

PORTAGE, INDIANA



COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2009



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



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PROJECT UNDERSTANDING



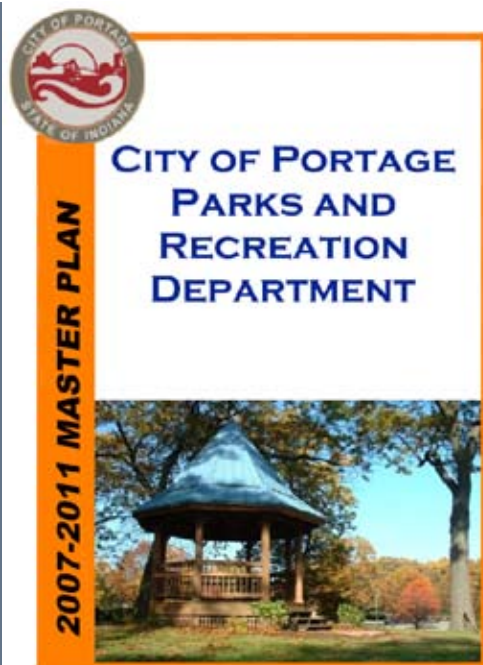
PROJECT UNDERSTANDING

In the fall of 2008, the city of Portage commissioned Short Elliott Hendrickson Inc. (SEH®) to assist the city in updating their comprehensive plan. Based upon the input of the steering committee as well as the project scope, a set of seven key objectives were outlined as a part of this planning effort:

1. Develop a set of guiding design principles based upon existing conditions and community needs.
2. Provide a community facilitation plan that is transparent and involves diverse stakeholders, elected officials, city staff, planning commissioners, developers, and students. Conduct a series of public meetings to provide updates and receive comments on the plan.
3. Outline planning districts which will serve as a guide for development and redevelopment of the city.
4. Develop subarea plans for three gateway areas within the city. Within these areas, identify issues and opportunities for development or redevelopment.
5. Identify issues and opportunities for growth areas outside of the city's existing boundaries and provide implementation strategies that accommodate growth through intergovernmental cooperation.
6. Provide a transportation plan for areas that fall adjacent to the city's existing boundaries.
7. Create action plans that outline implementation steps for the city in an easy to use format.

This plan is intended to be a road map for development, redevelopment, transportation, economic development and extraterritorial planning over the next ten years. The *2009 Portage Comprehensive Plan* provides a clear vision through policy statements for the planning districts and sub area plans found within the document. To fully achieve the action steps and implementation strategies found within this document, it is imperative that the city continue to review this document on an annual basis to ensure that the goals and policies set forth in this plan are fully integrated and achieved for years to come.





The City of Portage Parks Master Plan is a document that guides the Parks and Recreation Department to better address the needs of its residents.



Map of The Marquette Plan that was adopted in 2008.

Review of Past Planning Efforts

Several important planning efforts have taken place within the city of Portage. This document builds upon planning work that has occurred over the past several years. It is critical to understand that these plans serve as working documents. As such, this plan was developed in a fashion that will not conflict with information found within key

planning efforts. Most notably, the information found within this document reflects the hard work and tireless efforts that past planning commissions, city staff, and elected officials have developed. Table 2-1 provides past planning documents that have been approved by the city since 1999.

Table 2-1: Review of Past Plans

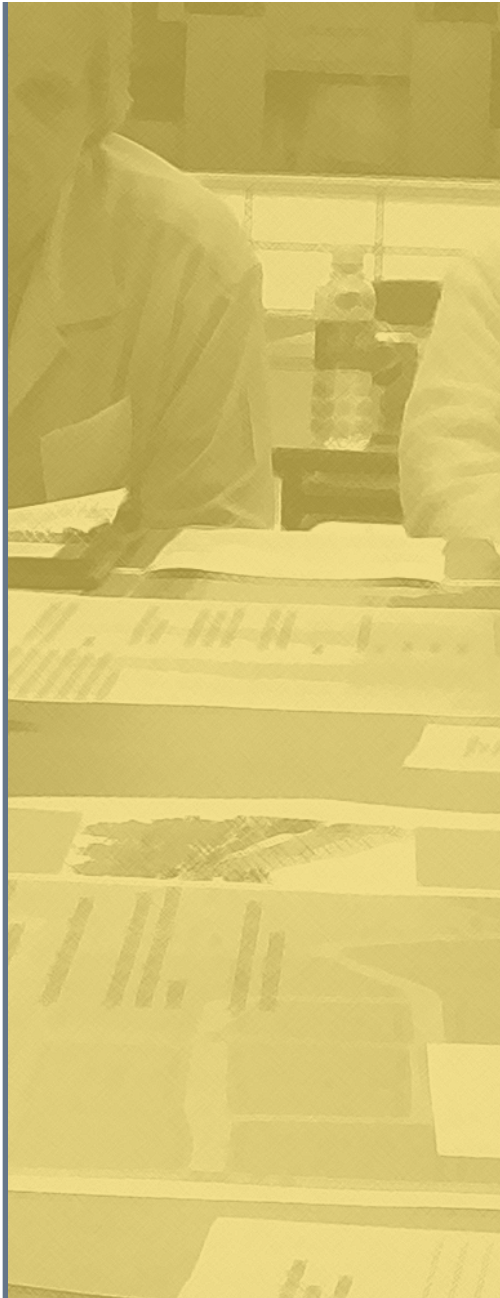
Year	Plan	Planning Group
1999	Central Avenue Business District Master Plan	by: Lakota Group
1999	City of Portage Zoning Ordinance	by: Camiros
2002	City of Portage Comprehensive Plan–Update	by: Ratio Architects
2002	City of Portage Parks Master Plan	by: Ratio Architects
2005	The Marquette Plan: The Lakeshore Reinvestment Strategy	by: JJR, SEH, Huff and Huff, The Trust for Public Lands, JF New
2005	City of Portage Northside Master Plan	by: JJR, SEH, Huff and Huff
2005	City of Portage Higher Learning Campus Master Plan	by: Ratio Architects
2005	City of Portage Zoning Ordinance	by: GroundRules
2006	Portage Lakefront and Riverwalk	by: JJR, SEH
2007	City of Portage Northside Development	by: City of Portage Planning Department, SEH
2007	City of Portage Parks Master Plan	by: Sitescapes
2008	The Marquette Plan–Phase II: A Vision of Lakeshore Reinvestment	by: JJR, SEH, Cambridge Systematics, JF New
2008	Porter County US 12/20 Transportation Corridor Plan	by: SEH, JJR

Planning Studies

There are several other planning studies/approved planned unit developments guiding the community's development. Table 2-2 lists other planning studies within or near Portage.

Plan	Planning Group
U.S. Highway 6 Corridor Sub Area Master Plan	by: Camiros
Airport Road Corridor Plan	by: American StructurePoint
Marina Shores at Dune Harbor Planned Unit Development (Brant Construction)	
AmeriPlex-At the Port Planned Unit Development (Holladay Properties)	
Sterling Creek Parc Planned Unit Development (JBL120)	
Airport Crossing (Regency Centers)	
Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore General Management Plan	by: NPS
Founders Square Park	by: DLZ
City Hall Landscape Plan	by: Troyer Group
Downtown Trail Connector	by: SEH
Ped and Pedal Plan	by: NIRPC
Blueways and Greenways Plan	by: Openlands
Burns Waterway Boat Capacity Study	by: HNTB





Plan Foundation and Guiding Principles

During the first two months of this planning project, the development of vision and guiding principles was created. As a means to assist in the creation of new goals and policies, the following community issues identified in the 2003 Comprehensive Plan were revisited.

1. Integrate Lake Michigan and the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore into the lifestyle of the Portage community.
2. Improve the city's image and character.
3. Attract more specialty retail shops and restaurants.
4. Offer more active recreational opportunities and facilities.
5. Develop a master plan for sanitary and storm sewers.
6. Create a vital and attractive downtown.
7. Provide more choices in housing.
8. Attract more office and light industrial uses.
9. Aim to protect natural areas, critical wildlife habitats and water resources.
10. Expand alternative modes of transportation such as transit, sidewalks, bike lanes, paths and trails.

After presenting these issues to the public during the first open house, the public wished to add five key issues which will be addressed further within this plan.

1. Develop a short-term plan that focuses on Portage being a destination for tourism throughout the region.
2. Create a gateway to the downtown area which will bring people from I-94 south to the downtown area. The gateway should include streetscape improvements and wayfinding that encourage people to visit the downtown area.
3. Continue to attract high-tech businesses that will create higher-paying jobs.
4. Develop standards for infill development.
5. Develop an action plan for growth outside of the city's current boundaries.

Planning Process

Another important element was maintaining a transparent public process throughout the plan update. Throughout the course of this project, three community meetings were held to provide input, address issues, and develop strategies for the long-term health of Portage. Below is a summary of the community meetings.

January 2009

A community-wide project kick-off was facilitated in January 2009 and held at Woodland Park. The purpose of this meeting was to introduce participants to the Portage comprehensive planning process. Despite frigid temperatures, approximately sixty people were in attendance. The focus of this meeting was to review goals and policies of the 2003 Comprehensive Plan, provide milestones for the current planning process and review questions related to economic development, housing, the downtown area, land use, and urban design. Participants were asked to form into small groups to discuss planning elements at six different "theme" tables.

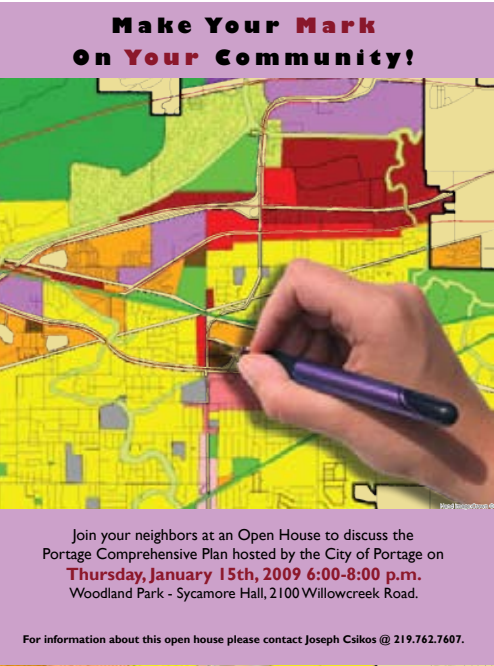
One of the objectives of this open house was to identify the city's greatest assets as well as areas for improvement. Following are the top elements identified during the community open house.

Community Assets:

1. Location
2. Lake Michigan
3. Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore - Portage Lake Front and Riverwalk, West Beach, Inland Marsh
4. South Shore Commuter Rail
5. Marinas
6. Schools
7. City services
8. Park system
9. Community theaters

Areas for improvement:

1. Improve vehicular and pedestrian circulation
2. Maintain and enhance stormwater conveyance systems
3. Maintain and improve sanitary sewer systems
4. Implement the Downtown District Redevelopment Plan
5. Offer a wider variety of dining experiences
6. Celebrate life - community festivals, concerts, art shows




**Make Your Mark
On Your Community!**

Join your neighbors at an Open House to discuss the Portage Comprehensive Plan hosted by the City of Portage on
Thursday, January 15th, 2009 6:00-8:00 p.m.
Woodland Park - Sycamore Hall, 2100 Willowcreek Road.

For information about this open house please contact Joseph Csikos @ 219.762.7407.

The poster distributed to advertise the January Open House.

This PLAN will Impact YOU!




The purpose of this open house is to present information pertaining to planning districts within the City as well as to solicit feedback related to three special area plans. **Your input is critical to the success of this plan.**

YOUR INVITED—Portage Comprehensive Plan Update Open House
 March 11, 2009 | 6:00-8:00 p.m.

Portage Branch of the Porter County Public Library—2665 Irving Street

For questions about this meeting, please contact Community Development Director Joe Caskos, AICP at 219-762-7607 or visit the project website at www.sehinc.com/online/portage

The poster created for the March open house.



A small group discussing implementation strategies at the May open house.

March 2009

The second community meeting was held at the Portage Public Library. The purpose of this meeting was to acquire feedback on the proposed planning districts. Participants were also given a visual preference survey and community survey. The results of both are attached as an addendum to this planning document. Roughly 30 people were in attendance with another 120 people taking the visual preference survey online through the project website. The results of the visual preference survey will assist in the development of the urban design element of this document.

May 2009

The final open house was held at the Portage Fegely Middle School in May of 2009. The purpose of this meeting was to update the public on the action steps and implementation strategies as a part of the comprehensive plan. Participants listened to a brief presentation made by the consultant team related to infrastructure planning, economic development, street design and connectivity, extraterritorial planning, neighborhood planning and critical area planning. After the presentation, the public was divided into small groups to review specific implementation strategies related to the plan and ask questions.

Community Input

There were several techniques to gain valuable feedback from the community in the development of this plan including a steering committee and community meetings, stakeholder interviews, and the use of an online visual preference survey. A major focal point of this planning process was the development of an online project website. A total of 365 people during the month of February, March and April reviewed material related to community meetings, PowerPoint presentations, and related information. An additional 120 participants took the visual preference survey online.

Every effort was made to ensure that all stakeholders were given the opportunity to participate in the planning process. The strategy for outreach was to identify specific constituencies, apply a wide variety of methods to reach them and ensure that they were engaged and involved throughout the process.

The project steering committee was organized by city staff to assist in the development and review of the plan. During steering committee meetings, participants were asked to review information related to planning elements, discuss additional strategies, and provide comments on material prior to review by the public. The steering

committee played an active role in the process relating to specific action steps and implementation strategies.

In addition to the events hosted by the steering committee, presentations on the planning process, interviews and one-on-one discussions were held with a variety of groups. They included: students, religious leaders, educators, elected officials, planning commissioners, city staff, county representatives, engineers, business associates, and developers. During each of these meetings, there was discussion of the planning elements in the comprehensive plan with participants providing input on implementation strategies and action steps.

Getting the word out about this project included the publication of posters, public hearing notifications, newspaper articles, information posters at City Hall, a 100 member e-mail distribution developed by city staff, and related print material. In addition, the project website generated interest and assisted in getting the word out regarding the project.

The outreach and communications employed by the steering committee, city staff and the consultants helped shape the plan through the inclusion of as many stakeholders as possible.



The consulting team presented several presentations throughout the plan update process.

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COMMUNITY CONTEXT



COMMUNITY CONTEXT

Introduction

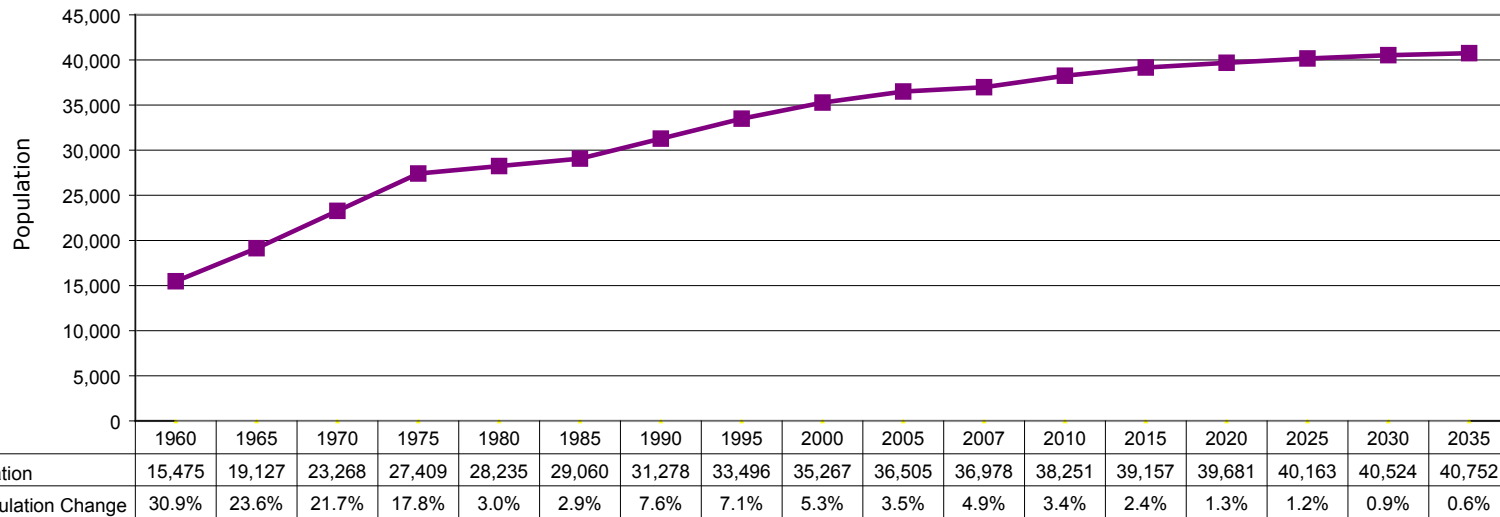
A statistical analysis of historical trends and future projections for Portage helps identify areas of change and economic characteristics within the city. This information will be useful in determining the direction the city should move and helpful in shaping land use decisions.

This plan will analyze historical census and projected demographics. Analyzing demographic trends, age distribution, income levels, employment characteristics, housing characteristics, and population levels will provide the city with the forecasting tools needed for this comprehensive plan update.

The last comprehensive plan was implemented in 2003 and completed at a time when the community was only beginning to experience rapid growth and significant levels of economic development. This update will be very mindful of trends and projections to effectively direct land use policies, guide government officials and communicate a vision for the city of Portage.



Figure 3-1 City of Portage Population



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, NIRPC Where We Stand

Race	Portage		U.S.
	2000	2007	2007
White	92.5%	86.7%	74.1%
Black & African American	1.4%	6.5%	12.4%
American Indian & Alaska Native	.3%	.2%	.8%
Asian	.6%	.7%	4.3%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	.1%	0%	.1%
Some other race	3.2%	4.4%	6.2%
Hispanic (of any race)	9.9%	11.2%	14.7%

Source: US Census Bureau

Population

Portage’s population has increased considerably over the last forty years. From 1960 to 2007, the population of Portage nearly tripled from 11,822 to 36,505. Figure 3-1 shows the historical population change from 1960 to 2007 as well as the projected future population up to the year 2040.

The population is expected to increase over the next thirty years. The projected population in 2040 is 40,752, which is an increase of approximately 5,200 residents from 2007. While the future growth rate is not expected to be as high as in the past, Porter County will increase at a higher percentage than all

counties in Northwest Indiana. This strong projected population growth is a sign of a healthy regional economy for Porter County and the city of Portage.

The reason for the higher increase in population can be explained by natural increase. The city of Portage had a higher percentage of children under the age of five than the national, state or regional levels in 2007.

Demographics

The city of Portage contained a high percentage of individuals belonging to the white demographic with no other ethnic group comprising more than 7 percent of the city's population (Table 3-1). While the minority population within the city grew between 2000 and 2007, Portage was still less diverse than the national average.

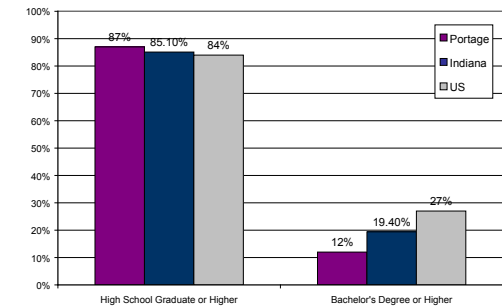
Education

Census data provides information for education levels of individuals 25 years and older. As displayed in Figure 3-2, the city of Portage possessed a slightly higher proportion of high school graduates than the state and nation. In terms of higher education, Portage was below the state and national percentage for individuals with a bachelor's degree or higher in 2007.

