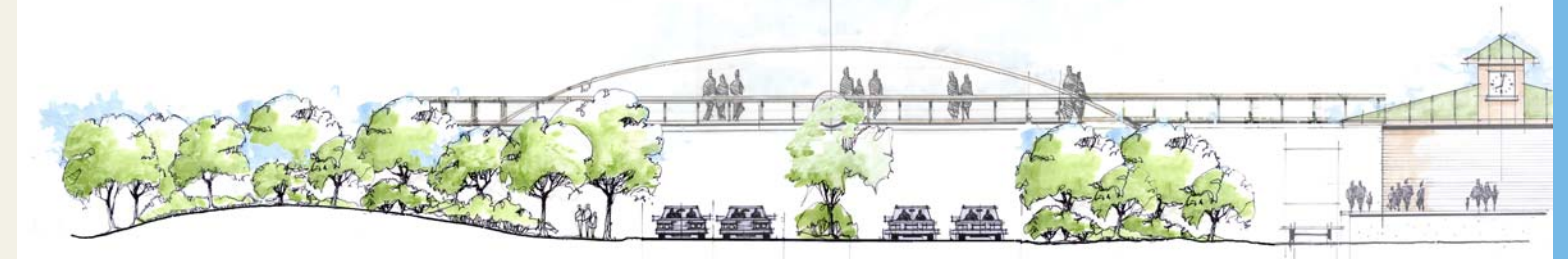
Proposed section through transit-oriented retail zone along Burns Parkway



Example of section through roundabout along Burns Parkway



Proposed section through U.S 12 corridor showing median, sidewalk and lighting improvements



Proposed section through U.S 12 corridor showing landscape buffer along Marina Shores development and pedestrian overpass connecting the improved South Shore Station with the Transit-Oriented retail and commuter parking lots.

Development Character - "Live"

Neighborhood Center & Multi-Family Residential

Great communities are anchored by great spaces. The Transit-Oriented Development zone has the potential to be a great space, activated by an energizing mixture of land uses and the constant coming and going of people. The streetscapes will be bustling with permeable storefronts, sidewalk cafes, lush plantings, and a central plaza. Walkup medium density residential buildings combine a new housing option with the area's numerous open space and environmental benefits. An upgraded South Shore Railroad station, the gracious new Burns Parkway, and an integrated parking area will all support the Transit-Oriented Development.



Example of proposed mixed-use development streetscape

(Bethesda Retail District - Cooper Carry)



Example of proposed multi-family residential development

(Langham Court - Goody Clancy)



Transit - Oriented Development Vision

Concept Plan



Concept Plan

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The Vision

The vision (shown here) for the Portage Northside was developed by setting the following consensus criteria early-on in the process:

The Vision :
Create a Livable Lakefront

The Guiding Principles :

1. Protect Open Space & Environmental Features with Sustainable Design

2. Create Traditional & Transit Oriented Neighborhoods focussed on Recreation

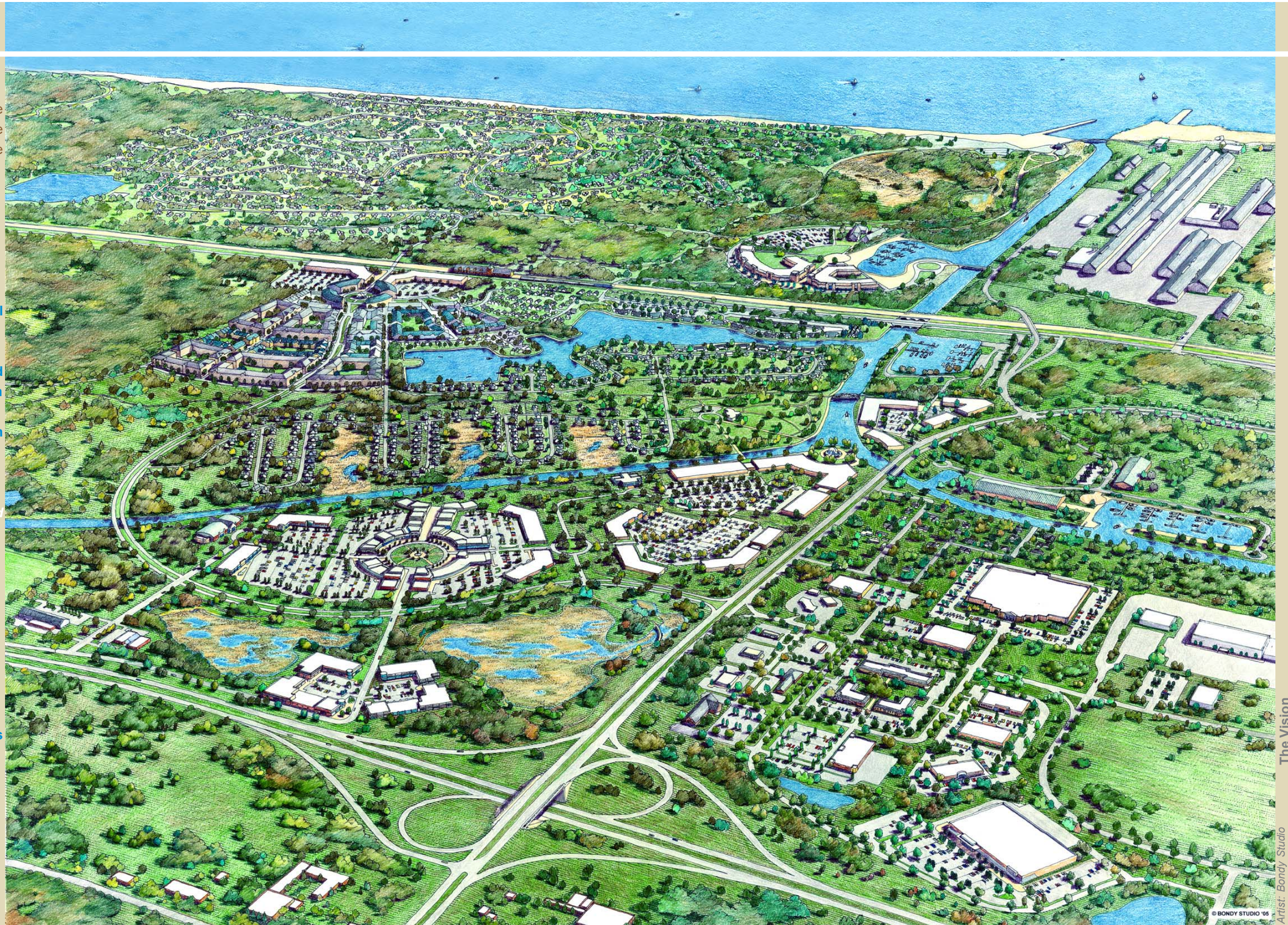
3. Utilize High-Quality Design Techniques

- Create a Sense of Community
- Promote pedestrian-oriented development for a healthy lifestyle
- Integrate land uses
- Offer a mix of housing types

4. Provide Transportation options

- Light & Heavy Rail
- Bus service
- Bicycle & Pedestrian paths

5. Promote Public / Private Partnerships



Portage Northside Vision

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The Vision

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