Age Distribution

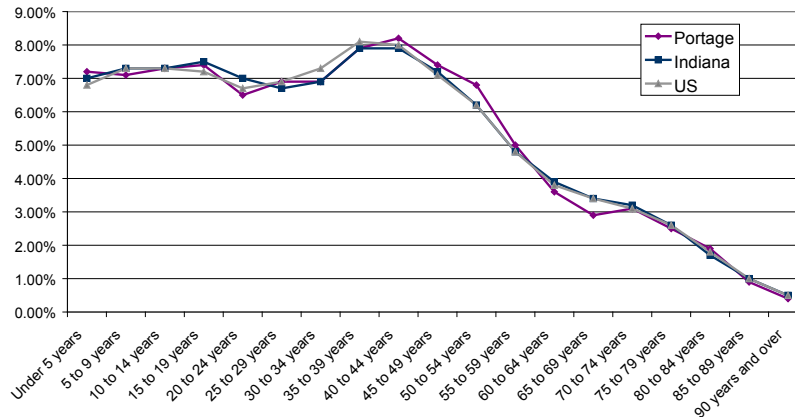
The city of Portage had an age distribution that mirrored that of both the state and the nation. In 2007, the 40 to 44 age group accounted for the largest percentage of the population (Figure 3-3). An aging population is a nationwide trend as the baby boomer generation is approaching retirement age. Portage has seen an increase in the median age from age 33 in 2000 to age 37 in 2006. By 2040, the median age is expected to increase somewhere between 2 to 5 years. The city will need to respond to the change in age distribution by providing services and housing needs to accommodate the growing elderly population.

Figure 3-2: Education Levels



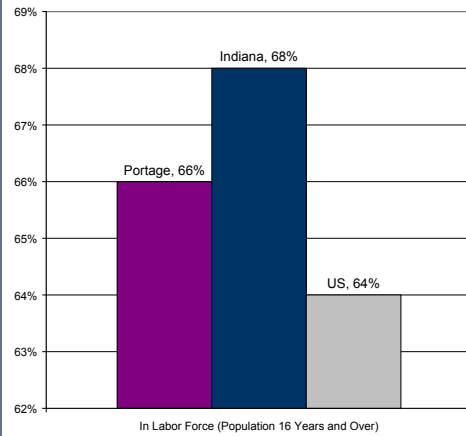
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2007 American Community Survey

Figure 3-3: Age Distribution as Percent of Population (2007)



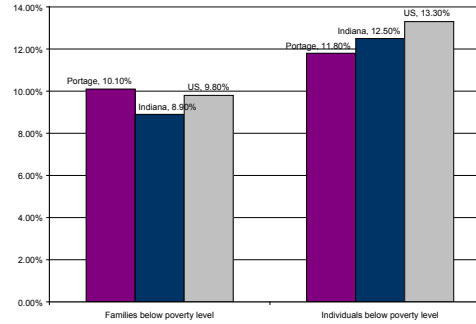
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2007 American Community Survey

Figure 3-4: Employment



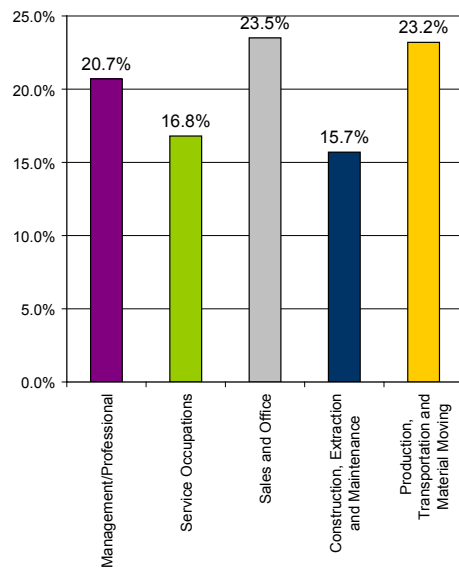
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2007 American Community Survey

Figure 3-6: Poverty Level



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2007 American Community Survey

Figure 3-5: Occupation Types



Source: US Census Bureau: 2007 American Community Survey

Table 3-2: Median Income (2007)

	Income (dollars)
Portage	\$47,500
Indiana	\$53,100
United States	\$41,994

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2007 American Community Survey

Employment

According to Figure 3-4, Portage had an employment level that was slightly higher than the employment level of the nation and slightly below that of the state in 2007. Figure 3-5 shows that there was about an equal distribution of jobs in five industries with production and sales being the largest sectors. Although production occupations accounts for a high percentage of jobs in Portage, the economy is shifting away from production and manufacturing to more “white collar” jobs. There will be a need for more specialized and diverse occupations as production industries become a less central role in the northwestern region.

Poverty levels for families and individuals in the city of Portage were below the national average but below the average of Indiana (Figure 3-6). Porter County had the highest median household income of all the counties in northwestern Indiana (Table 3-2).

With the expected increase in population for the city of Portage in the next thirty years it is important that employment and education remain a priority to ensure the sustainability of the city.

Housing

The city of Portage had an estimated 14,876 housing units within its jurisdiction in 2007; this represents an 11 percent increase from the 2000 census (Table 3-3). The city had a percentage of owner occupied housing units on track with the national average, 66.5 percent in Portage compared to 66.2 percent nationally. As of the 2000 Census, only 5.3 percent of the homes in Portage were vacant, half the vacancies as the United States average (9 percent). The average household size for the city of Portage is 2.6, identical to the national average.

Table 3-3: Housing			
Portage Housing Characteristics	1990 Census	2000 Census	2007 Estimates
Total housing units	10,864	13,375	14,876
Occupied housing units	10,520	12,746	14,095
Owner-occupied housing units	7,627	9,236	9,901
Renter-occupied housing units	2,893	3,510	4,194
Vacant housing units	344	629	781

US Census Bureau

4

LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT



LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT

This chapter provides a summary of existing and future land uses within the city of Portage. Located along the southern shores of Lake Michigan, Portage offers a mix of housing types, recreational activities and educational opportunities.

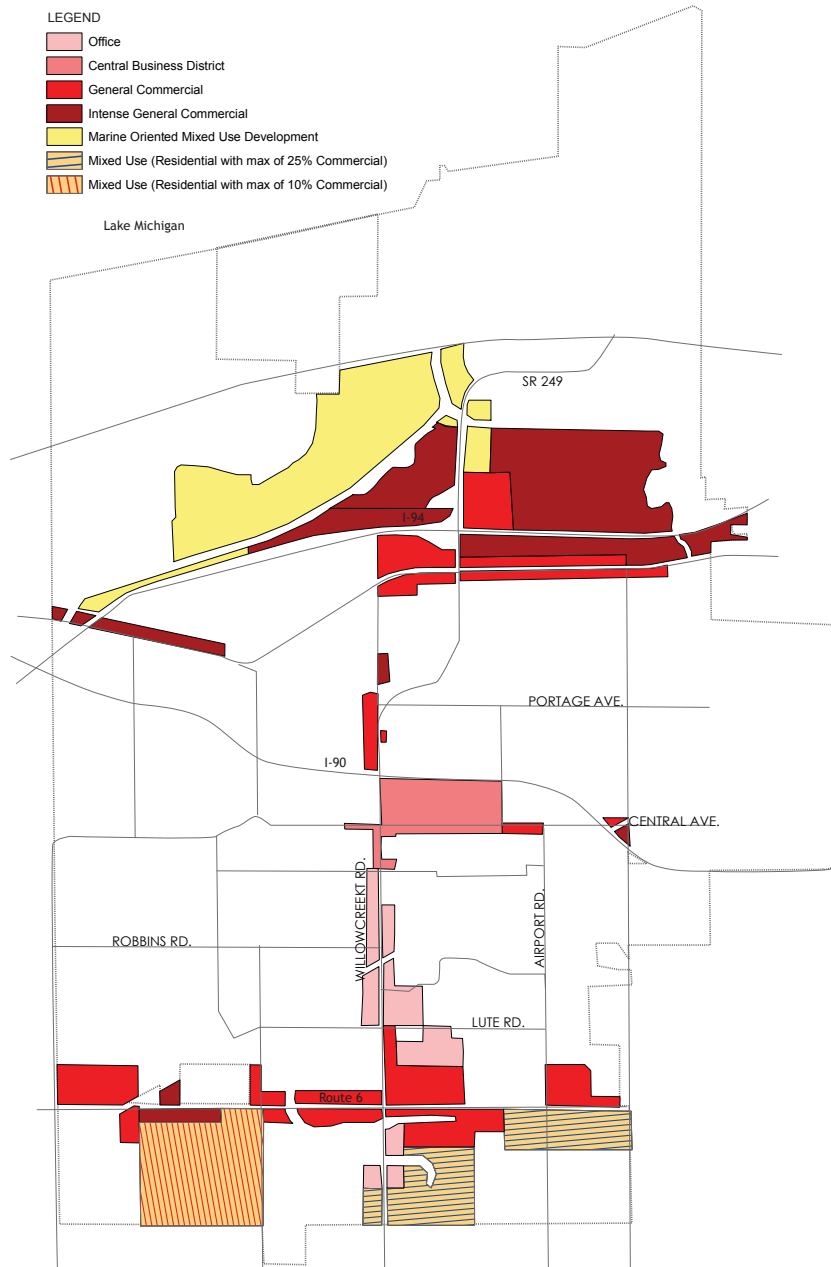
Prior to understanding the key issues of the city, the consultant team provided an initial planning analysis of Portage. As a part of this analysis, visual and computer mapping was created to show linkages between commercial “hot-spots”, sidewalk and trail areas, parks and open spaces and an overall street network. From this inventory, the city began to better understand key issues as they relate to connectivity, urban design, park space, commercial development, and specific corridor strengths and weaknesses. These areas are summarized in the land use section of this plan.

The city of Portage is made up of a mix of land uses. The predominate land use is residential which makes up 55 percent of all land area within the city. Commercial land uses are mainly found along major thoroughfares within the city.



Aerial photo of Portage.

COMMERCIAL CORRIDORS MAP



The majority of all commercial development within Portage is almost entirely auto-oriented rather than pedestrian oriented on a scale that supports nearby residential uses. Currently, there is a lack of pedestrian-oriented commercial retail within the city. Pedestrian traffic is discouraged due in part to narrow sidewalks that lack contiguity to adjacent land uses and a lack of public gathering places within commercial developments. This specific issue is addressed as part of the implementation section and action plans found within this document.



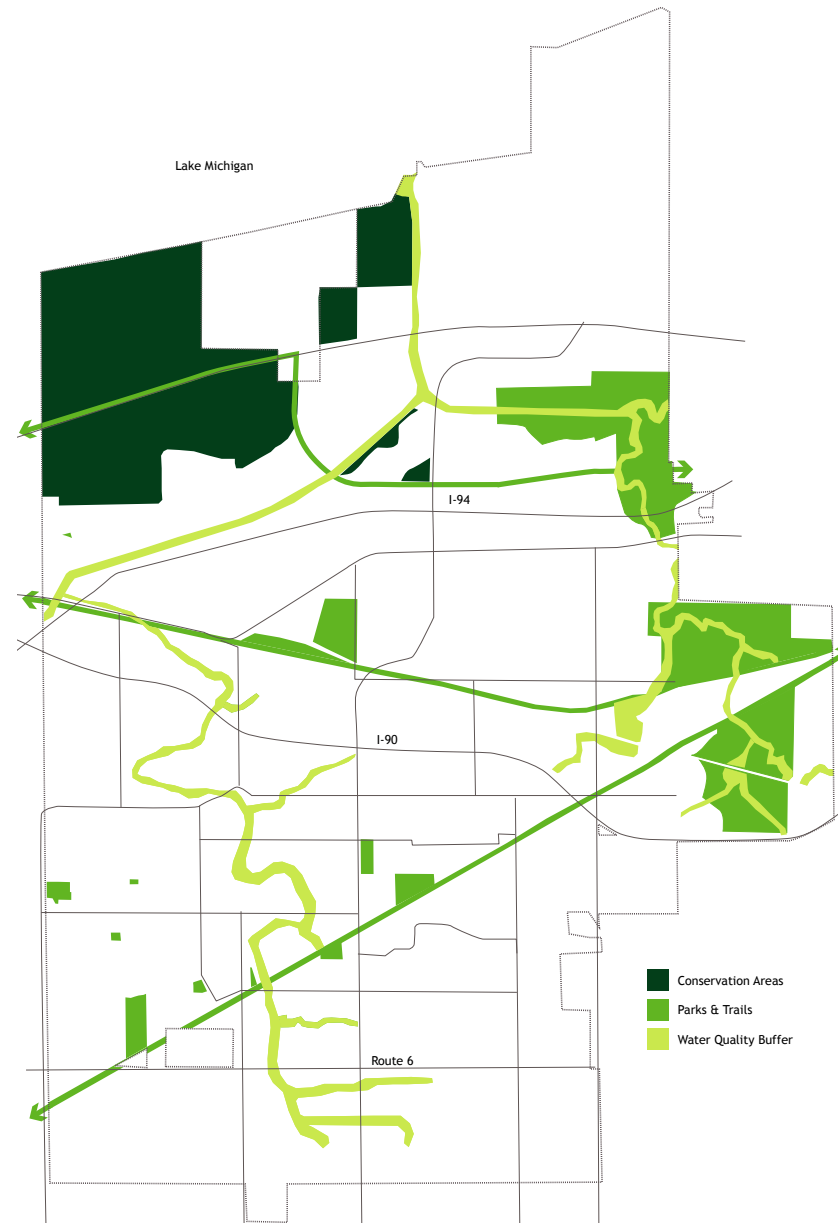
Pedestrian scaled development allows for a mix of both auto and pedestrian traffic.

Parks and open spaces are the greatest community assets within Portage. The parks and trails map, shown right, illustrates the existing regional parks and trails along with smaller neighborhood scale parks, regulated conservation and water quality buffers. Recently, the city developed a comprehensive park plan that addresses the goals and policies of park, trail and open space plans throughout the community.



Green space and parks are the greatest community asset in Portage. Woodland Park is an example of a neighborhood scaled park.

PARKS AND TRAILS MAP





Auto-oriented commercial development - Menards in Portage, Indiana.



Example of pedestrian oriented commercial development.

Existing Land Uses

The city is made up of six main land uses including, residential, commercial, office, industrial, institutional and open space. Below is a breakdown of these categories.

Residential

The city is made up of roughly 8,352 acres of residential land uses which include low to high density dwelling units.

Commercial

Commercial land uses within the city are typically developed on an auto-oriented scale and are generally found along the city's major corridors and downtown area. Approximately 1,469 acres of land is currently designated as commercial. As part of the city's downtown plan, smaller-scale pedestrian oriented development as well as mixed-use commercial development are proposed.

Office

The office land use classification makes up the smallest percentage of acres within Portage. It should be noted that some office space has been classified within mixed use developments or is a part of the Downtown District.

Industrial

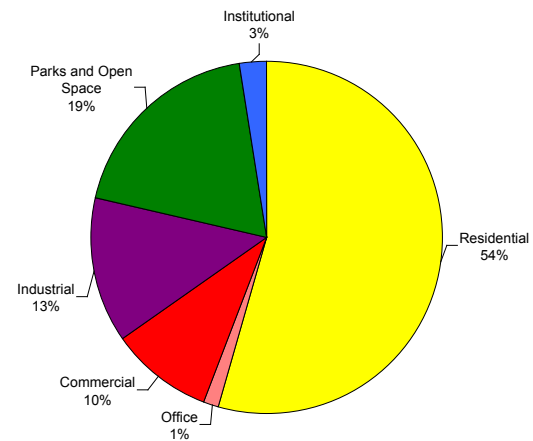
The largest industrial uses are found within the Port District. Industrial classifications include both heavy and light classifications. Approximately 2,031 acres are designated as industrial uses, of which 1,177 acres are located within the Port District.

Institutional Areas

Institutional areas, which include City Hall and public facilities, account for approximately 386 acres of the total land within the city.

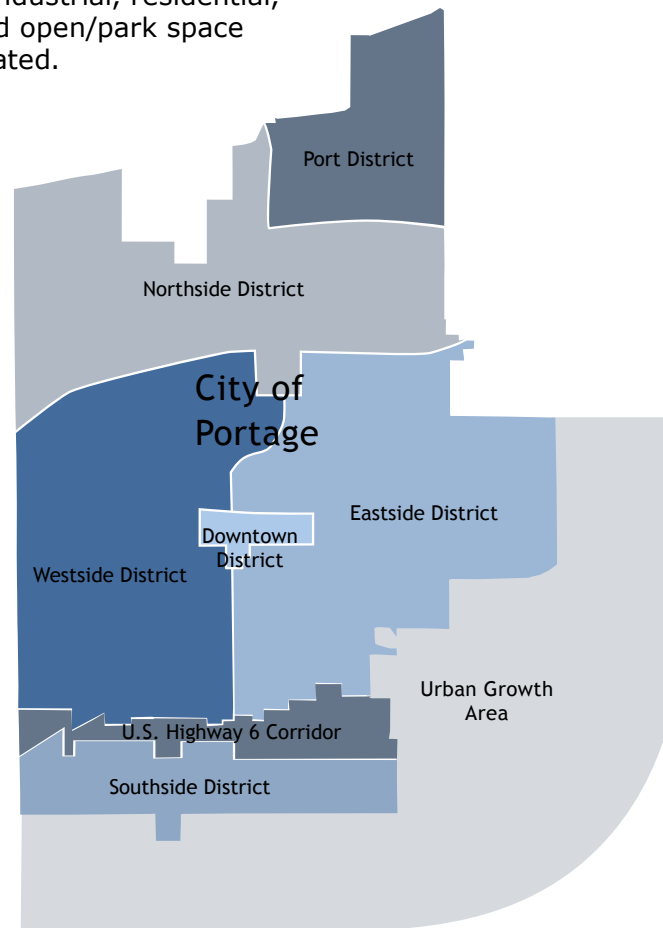
Parks and Open Space

Parks and open space, which include conservation areas make up approximately 2,899 acres of the city. Parks, open space, conservation areas and water quality buffers are scattered throughout the city and are typically located adjacent to residential uses.



Land Use Decisions

To assist in making future land use decisions, the city has been organized into seven planning districts as well as an urban growth area. Within each of these planning districts, a future land use map has been developed that illustrates the locations throughout the city where commercial, industrial, residential, mixed use and open/park space should be located.



Residential land use in the Southside District.



Commercial land use in the Downtown District.



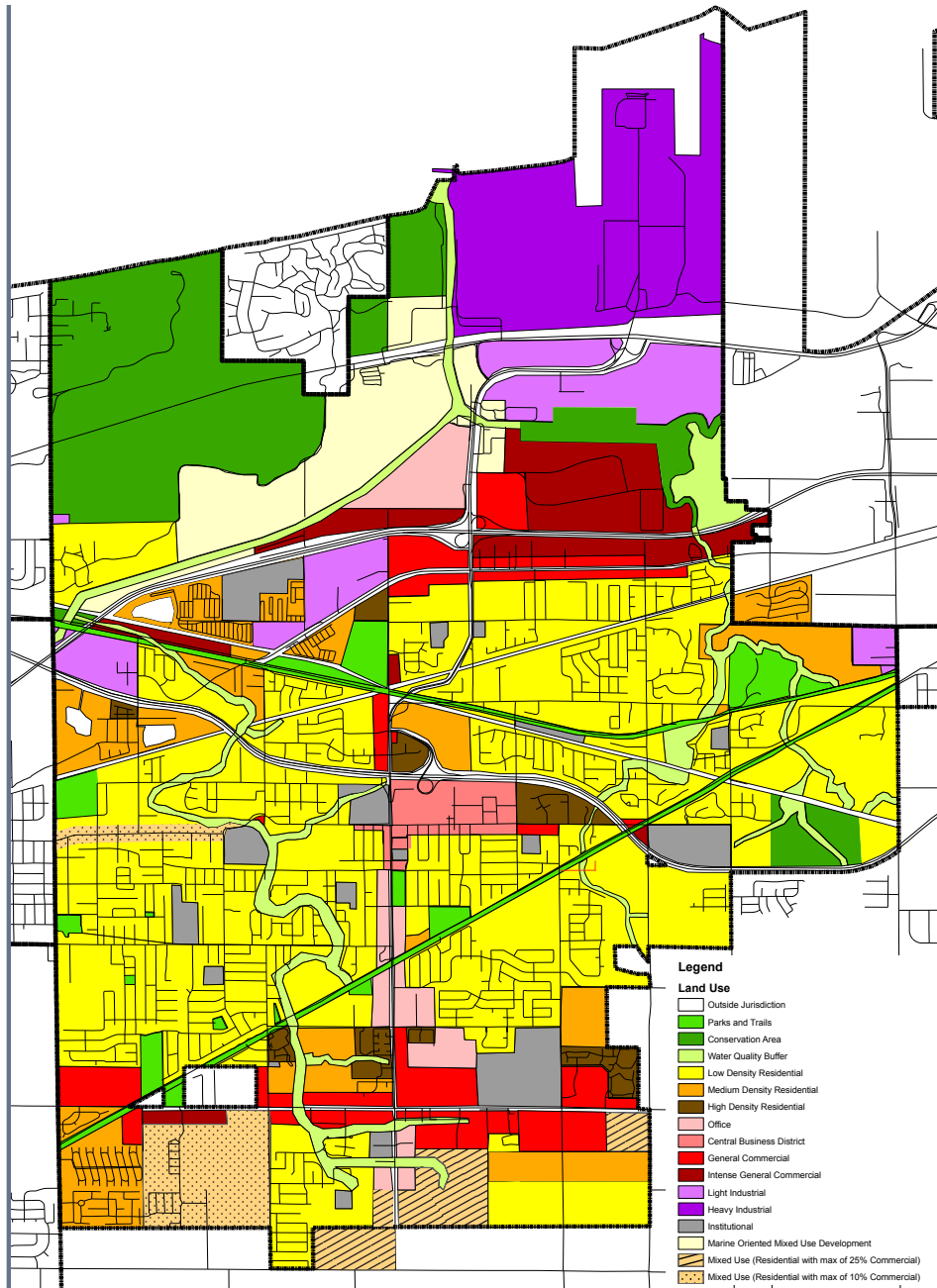
Industrial land use in the Eastside District.

Future Land Use

The following map identifies future land uses within the city of Portage. The land use allocations shown on the map are supported by land use projections linked to population projections and forecasts for the city of Portage.

Within the context of a land use map are land use classifications. These classifications outline the general purpose of the land use map. The city's zoning ordinance provides, in specific detail, the parameters for which this type of classification can occur within the city. Below is an overview of each land use classification found within this plan.

- Low Density Residential
- Medium Density Residential
- High Density Residential
- General Commercial
- Office
- Mixed Use
- Marine Oriented Mixed Use
- Central Business District



Low Density Residential

This classification provides for development of one to six dwelling units per acre. Such areas are largely comprised primarily of single-family detached dwellings.

Medium Density Residential

Dwelling types within this classification include single-family residential, duplexes, attached dwellings and multiple unit dwellings. Medium density residential includes a density range from six dwelling units per acre to ten dwelling units per acre. Common open space is required for and development guided within the medium density land use.

High Density Residential

This classification provides for development with a density ranging from ten to sixteen dwelling units per acre. Common open space is required for all development guided for high-density residential. Due to the aging demographic within the city of Portage, it is recommended that new high density residential include a mix of senior or active adult dwelling units. High density residential uses serve to promote the future prosperity of Portage. Quality high density residential serves in conjunction with improved employment centers to induce young professionals to live and work in Portage. High density residential, along with mixed use development, often serves as an exceptional

transition land use between high impact land uses (i.e. high intense commercial use, interstates, etc.) and lower density residential uses.

General Commercial

This commercial area contains retail uses intended to serve the community and surrounding areas. Uses within general commercial will include local shops as well as regional retailers, and super-regional retailers.

Office

These areas are primarily developed for traditional office/employment facilities. Office uses should be encouraged to incorporate a mix of uses to support the employment center.

Mixed Use

This category is intended to include a compatible mix of residential, service, retail, office and public use. These areas should include larger sidewalk areas for outdoor cafes, interconnected neighborhoods, public open space and design enhancements that support the intended use.

Marine Oriented Mixed Use

This land use is located within the Northside District. The focus of this district is to include a mix of housing, retail, recreational and tourist-oriented uses of the marina and Lake Michigan.

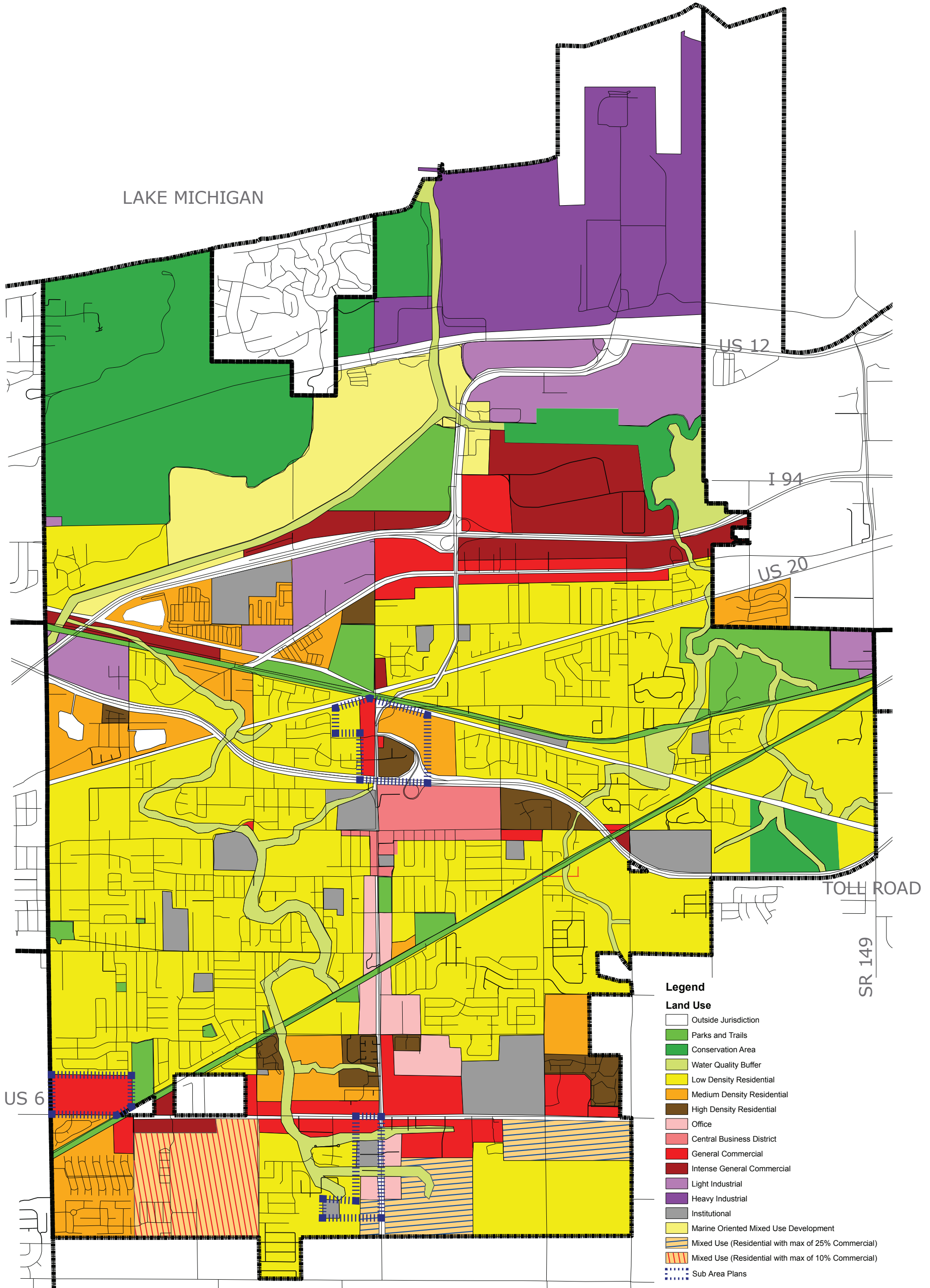


Medium Density Residential



The Bass Pro Shop is an example of a super-regional retailer within the General Commercial.

FUTURE LAND USE MAP





Light Industrial - AmeriPlex development in Portage, Indiana.



Institutional - Portage Middle School.

Central Business District

The Central Business District (CBD) includes a mix of office, retail, institutional and open space. Land development within the Downtown District must adhere to the policies found within the comprehensive plan as well as those of the Downtown Plan. This area should be developed by utilizing principals of traditional development with a reduced emphasis on vehicular traffic and parking, and placing a greater emphasis on character of the streetscape and pedestrian mobility and access.

Light Industrial

This land use category emphasizes light manufacturing, processing and assembly typical to most existing industries within the city of Portage. Light industrial land uses may also include distribution and warehouse facilities.

Heavy Industrial

Heavy industrial uses include the manufacturing of goods and storage of bulk materials. This type of use is most often associated with the production of steel in Portage and Northwest Indiana.

Parks and Open Space

This area includes park and recreational areas, natural corridors, drainage ways, and other open spaces. Parks and open space is not limited to public (federal, state, or municipal) ownership, but may be privately owned, or owned by a property owners group in conjunction with development.

Water Quality Buffer

This important land use classification is created to provide a natural buffer to protect water courses within the city of Portage. The water quality or riparian buffer serves as a natural filter of stormwater runoff and removes potential contaminants before they enter Portage's watercourses. Additional information about riparian buffers and the benefits they provide can be found at the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Water Division website (www.in.gov/dnr/water).

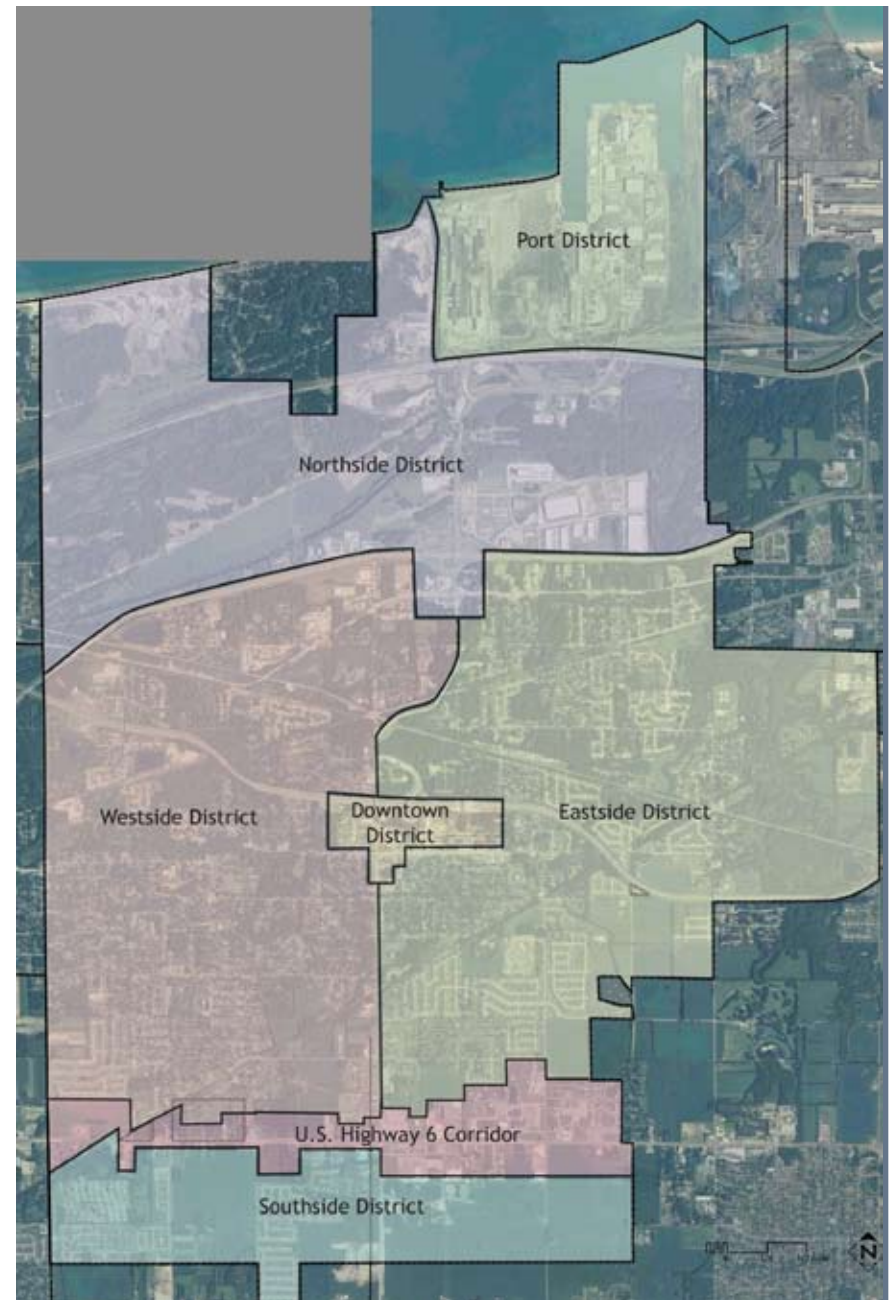
Institutional

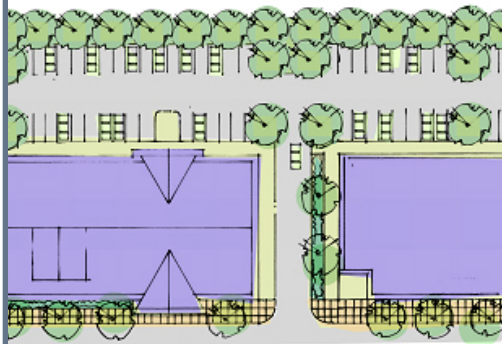
Institutional areas within Portage include City Hall, police, fire, Public Works, most educational facilities, public library, churches or places of worship, cemeteries, and city-owned property. Institutional uses generally serve the community as a whole.

Planning Districts

During the comprehensive planning process, eight planning districts were created as a means of addressing specific goals and policies that are unique to each district. The location of these districts was based upon geographical location, the arrangement of similar land uses or by physical barriers such as major streets, highways or water bodies. Within each planning district is a geographic introduction, percentage or land use, land use map and planning recommendations.

- Port District
- Northside District
- Westside District
- Eastside District
- Downtown District
- Southside District
- U.S. Highway 6 District
- Urban Growth District





A landscape buffer along the rear of a property can absorb the rainwater runoff and reduce flooding potential.

THE PORT PLANNING DISTRICT IS BOUNDED BY LAKE MICHIGAN TO THE NORTH, BURNS WATERWAY TO THE WEST, STATE ROAD 249 TO THE SOUTH AND THE TOWN OF BURNS HARBOR TO THE EAST.

DISTRICT HIGHLIGHTS

- THE INTERNATIONAL PORT OF INDIANA
- US STEEL MIDWEST PLANT

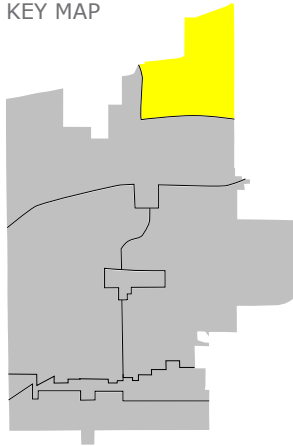


Port District

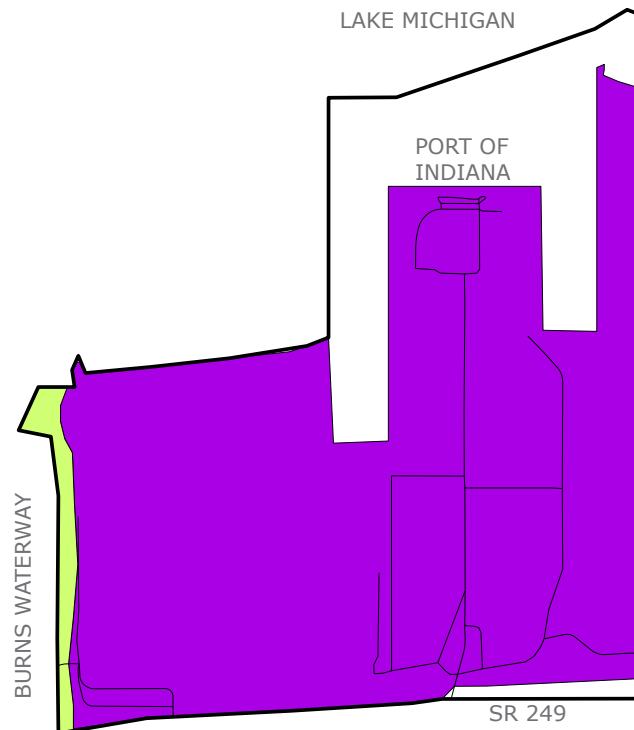
This district is located in the northeastern portion of the city. Of the 1,209 acres within the district, 97 percent is guided for heavy industrial uses. Among the largest users within this district is the Port of Indiana. Below are the policies of the Port District:

- **DEVELOP** partnerships between the Port of Indiana and the city of Portage.
- **FOCUS** on retaining and attracting industries that can use existing infrastructure.
- **WORK**, where appropriate, to relocate industries within the Port District.
- **ADAPT** new industry-wide requirements as new markets, technology, and industry regulations emerge.
- **DEVELOP** guidelines that incorporate light-imprint design (stormwater treatment trains, impervious surface coverage calculations, buffering, and landscaping techniques).
- **INVESTIGATE** using Port Authority bonding to enhance or realize economic development potential of the Port District.

KEY MAP



Recommended Land Use	Acreage Total	Percent
Heavy Industrial	1,177.06	97.3%
Water Quality Buffer	32.56	2.7%
Total Acreage	1,209.62	100%



A rain garden is a type of stormwater treatment system that allows rainwater runoff from impervious surfaces to be absorbed by the soil and used by wet-tolerant plants.

THE NORTHSIDE DISTRICT IS ROUGHLY BOUNDED BY LAKE MICHIGAN, TOWN OF OGDEN DUNES AND US 12 TO THE NORTH, LAKE COUNTY TO THE WEST, I-94 TO THE SOUTH, AND BURNS HARBOR TO THE EAST.

DISTRICT HIGHLIGHTS

- AMERIPLEX
- PORTAGE PUBLIC MARINA AND MARINA SHORES DEVELOPMENT
- LAKEFRONT PARK/ NATIONAL LAKESHORE
- I-94 INTERCHANGE AT SR 149
- PORTAGE NORTHSIDE BUSINESS PARK

Northside District

The Northside District has a mix of uses ranging from industrial to commercial and marine oriented mixed use. Located within this district is the AmeriPlex Planned Development and gateway area to Lake Michigan. Any development or redevelopment within this area should align with the guidelines of this chapter as well as those outlined within the Northside Master Plan. Below are the guiding principles for this district.

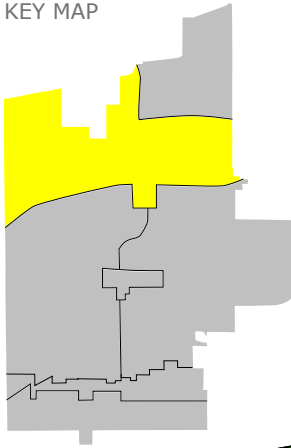
- **CONTINUE** implementation of the Marquette Plan and Northside Master Plan to enhance this district as a tourism destination.
- **REFINE** development opportunities of the Northside Plan east of the "Confluence."
- **INCORPORATE** design standards for controlling runoff, LEED-ND standards, and stormwater treatment systems into commercial and retail development.
- **DEVELOP** buffer standards for commercial sites, particularly those that are adjacent to residential areas.

- **INVESTIGATE** opportunities to consolidate or relocate industry and business when mutually beneficial.
- **PROMOTE** the development of a comprehensive signage and wayfinding system.
- **WORK** with district stakeholders and neighboring communities to construct the Marquette Greenway Trail.
- **BUFFER** all uses adjacent to the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore.
- **DEVELOP** architectural standards for construction along thoroughfares to reflect the importance of this district.

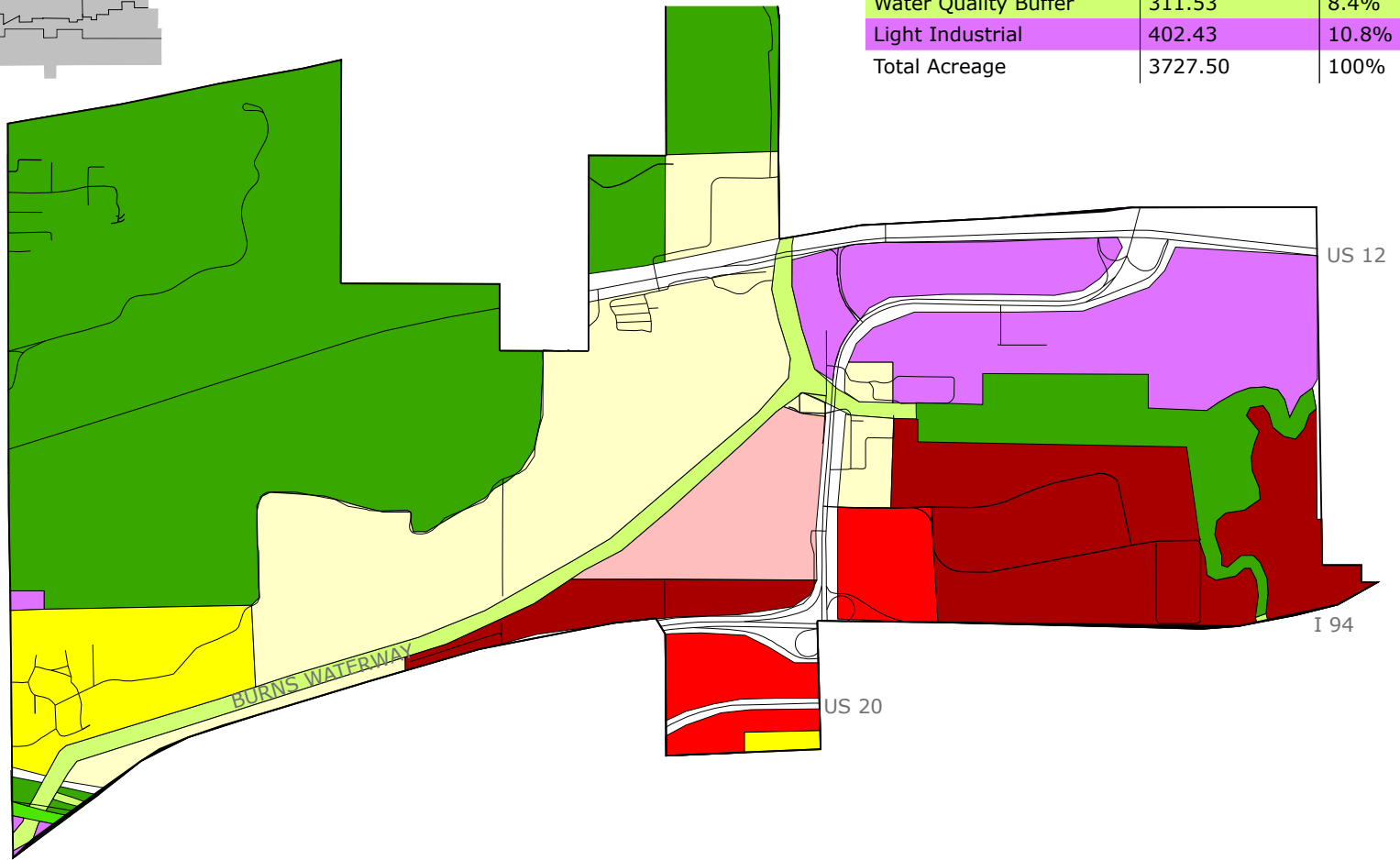


Images of wayfinding signage that will be installed by the city.

KEY MAP



Recommended Land Use	Acreage Total	Percent
Intense General Commercial	298.6	8.0%
General Commercial	149.50	4.0%
Office	136.00	3.6%
Low Density Residential	185.57	5.0%
Marine Oriented Mixed Use Development	658.45	17.7%
Conservation Area	1442.06	38.7%
Parks and Trails	143.36	3.8%
Water Quality Buffer	311.53	8.4%
Light Industrial	402.43	10.8%
Total Acreage	3727.50	100%





Mixed use development promotes walking and reduces vehicle trips.

THE WESTSIDE DISTRICT IS ROUGHLY BORDERED BY I-94 TO THE NORTH, LAKE COUNTY TO THE WEST, US 6 COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR TO THE SOUTH, AND WILLOWCREEK ROAD TO THE EAST.

DISTRICT HIGHLIGHTS

- TRADITIONAL GARYTON AREA
- WILLOWCREEK WATERSHED
- WOODLAND AND COUNTRYVIEW PARKS
- FEGELY MIDDLE SCHOOL

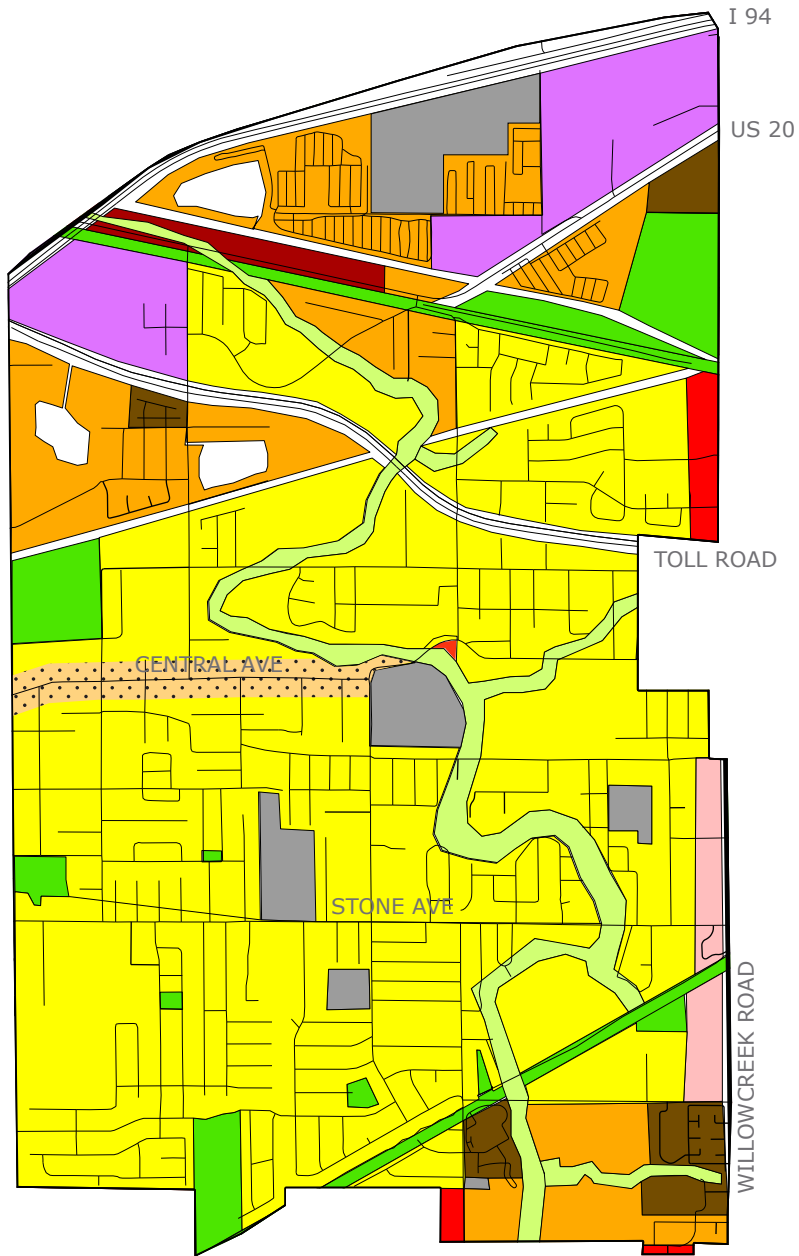
Westside District

This district includes a mix of traditional single-family housing types as well as those that have been converted into duplex units. Most housing within this district was built over the last fifty years. Low density residential uses provide the greatest mix of housing within this district.

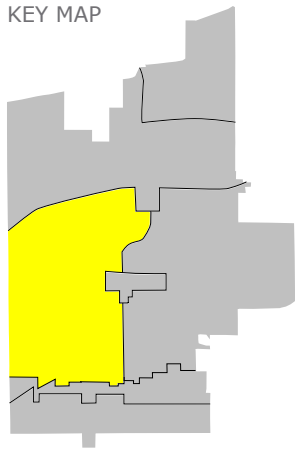
- **INFILL** development will be allowed on an urban neighborhood scale.
- **DEVELOPMENT** standards will be enforced within this area so that infill development or redevelopment of commercial areas is in a compatible style and scale as adjoining uses.
- **ALLOW** for the incorporation of mixed use development in the northern portion of the district.
- **PROMOTE** medium density development on a scale of 6-10 units/acre.
- **DEVELOP** a capital improvement plan to rebuild aging infrastructure in the district.
- **PROMOTE** private reinvestment and housing maintenance standards within this district through zoning flexibility.



Example of a commercial area that conforms to development standards for a uniform style.



KEY MAP



Recommended Land Use	Acreage Total	Percent
Intense General Commercial	40.00	1.1%
General Commercial	35.58	1.0%
Office	50.21	1.3%
Light Industrial	231.77	6.2%
Mixed Use (Residential with max of 10% Commercial)	60.00	1.6%
High Density Residential	87.66	2.3%
Medium Density Residential	479.77	12.9%
Low Density Residential	2127.80	57.0%
Parks and Trails	246.56	6.6%
Water Quality Buffer	204.21	5.5%
Institutional	167.97	4.5%
Total Area	3731.53	100%

THE EASTSIDE DISTRICT IS ROUGHLY BORDERED BY I-94 TO THE NORTH, WILLOWCREEK ROAD TO THE WEST, US 6 COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR TO THE SOUTH AND THE CORPORATE LIMITS TO THE EAST

DISTRICT HIGHLIGHTS

- IMAGINATION GLEN PARK
- TOLL ROAD INTERCHANGE
- RESIDENTIAL GROWTH AREAS
- PARK AND TRAIL INTEGRATION INTO NEIGHBORHOODS



Stormwater management implemented with a parking lot rain garden.

Eastside District

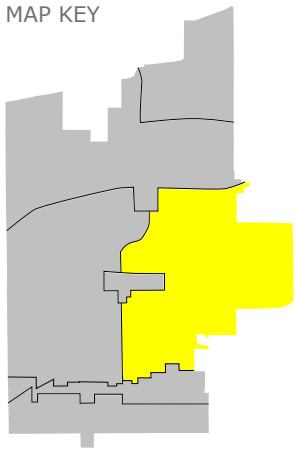
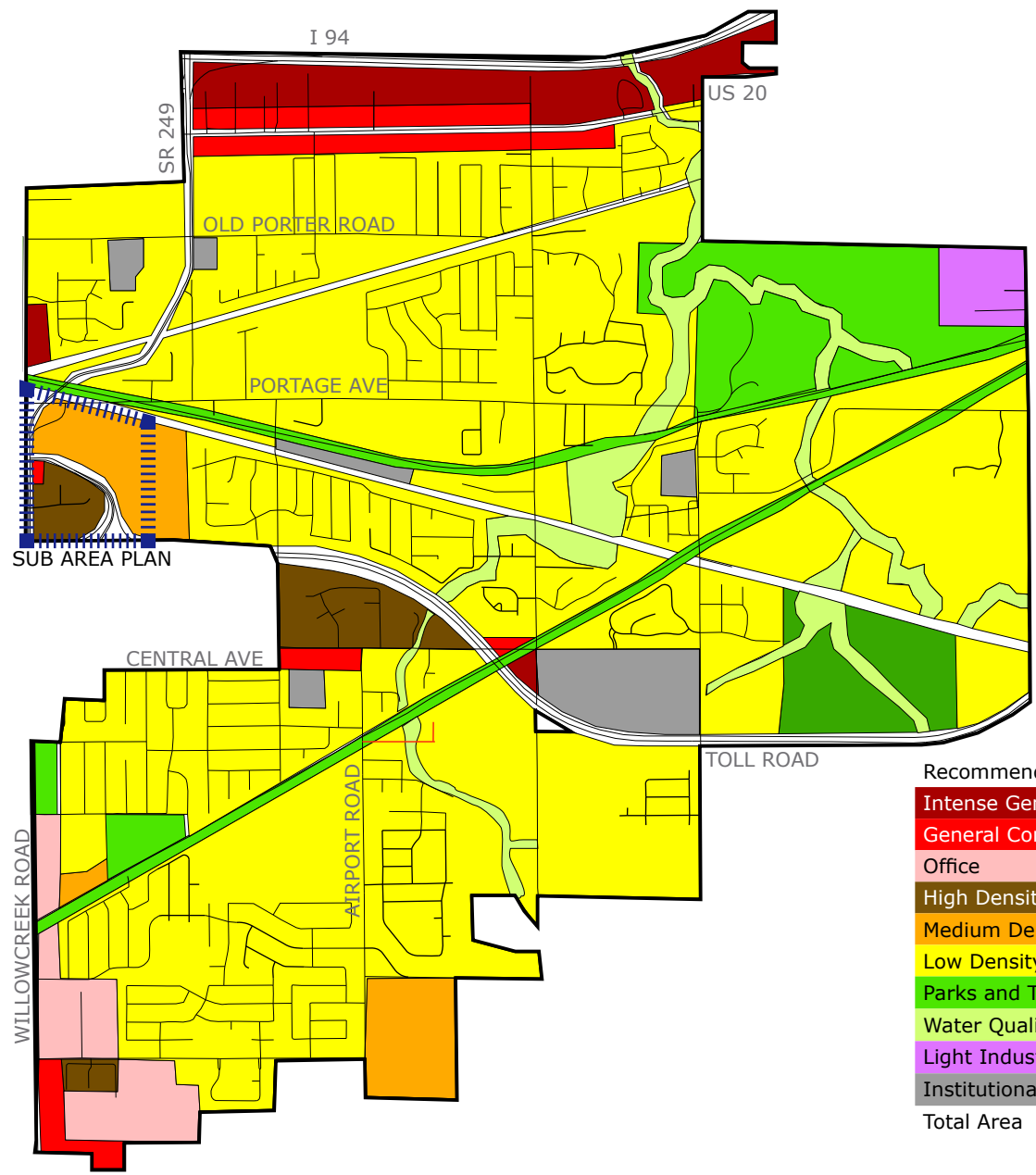
The primary land use within this district is low density residential. Housing within this district includes a mix of newer homes built on traditional suburban lots.

- **ENCOURAGE** the continued prosperity of low density development within this area by allowing flexibility of building types and housing styles.
- **MAKE** improvements to the county street network system by supporting public/private reinvestment.
- **UPGRADE** existing roadways (Old Porter Road, Portage Avenue, Central Avenue, Hamstrom Road, Samuelson Road, McCool Road and Lenburg Road).
- **INSTALL** sidewalks, curbs, streetlights and crosswalks.
- **IMPROVE** connections to Iron Horse Heritage Trail, Prairie Duneland Trail and Imagination Glen.

- **IDENTIFY** opportunities to acquire property along the Salt Creek Corridor and develop a pathway system to connect the corridor to the Marquette Greenway Trail.
- **DEVELOP** a comprehensive stormwater management plan strategy to improve water quality of Salt Creek Watershed and Lake Michigan Watershed.
- **PROMOTE** the recreational features within the Eastside District (Imagination Glen, soccer fields, and BMX facility).



Pedestrian realm amenities include wide sidewalks, street trees, and decorative streetlights.



Recommended Land Use	Acreage Total	Percent
Intense General Commercial	156.20	3.6%
General Commercial	127.88	2.9%
Office	110.62	2.5%
High Density Residential	104.18	2.4%
Medium Density Residential	139.84	3.2%
Low Density Residential	2809.05	64.3%
Parks and Trails	544.36	12.5%
Water Quality Buffer	219.69	5.0%
Light Industrial	45.18	1.0%
Institutional	114.79	2.6%
Total Area	4371.79	100%

THE DOWNTOWN DISTRICT IS ROUGHLY BORDERED BY THE INDIANA TOLL ROAD TO THE NORTH, WILLOWCREEK MIDDLE SCHOOL TO THE WEST, THE CENTRAL AVENUE CORRIDOR TO THE SOUTH AND HAMSTROM ROAD TO THE EAST

DISTRICT HIGHLIGHTS

- INFRASTRUCTURE IN PLACE FOR EXTENSIVE REDEVELOPMENT
- OFFICE/INSTITUTIONAL SPACE ANTICIPATED TO OPEN IN 2010
- WILLOWCREEK MIDDLE SCHOOL
- CITY HALL AND MUNICIPAL OFFICES

Downtown District

The Downtown District is guided for central business land uses. Existing uses include City Hall, fast-food restaurants, medium-box retail centers, and shopping centers. When considering new development within this district, the city’s downtown plan must be considered.

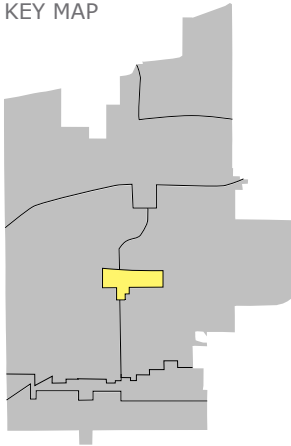
- **DEVELOPMENT** should follow the design standards found within the 1999 Downtown Development Plan, as amended.
- **DEVELOP** sources and uses of capital funds.
- **PRIORITIZE** infill development within this area and identify build-ready opportunity sites.
- **CONSIDER** revisions to the permitted land uses within the Downtown District to further encourage traditional mixed use and central business development.
- **IMPLEMENT** public investment projects to promote private investment confidence.
- **CONTINUE** to implement Central Avenue Business District Plan.
- **DEVELOP** a marketing plan and/or identify developers to enter into a public-private partnership to develop sites.

- **CONSTRUCT** Founders Square Park as shown in the CABD Plan.
- **COMPLETE** Downtown Connector Trail.
- **CONTINUE** to implement a Higher Learning Campus Master Plan.
- **EXPLORE** opportunities to establish a Fire Academy.

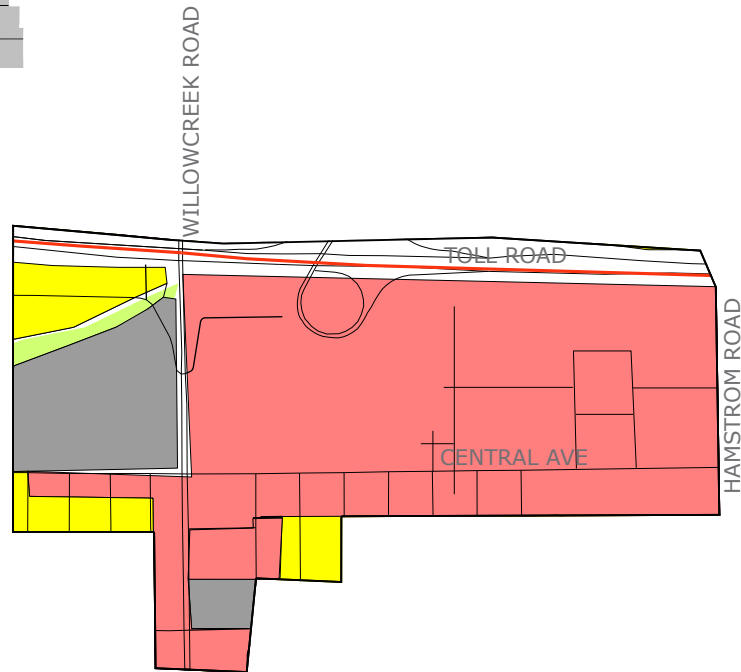


Preliminary Higher Learning campus Master Plan for downtown Portage.

KEY MAP



Recommended Land Use	Acreage Total	Percent
Central Business District	169.13	70.2%
Low Density Residential	14.30	5.9%
Water Quality Buffer	3.83	1.6%
Institutional	39.59	16.4%
Total Area	240.85	100%



THE SOUTHSIDE DISTRICT IS ROUGHLY BOUNDED BY THE US 6 DISTRICT TO THE NORTH, LAKE COUNTY TO THE WEST, AND THE CORPORATE LIMITS TO THE SOUTH AND EAST

DISTRICT HIGHLIGHTS

- PORTER HOSPITAL CAMPUS
- PORTER COUNTY GOVERNMENT CENTER ANNEX
- RESIDENTIAL AND MIXED USE GROWTH CENTER

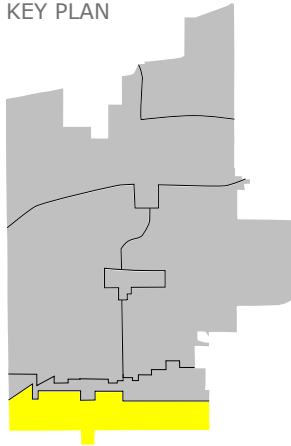


Southside District

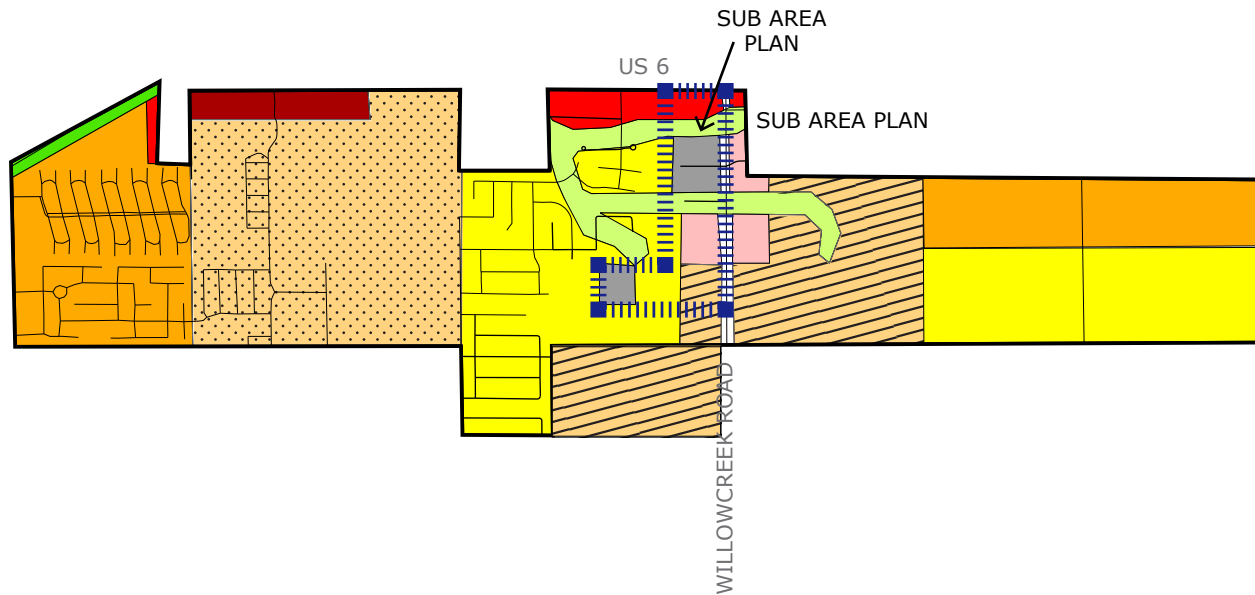
The Southside District includes a mix of mixed use residential and medium density residential uses. Housing within this district includes those built within the past twenty years and includes split-level attached garages on traditional suburban lots.

- **PROMOTE** development of complex neighborhoods of varying density and use.
- **DEVELOPMENT** standards will be enforced within this area so that infill development or redevelopment of commercial areas is in the same style and scale as adjoining uses.
- **ESTABLISH** development requirements that install new or upgraded existing infrastructure as development occurs.
- **PROMOTE** the development of regional detention facilities for stormwater management.
- **ESTABLISH** flexible zoning requirements to allow for innovative trends and sustainability in development.
- **IDENTIFY** and develop a strategic plan to address stormwater problems, both existing and predicted.
- **ENCOURAGE** mixed use development that incorporates a range of housing densities and neighborhood scale commercial uses.

KEY PLAN



Recommended Land Use	Acreage Total	Percent
Intense General Commercial	26.78	1.9%
General Commercial	33.76	2.4%
Office	26.18	1.9%
Mixed Use (Residential with max of 10% Commercial)	324.78	23.4%
Mixed Use (Residential with max of 25% Commercial)	198.41	14.3%
Medium Density Residential	178.68	12.9%
Low Density Residential	500.67	36%
Parks and Trails	10.60	0.8%
Water Quality Buffer	69.10	5.0%
Institutional	20.90	1.5%
Total Area	1389.86	100%



THE US HIGHWAY 6 DISTRICT INCLUDES COMMERCIAL PROPERTIES FRONTING ON AND IN DIRECT RELATION TO US HIGHWAY 6.

DISTRICT HIGHLIGHTS

- PORTAGE HIGH SCHOOL
- COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL SCALE COMMERCIAL CORRIDOR



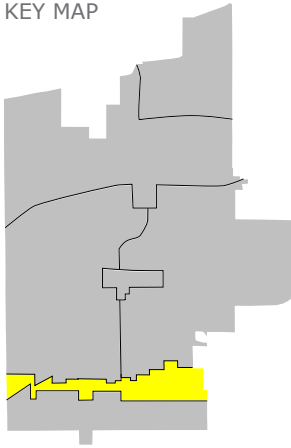
US Highway 6 District

This district includes a mix of general commercial, office and mixed use residential. Housing within this district includes townhomes, and commercial and highway oriented retail uses.

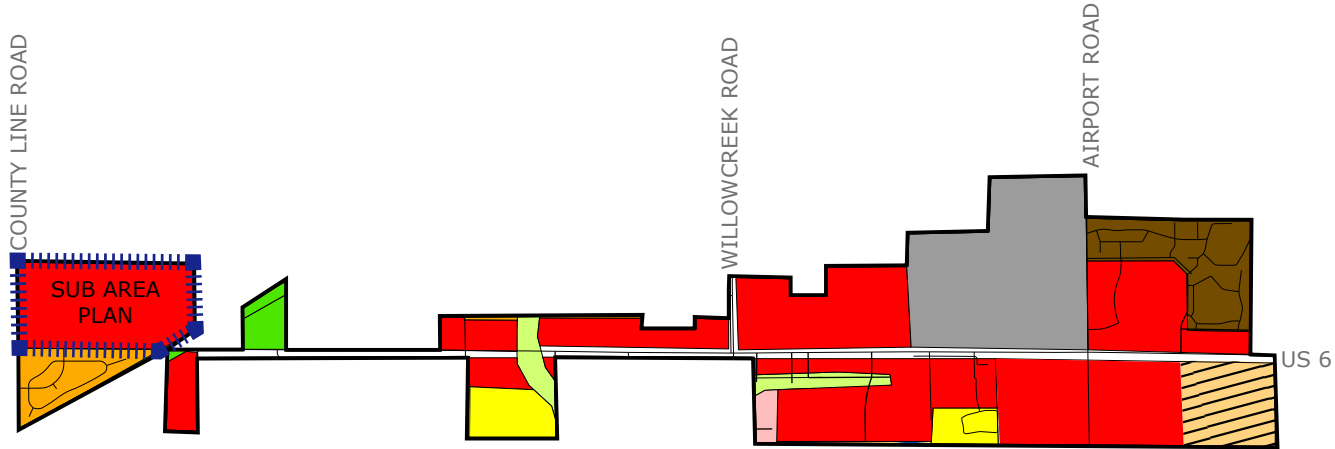
- **LIMIT** drive-through operations within this area as a means to reduce traffic congestion. All drive-through operations will require a master plan for building and traffic function.
- **IMPLEMENT** desired streetscape improvements including landscaping, street lighting and traffic calming within the district.
- **IDENTIFY** funds and install landscape improvements.
- **CONSIDER** installation of streetlights along the corridor to improve user safety.
- **INSTALL** traffic calming measures to improve vehicular and pedestrian safety.
- **ENCOURAGE** continued pedestrian connections and the use of alternate transportation methods.
- **CREATE** specialized site development standards for large scale retail development.
- **ESTABLISH** a clear set of architectural standards to protect the visual character of the corridor.

- **ENCOURAGE** shared parking between adjoining properties.
- **EXAMINE** redevelopment opportunities for under utilized commercial properties.
- **ADDRESS** water quality and intense stormwater concentrations by reconstituting natural watercourses and implementing stormwater BMPs.

KEY MAP



Recommended Land Use	Acreage Total	Percent
Intense General Commercial	4.07	0.6%
General Commercial	387.93	52.7%
Office	6.08	0.8%
Mixed Use (Residential with max of 25% Commercial)	64.77	8.8%
High Density Residential	58.44	7.9%
Medium Density Residential	33.14	4.5%
Low Density Residential	33.25	4.5%
Parks and Trails	11.34	1.5%
Water Quality Buffer	21.35	2.9%
Institutional	133.60	18.2%
Total Area	735.97	100%





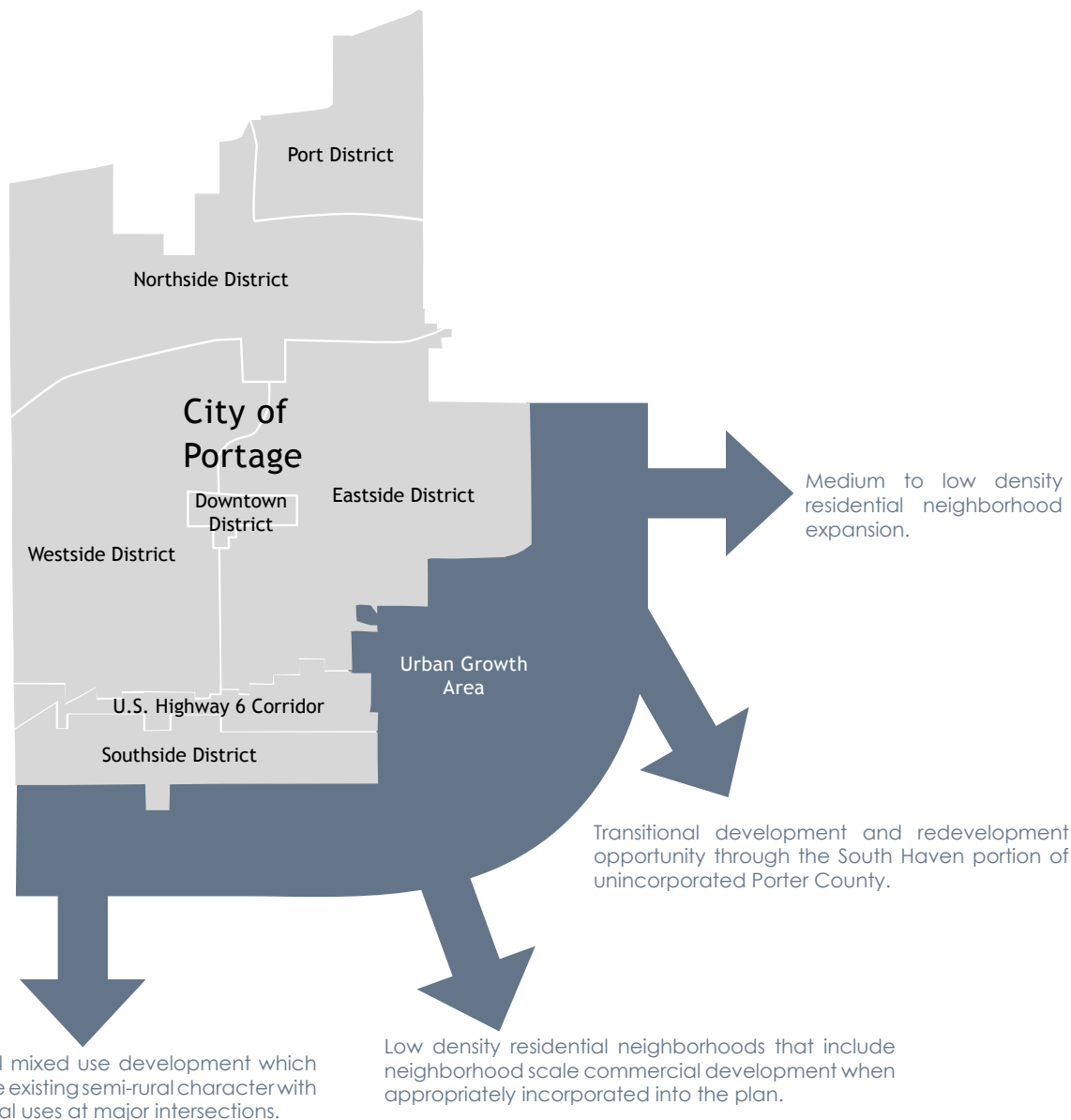
Ghost platting is a method of planning for future development located within the City's extraterritorial jurisdiction. Platting is established by creating lines for future splits of large lots into smaller lots and dedication of rights-of-way and easements for future streets, utilities, stormwater facilities, etc.

Urban Growth Area

A critical component to this plan was to create policies for land use and management of areas that fall next to the city's boundaries. By creating partnerships in urban planning, transportation and public utilities and facilities a balanced and sustainable (economic and environmental) plan can be developed.

It is the full intention of the city of Portage to work with adjoining jurisdictions in an effort to create urban fringe development opportunities outside of the city's boundaries. The city encourages the cooperation between adjacent jurisdictions, but will require development that utilizes municipal services to be annexed into Portage. The Porter County Planning Department agrees that new development belongs adjacent to infrastructure and shall be incorporated into municipal boundaries. As such, this plan seeks to prevent premature subdivisions and spot zoning. In order to achieve these goals, the city as developed the following recommendations for the Urban Growth Area:

- **DEVELOP** premature subdivision standards for growth outside of the city limits.
- **INCORPORATE** ghost platting requirements as a part of all preliminary plat applications outside of the city limits.
- **WORK** in cooperation with Porter County to develop a multi-jurisdictional extraterritorial plan.
- **DEVELOP** a capacity and facility plan for the east and southern growth boundaries.
- **DEVELOP** a comprehensive trail plan for areas east and south of the city.
- **PROMOTE** orderly annexation agreements as procedures for annexation to accommodate new development, provided that sufficient public facilities can be provided to serve new development.
- **DEVELOP** a transportation plan to create a viable north/south connector route between Portage and US Route 30.



ACTION STEPS

- Create a voluntary Annexation Checklist. The checklist will outline requirements, criteria, or factors to be considered before action on the request is taken.
- Meet with Porter County to discuss extra-territorial planning authority in the urban growth area identified in the plan.
- Develop premature subdivision standards for the urban growth area (2010).
- Incorporate ghost platting requirements as part of all primary plat applications within the urban growth area.
- Develop a Capacity and Facility Plan for the eastern and southern sections of the urban growth area.
- Develop a Comprehensive Park/Open Space and Trail Plan for the urban growth area.
- Commission the Willowcreek Road Corridor Extension. The Corridor Plan will identify the preferred route and development characteristics of Willowcreek Road from County Road 700N to Indiana 130.



HOUSING

As of 2007, Portage had an estimated population of 36,505 people. Based upon 2007 statistics, there is a total of 14,876 housing units within the city. Of that, 9,901 or 67 percent were owner-occupied and 4,194 or 28 percent were rental units (Table 4-1). Based upon 2007 estimates, the estimated median house price for a single family dwelling within the city of Portage was \$154,008. The median gross rent for a rental-occupied unit was \$728. The following table is a comparison of housing ownership on a state and local level.

Through public workshops, a perception that Portage had an overabundance of rental housing was identified. Through examination of 2007 Census estimates, one can see that the percentage of owner occupied housing in Portage is similar to that of the state and 7-10 percent higher than the comparable communities of Columbus and Richmond, Indiana.

Housing development has slowed city-wide and throughout the region. While this reflects nationwide trends, it is also part of a recurrent market cycle that will reserve itself in due course. When the housing market rebounds, it will be critical that the city develop the tools necessary to meet the needs of its residents.

	Total Units	% Owner Occupied	% Rental
Portage	14,095	70.2%	29.8%
Columbus	16,303	63.2%	36.8%
New Albany	17,385	86.9%	13.1%
Nobelsville	15,765	76.3%	23.7%
Richmond	15,031	60.7%	39.3%
Statewide	2,447,887	72.1%	27.9%

Portage has a mix of housing available. Housing design, quality and value have been maintained in most cases of the city. During the January 2009 open house, the public was invited to discuss housing opportunities and challenges. Below is a list of the top six issues identified by the public during that meeting:

1. More owner-occupied housing is needed.
2. Mix of housing styles and housing types.
3. Senior housing uses should be developed near services.
4. Achieve substantial architectural improvements.
5. Develop life-style centers.
6. Ensure that development policies are clear, transparent and understood between both the applicant/developer, staff, planning commission and council.

To accurately understand housing needs in the long-term, a housing needs assessment should be undertaken. This type of analysis will provide detailed housing forecasting based upon projected demographics. With projected population demands as well as existing housing stock, it appears that the greatest housing need is maintaining the city's existing stock through stabilization as well as the

development of affordable, senior housing. Both types of housing are further described within the housing types and redevelopment strategies.

Housing and Design Standards

During community meetings in January and March as well as discussions with local developers, elected officials and key stakeholders, the question of housing need was asked. The results of these discussions reflect the support for new housing that is varied to meet the needs of multiple markets. The overwhelming need identified throughout these discussions was to develop higher end housing, stabilize existing housing stock, create mixed use developments whereby owner-occupied housing and a mix of business retail or commercial is developed on the ground floor and senior housing opportunities for the aging demographic.



Example of mixed use development with retail on the ground floor and housing above.



Independent living facilities offer seniors the mobility, amenities and freedom to maintain rich and active lifestyles.



The nonprofit organization, Rebuilding Together, install a new roof on a home in Portage. The organization's mission is to preserve affordable homeownership and revitalize communities.

Housing Types and Redevelopment Strategies

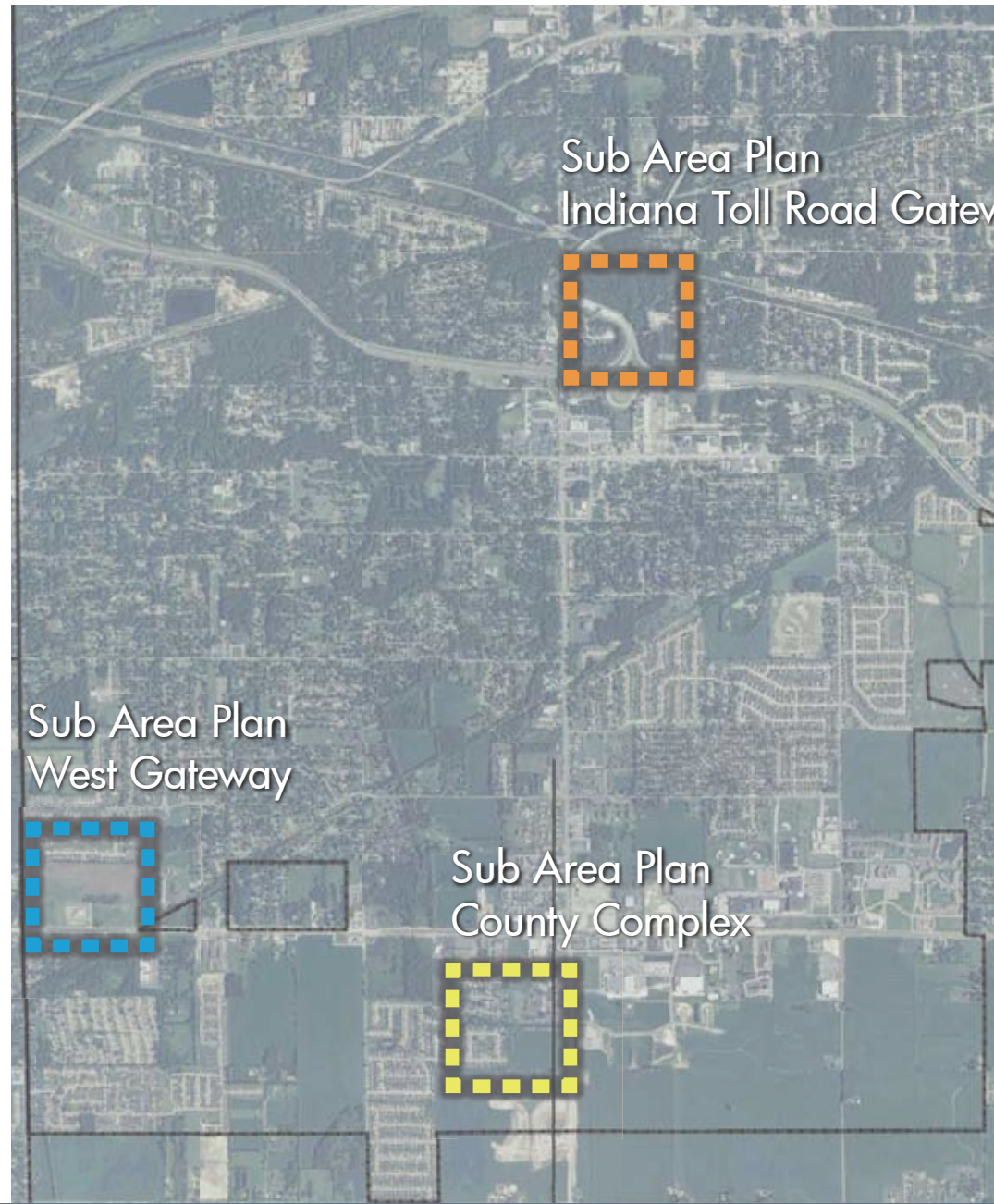
Perhaps the greatest issue facing the city with regard to housing is not necessarily new housing construction, but identifying redevelopment and reinvestment strategies to stabilize of existing housing stock. The following is a sampling of funding tools the city may wish to consider as a part of redevelopment and stabilization process.

1. Code enforcement. By continuing city-wide code enforcement efforts, the integrity of property values will be maintained.
2. Offer developer incentives for appropriate infill. Development incentives may include stabilization programs through local, state or federal programs. The overall purpose of this tool is to ensure that existing housing stock is maintained and preserved in the long-term.
3. City investment in infrastructure. City-wide investments and capital improvement programs will be developed in conjunction to this planning process. Several investment projects are identified within the action cards and implementation steps within this document.
4. Housing Authority. Depending upon the 2010 Census results, the City may develop a Housing Authority. The overall purpose of the Portage Housing Authority would be to create specific tools for housing stabilization, maintenance and housing support for those in need.
5. Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Federal programs like HUD may be a consideration for both short-term and long-term city-wide housing endeavors. HUD provides both grants and loans to qualifying communities. At this point, Portage does not qualify for Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding.



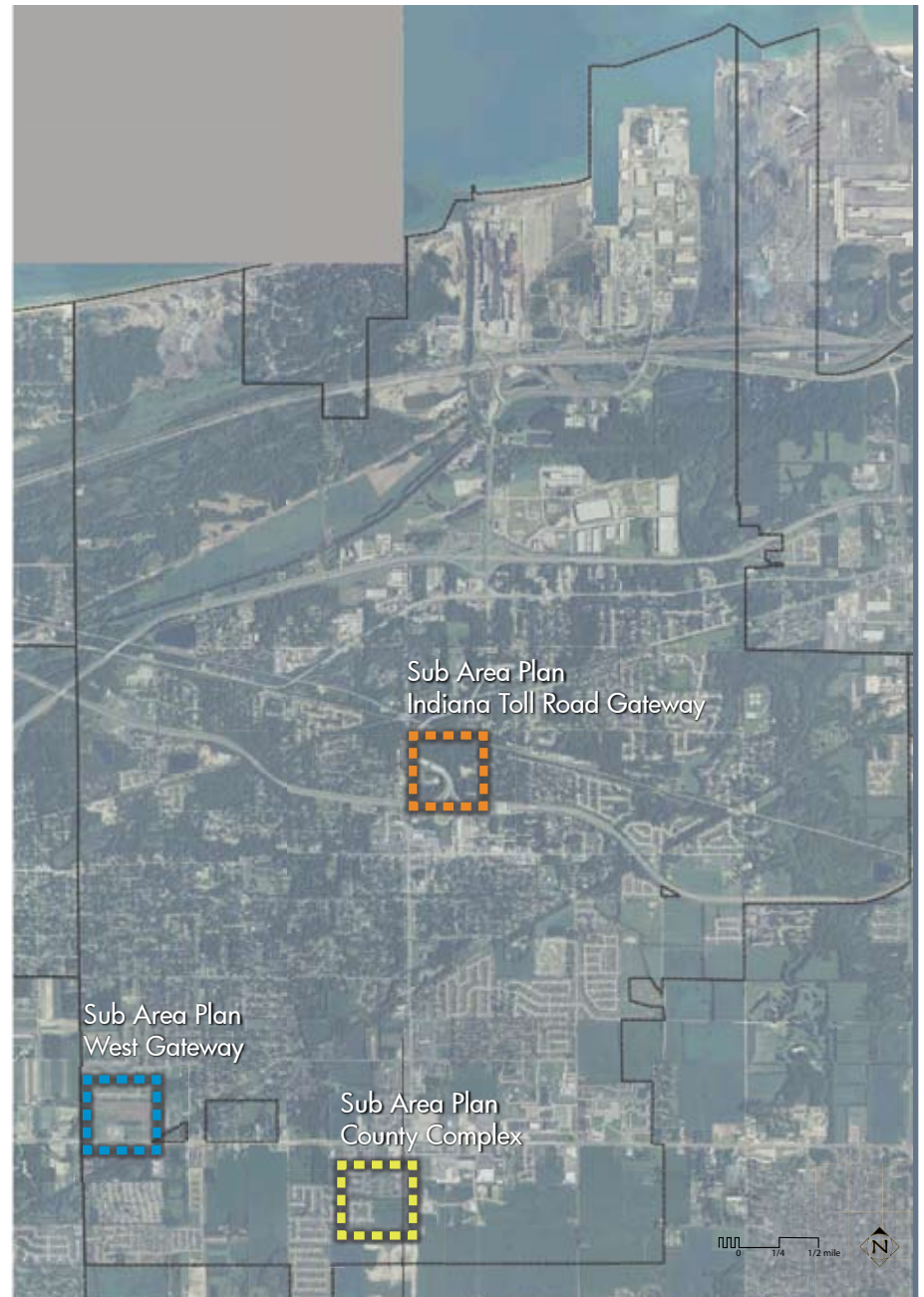
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SUB AREA PLANNING



SUB AREA PLANNING

As part of this plan three sub areas within the city's planning districts were identified and further examined. These areas were chosen due to their existing locations, redevelopment opportunity, or based upon public input. While the following maps identify proposed land uses, further master planning will be required.





Example of proposed Low Density Residential



Example of proposed Medium Density Residential.



Example of proposed Mixed Use.

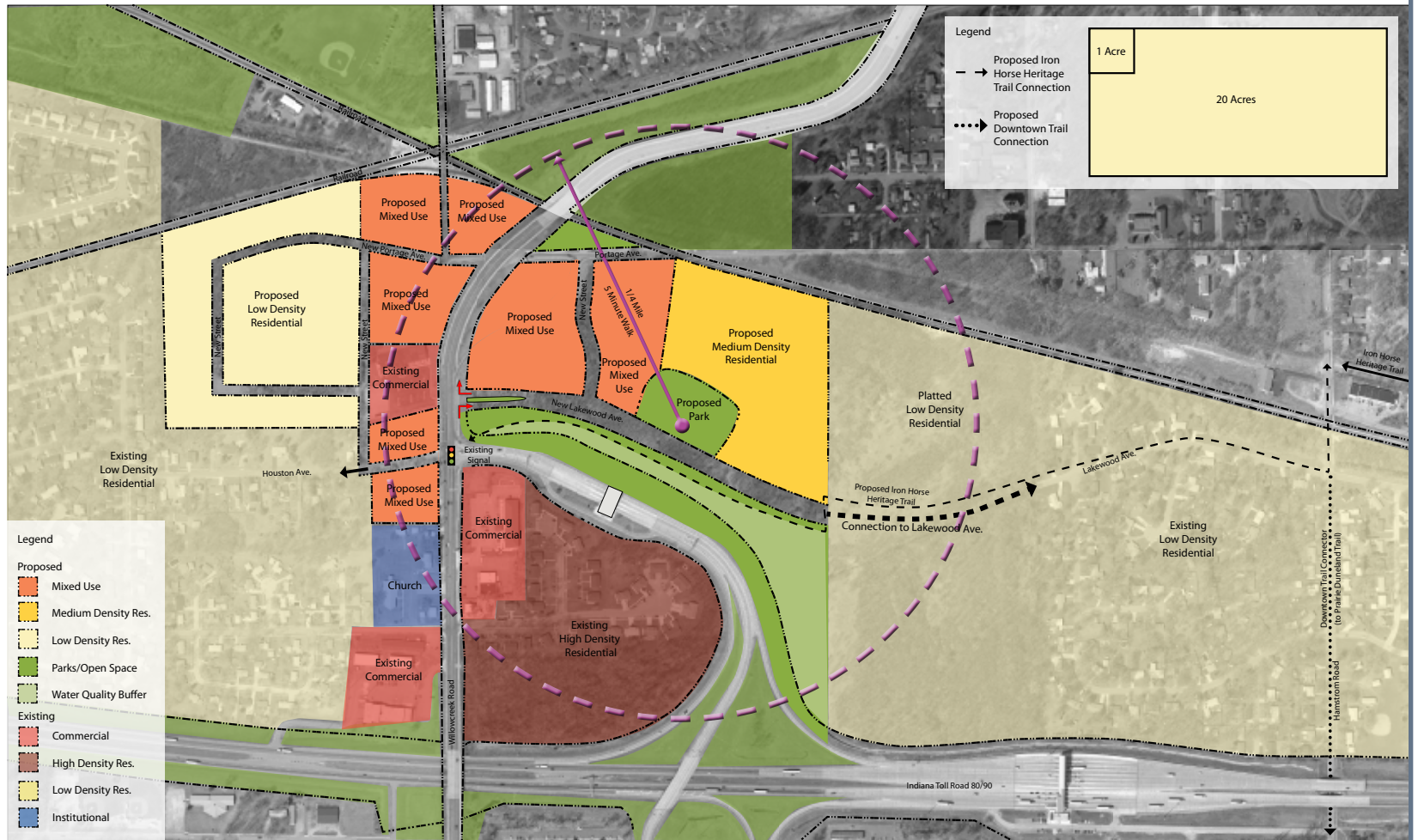
Indiana Toll Road Gateway Sub Area

This area is located immediately north of the Indiana Toll Road 80/90, south of the proposed Iron Horse Heritage Trail and has Willowcreek Road separating the sub area in half. Currently, the site has a mix of commercial, low and high density residential as well as a church in the southwestern portion of the site area.

This sub area is seen as an important gateway to the downtown district. The Indiana toll road gateway sub area provides a unique transition between the downtown area to the south, the I-94 corridor to the north as well as low-density residential uses to the west and east. The overall plan for this area calls for a mix of commercial and residential uses off of Willowcreek Road with medium density residential and low density residential tiered behind the mixed-use higher-density uses. The increased density provides the necessary backbone for walkable mixed use neighborhoods.

Also important is creating a five minute pedestrian shed within this development. A standard pedestrian shed is $\frac{1}{4}$ of a mile or 1320 feet. Typically, this is the distance that people are willing to walk for goods and services without getting into an automobile. By incorporating a mix of uses within the Indiana Toll Road Gateway as well as incorporating a pedestrian shed, this area will be less auto-dependant within the context of the neighborhood.

INDIANA TOLL ROAD GATEWAY SUB AREA



County/Medical Complex Gateway Sub Area

This area is located south of US Highway 6 and west of Willowcreek Road. Existing uses within this sub area include commercial, institutional (county-owned building and Portage Township Schools), the Portage branch of the Porter Hospital, and high density residential. Proposed uses within this area include a mix of neighborhood scale commercial uses, upper floor office or residential uses within Cardinal Crossing, and a proposed medical office building and commercial. A new street is proposed to run north-south adjacent to Willowcreek Road. A new north/south street connection is also proposed between US Highway 6 and Kingman Avenue.

Pedestrian connectivity is critical between this sub area and the surrounding area. To the extent possible, a five minute pedestrian shed should be incorporated. Additionally, shared parking standards or joint parking agreements between proposed uses within this area will be encouraged as means of reducing the overall surface coverage.



Example of proposed Medical Office.

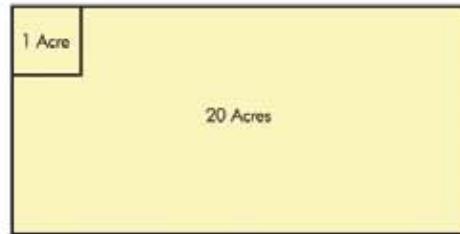


Example of proposed Mixed Use.



Example of proposed Mixed Use.

COUNTY MEDICAL COMPLEX GATEWAY SUB AREA



- Legend**
- Proposed**
 - Commercial
 - Mixed Use
 - Office
 - Institutional
 - Existing**
 - Commercial
 - High Density Res.
 - Low Density Res.
 - Office
 - Institutional





Example of proposed Commercial Use.



Example of proposed Commercial Use.



Example of proposed stormwater retention.

Countryside Park-West Gateway Sub Area

This area is located to the east of County Line Road and north of US Highway 6. The area to the north is guided as low density residential and the area to the east is Countryside Park. The existing Neilsen Buick Subaru dealership is located within this sub area.

This sub area offers an excellent opportunity for neighborhood-scale commercial. With residential uses to the north and south, pedestrian sheds and smaller blocks are strongly encouraged for this area. Because of runoff concerns within this area, it is highly encouraged that any development or redevelopment within this area demonstrate the ability to contain run-off on site. Furthermore, it is encouraged that joint parking and shared parking standards be adopted within this area to reduce surface coverage.

Commercial uses should be developed in a small-block, neighborhood scale with a trail system leading to Countryside Park to the east and community trail just north of the sub area. Additionally, a small working farm is identified within the context of the sub area as a means to encourage food production on a neighborhood scale farm-plot. This neighborhood plot would be supported by the low-density development to the north and park to the east.



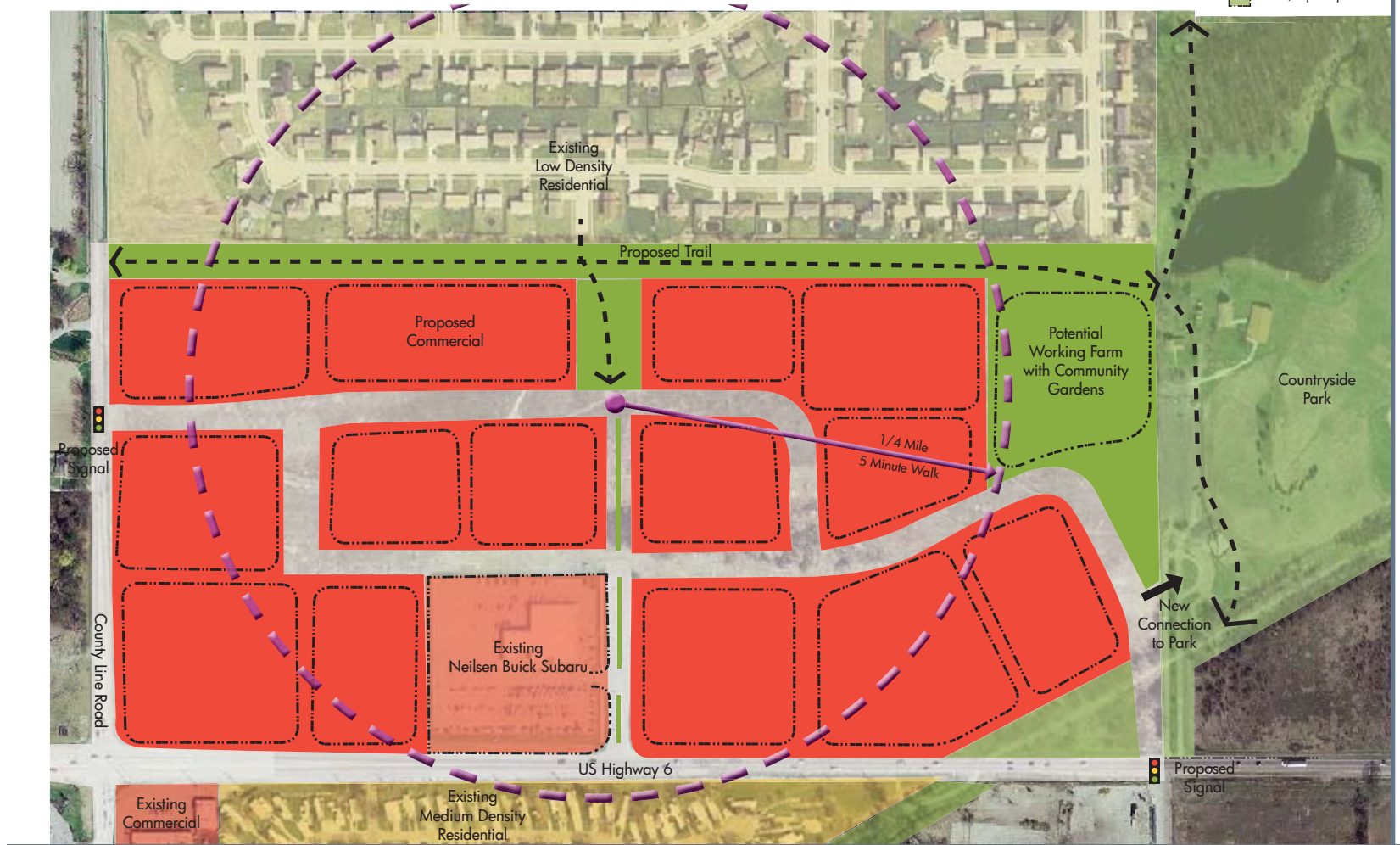
Example of proposed trail system.



Example of proposed community garden.

COUNTRYSIDE PARK-WEST GATEWAY SUB AREA

- Legend
- Proposed
 - Commercial
 - Park/Open Space
 - Trail
 - Trail
 - Existing
 - Commercial
 - Medium Density Res.
 - Low Density Res.
 - Park/Open Space



6

THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AND DESIGN



PARKS AND THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

The city of Portage recognizes the importance of parks, open spaces, trails and natural areas. During community meetings held as a part of the comprehensive planning process, the location of Lake Michigan, the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore area, and areas that include the state park and community parks are clearly assets to the community.

Approximately 2,890 or roughly 19 percent of the total area within the city of Portage is designated for either park or open space, conservation areas, or is within a buffer area.

While the city offers a great resource in terms of natural areas, connectivity between these areas is seen as an issue. Improving both access to the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore by way of additional parking as well as trails are issues that are being reviewed as part of the Marquette Plan.

A Parks and Recreation Master Plan was also adopted in 2007 to provide a road map for the Portage Parks and Recreation Department to better address the needs of its residents within a five-year timeframe.

The main issues identified during the public participation process of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan were maintaining current parks and facilities, expanding recreational opportunities, long-range planning, staffing, and budget/financial planning. As a result, the 2007-2011 Portage Parks and Recreation Master Plan focuses on the following:

- Identifies gaps in facilities, programs and services and recommends ways to address the gaps.
- Includes demographic data to protect population growth and its impacts on community park and recreation needs.
- Provides recommendations based on input from residents.
- Identifies the need for future land acquisition targets to meet future needs.
- Includes projections for future growth and recreational needs based on the Recreational Impact Fee study.
- Considers recreational programs offered by private sector providers and other public agencies to avoid duplication of services.



A park gazebo in Olson Park.



Gilbert Park



Residents breaking ground at Founder's Square Park.

- Guides Park Board, Staff and City leaders in determining where and how parks funding should be allocated over the next 5-10 years.

There are several planning documents that touch on issues regarding the natural environment. Each of the plans should be consistent and corresponding to one another, including the comprehensive plan.

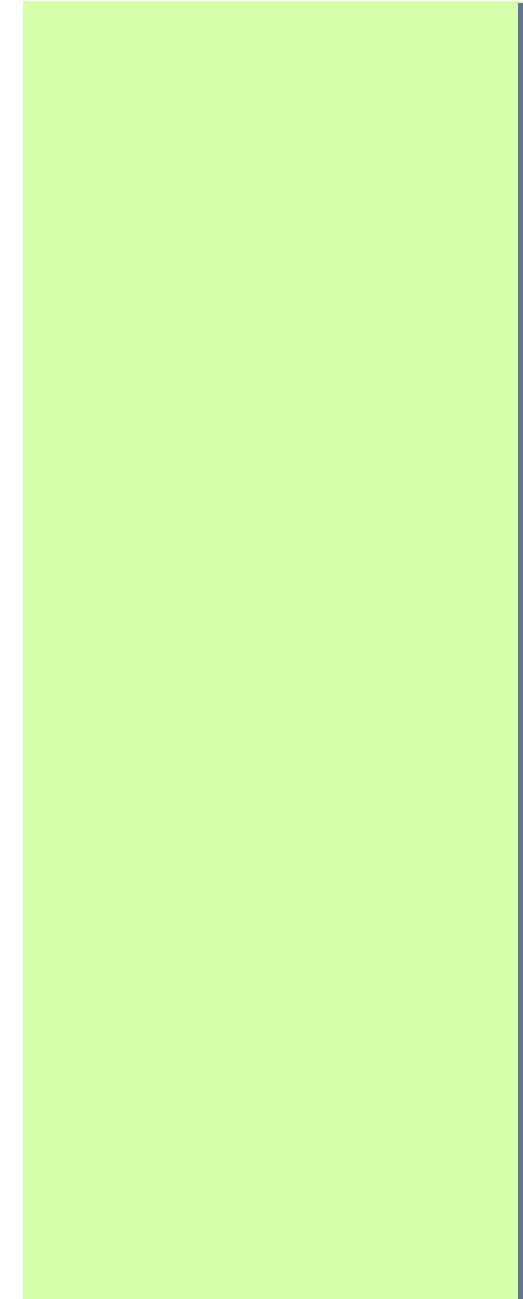
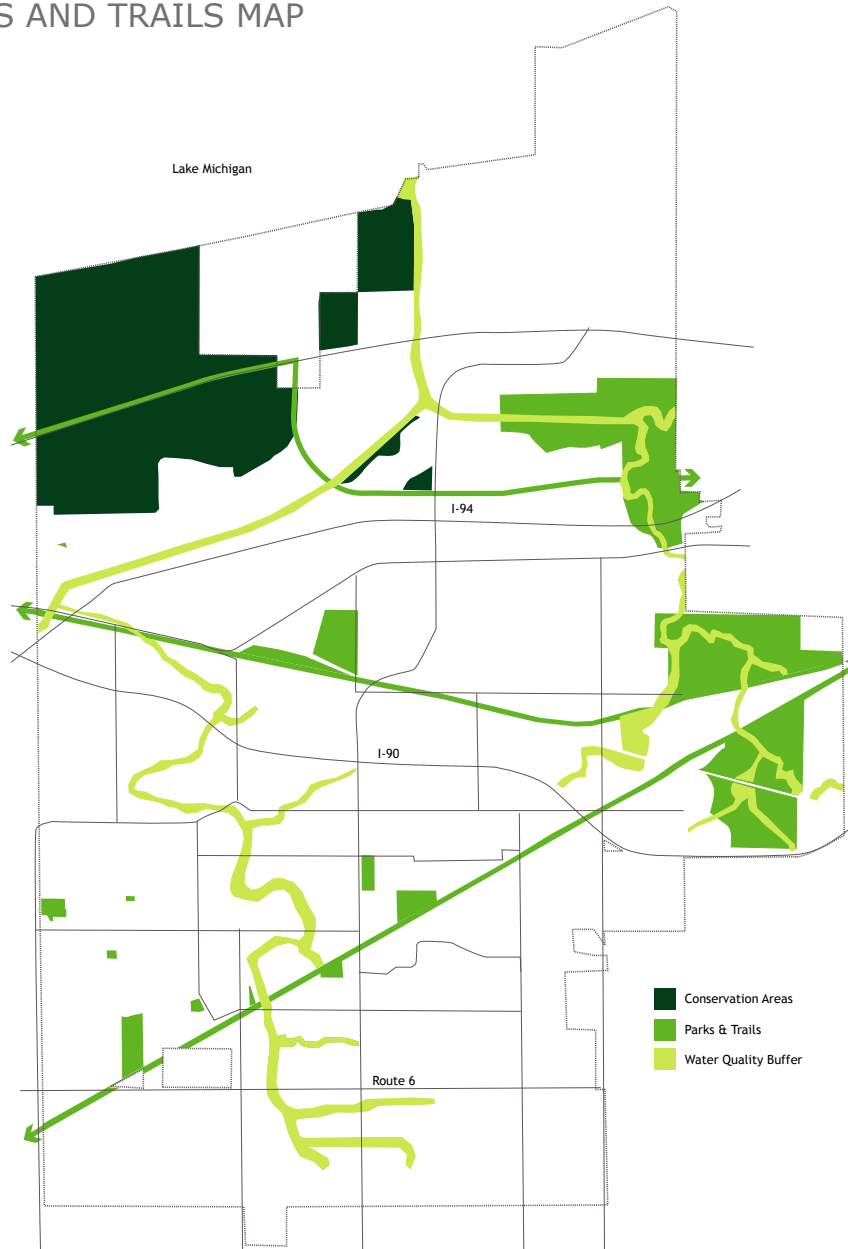
In regards to the comprehensive plan, the overarching goal of the parks and natural environment element is for these area to continue to be seen as community assets. With this goal in mind, the following objectives have been developed:

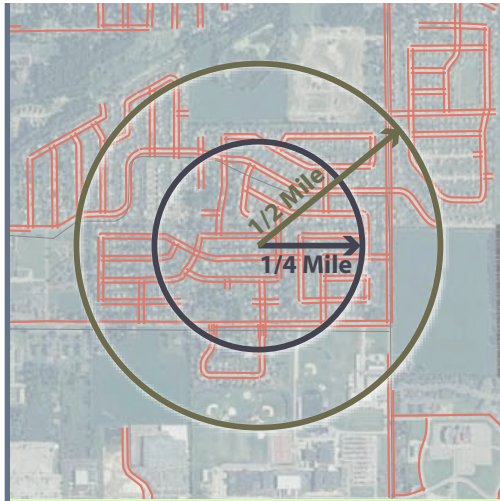
- Provide and maintain attractive parks and scenic areas for the enjoyment and leisure time activities of the community.
- Develop appropriate park and recreation areas and facilities to serve the existing and future needs of the community.
- Pursue and acquire additional land for open space, parks and trails.
- Create a Maintenance Plan that covers new park equipment, amenities and renovation.
- Provide recreational opportunities to meet the needs

of the community, including all age groups and ability levels.

- Provide a citywide interconnected trail system that connects to the national lakeshore and Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore area.
- Ensure that all development incorporates develops sidewalk and interconnected trail system.
- Protect, preserve, enhance and develop natural resources within the city.
- Review development proposals for conformance with ordinances regarding tree preservation, water quality, wetland protection and shore land protect.

PARKS AND TRAILS MAP





Using a pedestrian shed can promote pedestrian friendly neighborhoods and small-scale commercial and retail developments.



Example of a tree lined sidewalk creates an aesthetically pleasing streetscape.

Maintaining and promoting a unique sense of place within the city of Portage is essential to its character and function. Parks, open spaces and well designed landscaping improves the city's urban form by providing a connection from the built environment to the natural environment.

Since there is such a strong interface between the built and natural environment, incorporating city-wide urban design standards will create a unique sense of place and a high quality of life for the residents of Portage.

Throughout the comprehensive planning process several key urban design elements were identified as key components for future development and redevelopment within the city of Portage. Some of these characteristics are highlighted as part of the city's implementation and action cards.

Pedestrian Shed Standards

According to the Congress for New Urbanism a pedestrian shed is a tool used to determine the appropriate size and scale of a neighborhood. A standard pedestrian shed is 1/4 mile radius or 1320 feet, about the distance of a five-minute walk at a leisurely pace. It has been shown that provided with a pedestrian environment, most people will walk this distance rather than drive. By using a pedestrian shed as a tool for urban design in appropriate areas within the city, pedestrian friendly neighborhoods and small-scale commercial and retail developments can be maintained and enhanced.

Street Design and Connectivity

By establishing direct connections between neighborhoods, negative impacts of dead-end streets and/or long cul-de-sacs are diminished. Street and sidewalk connectivity creates additional travel choices as well as creates options for automobile, bicycle and pedestrian movement. A regular pattern of intersecting streets and sidewalks should be maintained.

Neighborhood and District Scale

The existing variety of building types is part of what gives Portage its unique character and scale. It is important to maintain these areas as unique by prohibiting uses that are out of scale to adjoining neighborhoods or uses. To the extent possible, the city will seek to prohibit the expansion of pre-existing uses that are out of character for neighborhoods (junk yards) and encourage development and redevelopment that promotes or enhances the architectural style of adjoining neighborhoods.

Form and Function

As a way to encourage development on a neighborhood scale, the development of a form-based code is encouraged. A form-based code seeks to regulate building form rather than by a specific land use. Form based codes establish zones of building types that are based upon pedestrian accessibility and the scale and character of a neighborhood or surrounding development. This type of zoning regulation allows developers or building owners greater flexibility in how a particularly type of building is used.



A regulating plan is an integral part of a form based code.

7

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY AND OPPORTUNITY

National Trends

Various sources of information including industry trend publications, census data, federal, state and local sources were reviewed in order to provide current trends and ideas for future growth and development opportunities for Portage.

The US and the Midwest has seen a significant decrease in most investment sectors as well as an increase in unemployment claims. As of March of 2009, the unemployment rate reached a 112 percent increase over one year since 2008. Table 7-1 shows a breakout of the unemployment data:

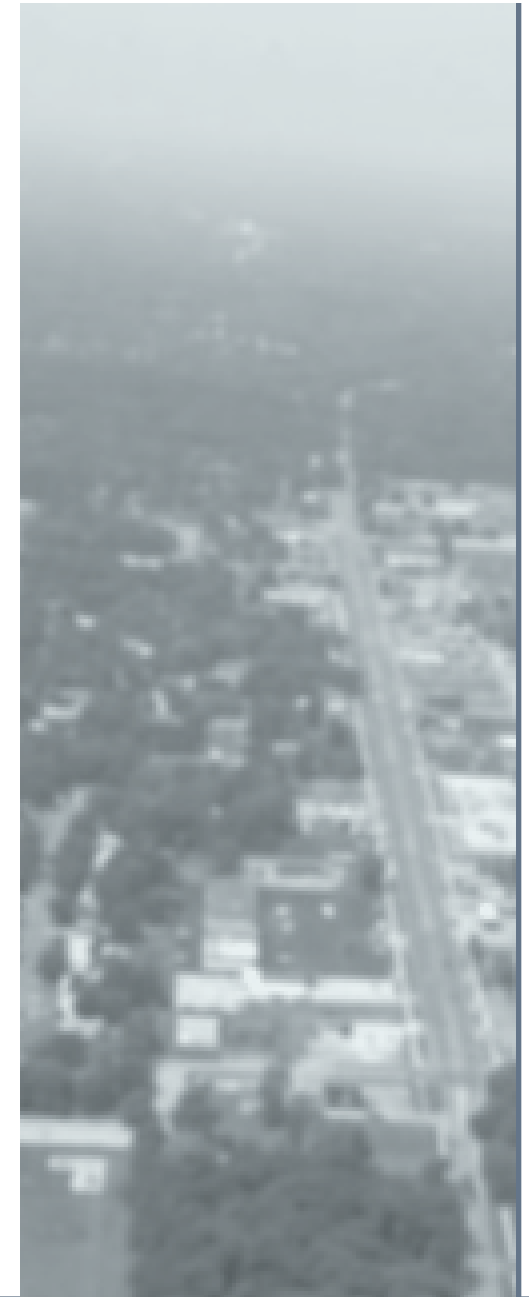
	March 2008	March 2009
Porter County	4.6%	9.7%
Indiana	5.5%	10.6%
U.S.	5.2%	9.0%

In the 2009 industry projections conducted by Professional Services Management Journal (PSMJ), they point to several elements that impacted and will continue to impact Portage's ability to

promote economic development and employment opportunities. In broad terms, the tightening of lending policies, not only construction loans but also end loans, has trended more toward 60 to 40 percent equity loans, which places higher capital requirements on the private sector and thus, limiting those markets that were not of the highest priority. In previous years, general lending policies leaned more toward 80 to 20 percent equity loans.

Another contributing factor was Federal and State budget difficulties, as reported by the Midwestern Office of State Governments. "An October report by the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities found that at least 39 U.S. states including all but Indiana, Nebraska, North Dakota and South Dakota (in the Midwest Region) faced or will face budget gaps for fiscal year 2009 and or 2010."

The state of Indiana has fared much better than surrounding states, as "Indiana closed the books on FY 2008 with a rainy-day fund of \$363 MM as well as a revenue surplus that left the state with a hefty overall end of the year balance." However, slowed growth, assessed valuation and decreases in income taxes as a result of the increase in unemployment will have a direct impact in local units of government. Also factoring into





New construction in Portage.



Ameriplex employs many residents within and nearby Portage.

these constraints on local revenues will be implementation of property tax caps, necessitating reduction of services provided by local units of government, or identification of alternative or additional revenues.

Local Efforts

There has been a concerted effort to diversify the composition of Portage for investment opportunities. As a result of past and current efforts, Portage has recognized areas for development that have been served by utilities or have geographic boundaries that create logical land-use opportunities. The seven separate districts have offered divergent investment opportunities over time. A specific example of the efforts to diversify development is the Downtown District.

Portage has a desire to provide for regional educational and complimentary uses. As can be seen by the economic impact of the proposed development, a great deal can be invested as these properties have been prepared for immediate investment. As Portage proceeds with development and action items in relation to the downtown, an estimated \$141.2 MM new assessed valuation can be added providing for \$3.9 MM in property tax generation.

In addition to the planning and investment that occurred in the Downtown District, the city, leveraging funding from the state, developed the Northside Plan. The Northside, much like the Downtown District, is currently owned by the city and as such does not generate property taxes. Table 7-2 and 7-3 are estimated investment and tax generation potential for the property in the Downtown District and Northside District.

Table 7-2 Portage - Downtown Redevelopment
Economic Impact Analysis

Tax Year	2030	Taxing District	Porter County
Gross Tax Rate	Office / Commercial	\$3.00	(per \$100 of assessed value)
	Residential (Owner Occupied)	\$1.00	
PROPOSED ASSUMPTIONS			
1	1,517,188	Total Square Footage of Downtown Redevelopment	
2	34.83	Acreage conversion to total square footage	
3	899,300	Square Footage of proposed commercial / office space	
4	146,000	Square Footage of proposed residential space	
5	691,100	Square Footage of proposed parking areas	
CALCULATIONS			NOTES
	Commercial / Office	899,300 s.f.	
1	Fair Market Value per Sq. Foot (includes parking)	\$175	
2	Total Assessed Value (80%)	\$125,902,000	Assumed 80% of value
3	Current Assessed Value of Land	\$599,073	\$20,000 per acre / prorated proportionately
4	Site Development Costs	\$898,610	\$30,000 per acre / prorated proportionately
Total Projected New Assessed Value		\$127,399,683	Line items 3+4+5
Annual Realized Tax Revenue		\$3,821,990	In Year 2030 upon complete build out
	Residential	146,000 s.f.	
5	Fair Market Value per Sq. Foot (includes parking)	\$120	Conservatively assumed all owner occupied at 1% tax rate
6	Total Assessed Value (80%)	\$14,016,000	Assumed 80% of value
7	Current Assessed Value of Land	\$16,718	\$20,000 per acre / prorated proportionately
8	Site Development Costs	\$250,775	\$30,000 per acre / prorated proportionately
Total Projected New Assessed Value		\$14,283,493	Line items 6+7+8
Annual Realized Tax Revenue		\$142,835	In Year 2030 upon complete build out
Total Annual Realized Tax Revenue		\$3,964,825	

Table 7-3 Portage - Northside Development Economic Impact Analysis			
	Tax Year	2030	Taxing District Porter County
	Gross Tax Rate	Office / Commercial	\$3.00 (per \$100 of assessed value)
PROPOSED ASSUMPTIONS			
1	510,000	Total Square Footage of Northside Development	
2	11.71	Acreage conversion to total square footage	
3	157,000	Square Footage of proposed retail/commercial	
4	128,000	Square Footage of proposed hotel	
5	225,000	Square Footage of commercial/office	
CALCULATIONS			NOTES
	Retail/Commercial	157,000 s.f.	
1	Fair Market Value per Sq. Foot (includes parking)	\$150	
2	Total Assessed Value (80%)	\$18,840,000	Assumed 80% of value
3	Current Assessed Value of Land	\$0	\$20,000 per acre / prorated proportionately
4	Site Development Costs	\$0	\$30,000 per acre / prorated proportionately
Total Projected New Assessed Value		\$18,840,000	Line items 3+4+5
Annual Realized Tax Revenue		\$565,200	In Year 2030 upon complete build out
	Hotel	128,000 s.f.	
5	Fair Market Value per Sq. Foot (includes parking)	\$120	
6	Total Assessed Value (80%)	\$12,288,000	Assumed 80% of value
7	Current Assessed Value of Land	\$0	\$20,000 per acre / prorated proportionately
8	Site Development Costs	\$0	\$30,000 per acre / prorated proportionately
Total Projected New Assessed Value		\$12,288,000	Line items 6+7+8
Annual Realized Tax Revenue		\$368,640	In Year 2030 upon complete build out
	Commercial/Office	225,000 s.f.	
5	Fair Market Value per Sq. Foot (includes parking)	\$150	
6	Total Assessed Value (80%)	\$27,000,000	Assumed 80% of value
7	Current Assessed Value of Land	\$0	\$20,000 per acre / prorated proportionately
8	Site Development Costs	\$0	\$30,000 per acre / prorated proportionately
Total Projected New Assessed Value		\$27,000,000	Line items 6+7+8
Annual Realized Tax Revenue		\$810,000	In Year 2030 upon complete build out
Total Annual Realized Revenues		\$1,743,840	

Regional/Local Impacts Manufacturing, Housing, Cost of Service/Taxation Indicators

Manufacturing in the region has been the backbone of job and tax base in Northwest Indiana. In Porter County, as of 2008, Portage manufacturing business represented 22 percent of the total manufacturing operations. As indicated in the 2008 manufacturing directory, there was slow growth in the number of manufacturing facilities in Porter County with a stable number in Portage.

Table 7-4 Manufacturing Facilities Porter County		
	Porter Co	Portage
2003	180	38
2004	190	38
2005	187	38
2006	200	40
2007	202	45
2008	203	45



Ports of Indiana is comprised of 600 acres and has more than 30 tenants including heavy industrial, light manufacturing and warehousing business.



Aerial photo of Ports of Indiana.

Another key indicator is not only the type of facilities, but also the employment and salaries at various locations. Below is a summary of the facilities and salaries in Porter County from 2003 to the most current available in 2007 from the Indiana Department of Labor.

Table 7-5 Average Annual Earnings by Industry Porter County

	2003	2007	Change	% Change	Indiana	% of
			2003-2007	2003-2007	2007	State
All Industries	\$33,075	\$37,730	\$4,655	14.10%	\$37,530	100.50%
Ag., For., Fishing, & Hunt.	\$12,328	\$18,614	\$6,286	51.00%	\$28,008	66.50%
Construction	\$39,695	\$49,562	\$9,867	24.90%	\$44,754	110.70%
Manufacturing	\$55,436	\$70,204	\$14,768	26.60%	\$51,148	137.30%
Wholesale Trade	\$42,941	\$46,818	\$3,877	9.00%	\$51,432	91.00%
Retail Trade	\$20,882	\$22,226	\$1,344	6.40%	\$22,581	98.40%
Trans. & Warehousing	\$35,236	\$38,067	\$2,830	8.00%	\$38,012	100.10%
Information	\$44,593	\$47,364	\$2,770	6.20%	\$46,311	102.30%
Finance & Insurance	\$35,287	\$41,386	\$6,099	17.30%	\$52,649	78.60%
Real Est., Rent., Leasing	\$21,147	\$24,005	\$2,858	13.50%	\$32,614	73.60%
Prof. & Tech. Svcs.	\$38,157	\$44,972	\$6,815	17.90%	\$51,451	87.40%
Mgt.of Companies	\$55,105	\$65,985	\$10,881	19.70%	\$72,682	90.80%
Admin. & Waste Svcs.	\$26,159	\$26,333	\$174	0.70%	\$24,934	105.60%
Education Svcs.	\$20,505	\$23,794	\$3,288	16.00%	\$31,029	76.70%
Health Care & Social Assist.	\$33,358	\$38,313	\$4,954	14.90%	\$37,706	101.60%
Arts, Ent. &, Rec.	\$12,676	\$13,911	\$1,235	9.70%	\$29,251	47.60%
Accom. & Food Svcs.	\$10,120	\$10,647	\$527	5.20%	\$12,442	85.60%
Other Svcs.	\$17,900	\$20,485	\$2,584	14.40%	\$24,862	82.40%
Fed.I, State & Local Govt.	\$30,419	\$32,701	\$2,282	7.50%	\$37,054	88.30%

As one can see in Table 7-5, manufacturing has a significantly higher wage rate to all other sectors in Porter County at \$70,204.

Table 7-6 Average Employment by Sector Porter County							
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	Change	% Change
						2003-2007	2003-2007
Total Employment	52,324	53,064	54,319	55,583	57,281	4,957	9.47%
Total Private Employment	43,672	44,262	45,373	46,556	49,654	5,982	13.70%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, Hunt	72	45	44	43	45	-27	-37.50%
Mining	D	D	D	D	D	N/A	N/A
Construction	3,606	3,858	4,019	4,520	4,775	1,169	32.42%
Manufacturing	9,701	9,003	8,973	8,897	9,164	-537	-5.54%
Wholesale Trade	2,401	2,445	2,673	2,711	2,682	281	11.70%
Retail Trade	6,431	6,428	6,675	6,567	7,091	660	10.26%
Transport. and Warehousing	1,591	1,665	1,783	1,829	1,740	149	9.37%
Utilities	D	D	D	D	D	N/A	N/A
Information	477	528	495	490	469	-8	-1.68%
Finance and Insurance	1,209	1,265	1,270	1,311	1,253	44	3.64%
Real Estate, Rental, Leasing	590	572	586	581	611	21	3.56%
Professional and Tech. Servs.	1,585	1,669	1,705	1,698	1,732	147	9.27%
Mgmt. of Companies	94	98	111	131	153	59	62.77%
Admin. and Waste Services	1,752	2,072	2,074	2,291	2,735	983	56.11%
Educational Services	1,972	2,074	2,141	2,208	2,229	N/A	N/A
Health Care and Social Assistance	4,313	4,434	4,478	4,744	6,156	N/A	N/A
Arts, Entertain., and Recreation	700	706	720	622	611	-89	-12.71%
Accommodation and Food Service	4,860	5,007	5,148	5,320	5,454	594	12.22%
Other Services	1,875	1,932	2,033	2,132	2,306	431	22.99%
Federal, State, & Local Govt.	8,652	8,802	8,946	9,027	7,627	-1,025	-11.85%

Manufacturing jobs represents 19 percent (and is the largest sector) of the total private sector employment in Porter County. Along with the significant manufacturing sector, retail trade accounts for 14 percent, health care accounts for 12 percent, and food service accounts for 10 percent, providing for a diverse employment base in the county.



Housing sales have been steady in Porter County with a recognizable decrease in 2008 and in the first five months of 2009.

Residential Real Estate

The Greater Northern Indiana Association of Realtors conducted a review of all residential sales including new and existing single family homes, condominiums and duplexes. They indicated that housing sales have been steady in Porter County with a recognizable decrease in 2008 and in the first five months of 2009 in comparison to previous years. As of May 1, 2009, 319 sales were recorded with an average sale price of \$175,285 in the year 2009.

The decline in the number of units sold and the selling price was a trend seen throughout the Greater Northwest Indiana Market starting in 2007.

The city of Portage had seen a stable housing market until 2008. From 2008 to the first five months in 2009, there was a decline in the housing market. There was a reported 61 sales with an average selling price of \$127,901. The city of Portage activity has represented an average of 20 percent of sales that occurred in Porter County and represented a total dollar value of \$376 MM with an average annual dollar value of investment of \$62.8 MM.

Year	Sold	Listing Price	Selling Price	Days on Market*
2003	2,165	\$166,128	\$160,829	93/121
2004	2,410	\$176,391	\$171,227	87/110
2005	2,395	\$187,475	\$183,278	82/102
2006	2,255	\$192,248	\$187,256	83/108
2007	2,103	\$203,404	\$197,336	94/125
2008	1,637	\$200,247	\$191,704	97/126

*Days on the market with and without contingencies

Year	Sold	Listing Price	Selling Price	Days on Market
2003	459	\$132,480	\$130,326	80/97
2004	511	\$136,529	\$134,562	73/87
2005	499	\$151,931	\$149,719	68/85
2006	457	\$154,391	\$151,565	81/96
2007	394	\$160,004	\$156,945	92/115
2008	301	\$145,628	\$140,940	85/112

Cost of Service and Taxes

A cost of service study is done to identify costs and benefits as related to the different classes of property in a given community. The community cost (general government and education) is compared to various land uses, and ratios are developed. Generally the segments are broken down as follows in Table 7-9:

Identify Land Use Categories	Residential	Single Family
		Apartment
		Mobile Home
	Commercial	Retail
		Industrial
		Utilities
	Working Lands Farms	Misc
	Public Lands	Local
		State
		Federal

National median information indicates that the residential sector has the least revenues and the highest expenditures as compared to farms as well as commercial development. Below is a national

median as provided by the American Farmland Trust (AFT) with cost of services compared to revenue generated.

Residential
\$1.19 to \$1.00

Commercial/Industrial
\$0.29 to \$1.00

Working/Open lands
\$0.37 to \$1.00

As part of investment decision as related to public improvements, the city of Portage has done an effective job in managing the cost of services. The requirements for residential development placed on subdivision owner/developer to fund all public improvements to be developed to the city's specifications is a key why the city has been able to keep its capital cost low. In addition to this activity, the city has also used economic development incentives to its advantage with the use of tax increment funds to invest into public improvements that have fostered investment in the commercial/industrial sector which not only garner higher wages, but also provide a greater return in investment. It is anticipated that as action plans are implemented, a continuation of these practices will be applied to all development districts.



Schoop's Hamburgers is a popular restaurant in Portage.

Table 7-10

Year	Location	Tax Rate
2006	Columbus	\$3.17
2006	New Albany	\$2.95
2006	Noblesville	\$2.61
2006	Portage	\$2.84
2006	Richmond	\$4.36

Year	Location	Tax Rate
2007	Columbus	\$2.75
2007	New Albany	\$2.64
2007	Noblesville	\$2.52
2007	Portage	\$3.23
2007	Richmond	\$4.13

Year	Location	Tax Rate
2008	Columbus	\$2.65
2008	New Albany	\$2.80
2008	Noblesville	\$2.61
2008	Portage	\$3.02
2008	Richmond	\$4.22

Property Taxes/Business Environment

Portage has been effective in maintaining and increasing levels of public service to the residents of the community while keeping property taxes and fees on par or lower than similar communities in the state of Indiana. Table 7-10 is a comparison of four similar communities in population to Portage. These rates are a gross basis, which include all of the surrounding taxing district (i.e., State, County, Township, Library, School, Special Taxing, etc.).

Summary of Findings

General planning and economic development efforts in Portage to date have produced balanced development and diversity in land uses and employment opportunities. Housing stability, specifically related to values, is an area of concern as there has been a decline in pricing. However, the decline in pricing is not isolated to Portage, Northwest Indiana or the state of Indiana, but rather a national trend. Targeted developments within the planning districts are essential to the continued success in Portage.

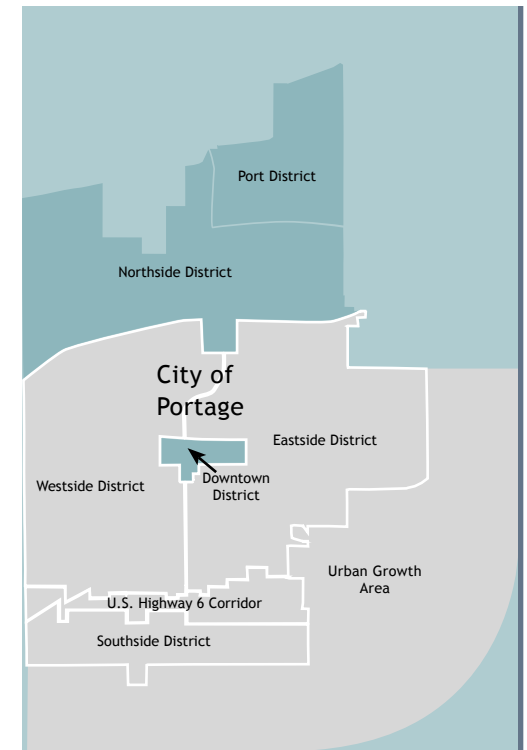
Additionally, consideration should be given to have the Portage Economic Development Corporation (PEDCO) serve as the city of Portage's official economic development agency with the responsibility to the following city offices and boards.

- Mayor's Office
- Engineering Office
- Building Department
- Planning Office
- Plan Commission
- Board of Zoning Appeals

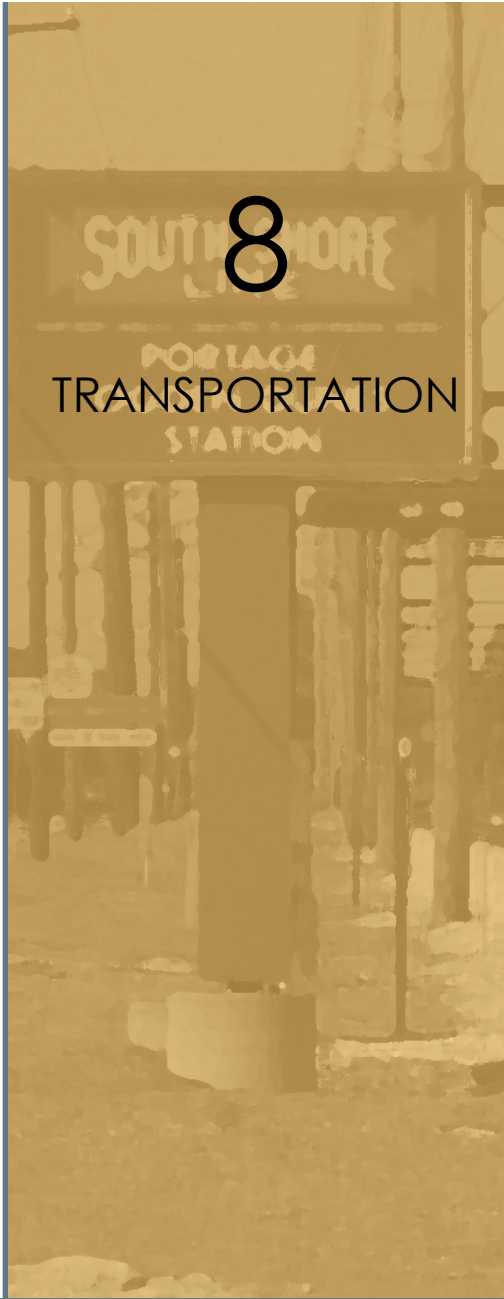
The purpose of dedicating the economic development responsibility to PEDCO would be to allow for flexibility in working with potential investors in the city without tying up essential resources that the city uses for day to day

operations. City departments would be brought into the transactions after they have been thoroughly reviewed by PEDCO.

Specific prioritization of public funds to leverage the maximum return in investment is a key result area that will require careful consideration by both elected officials and boards. Planning districts that provide the most opportunity include the Northside District, the Port District and the Downtown District. The action items that are vertical outcome driven should be considered first with the goal being leveraging of private sector investment, increasing the tax base and allowing for neighborhood investments to keep pace with the decreasing revenue streams.



Planning districts with the most opportunity to maximize return on investment



TRANSPORTATION

Introduction

Recommendations presented in the transportation chapter were developed through an integrated planning/design process that took land use, economic and business development, and livability into consideration while formulating transportation improvement strategies.

Street Functional Classifications

The functional classification system was developed by the Federal Highway Administration in 1962 as a way to define the traffic-carrying function of streets. For urban streets, there are four primary classifications which include principal arterials, minor arterials, collector streets and local streets. The City of Portage has a mix of functional classifications as outlined below.

Principal Arterials/Interstate-

This type of road function provides long-distance continuous routes within and between urban areas. I-94 is an example of a principal arterial.

Major Arterials- US Highway 20 and US Highway 6 are classified as major arterials within the context of this plan. Typically, this type of road classification carry high levels of traffic at speeds less than that of a principal arterial.

Community Arterial- Both Willowcreek Road and Central Avenue are classified as community arterial roads. By definition, this type of classification provides continuous routes through urban areas.

Community Collector Streets- Robbins Road, Mulberry Avenue and Portage Avenue are examples of community collector streets. This type of classification generally gathers traffic from numerous smaller local streets and delivers travelers to community arterials.

Local Streets- Local streets comprise roughly 80 percent of the street classification within the city of Portage. These streets are typically short in length, have numerous driveways, as they are addressed by homes and are frequently interrupted by traffic control devices (stop signs or signals).

The overall street classification of Portage must continue to be balanced as well as achieve traffic movement and support the pedestrian environment. Residents should expect to have a safe street, with reasonable speeds, with ample sidewalks, and an ability to cross the street comfortably at signalized intersections—this without significantly diminishing the capacity of the corridor to move traffic.



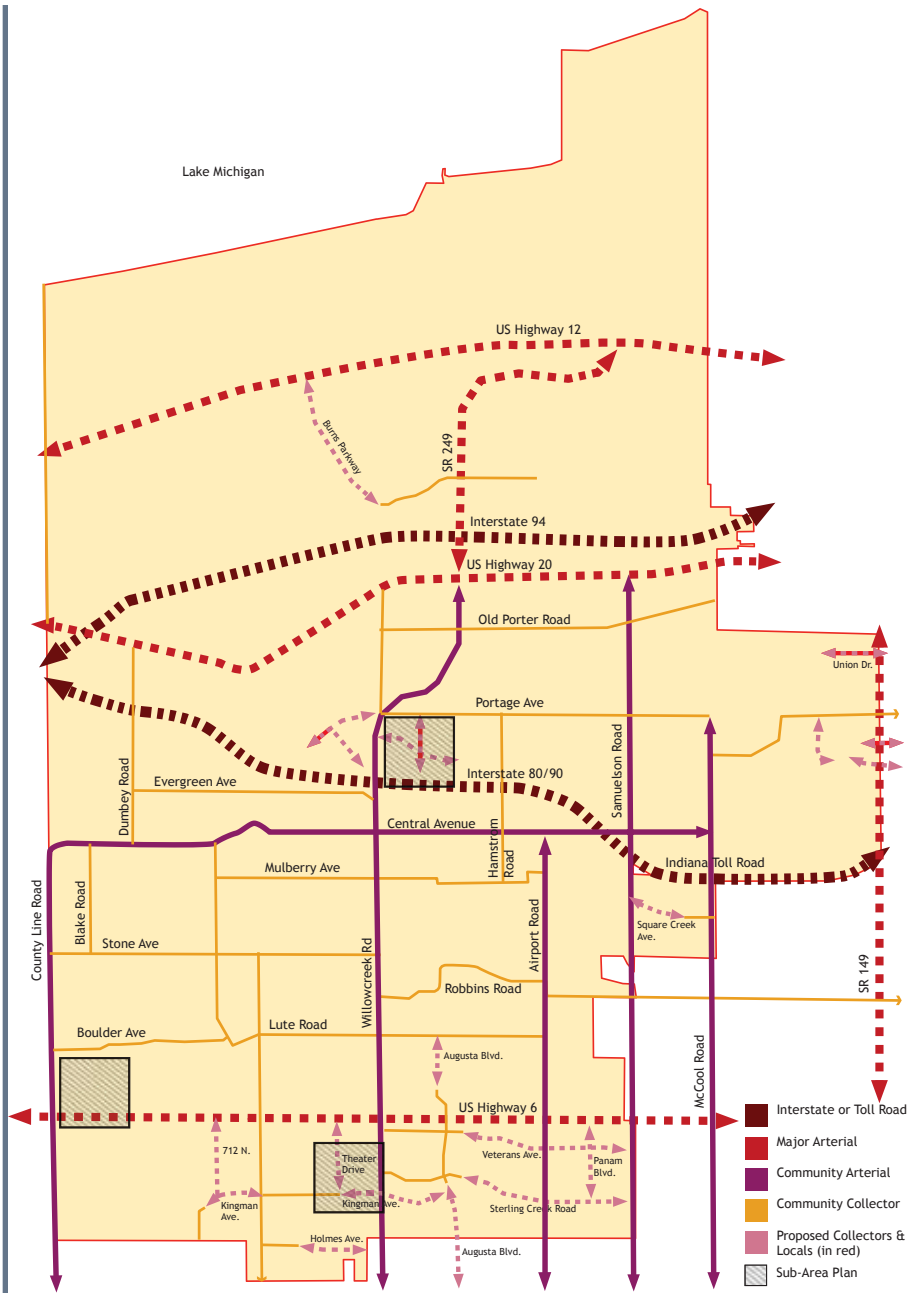
Major Arterial - US Highway 20



Community Arterial - Willowcreek Road



Local Street -



Thoroughfare Plan

A thoroughfare plan was developed during the comprehensive planning process. The thoroughfare plan map is used as a framework for roadway rehabilitation and short and long-term improvements. Noted areas within the thoroughfare plan include the incorporation of proposed collectors and locals within the eastern and southern areas of the city as well as expanding Airport Road and McCool Road (north/south).

Street Design

The physical design of Portage was considered in the planning process to determine how the street itself could better contribute to an improved and more successful commercial environment. A more successful environment includes physical features that contribute to:

- Safety, comfort and convenience for pedestrians.
- Aesthetically pleasing and interesting walkways for pedestrians and transit riders.
- Calmed traffic flows.
- Transportation development principles.

The following principles place an emphasis on pedestrian circulation, design, traffic calming and circulation within the city. These principles were developed through the examination of existing

conditions as well as presenting information through a series of public engagement opportunities and steering committee work.

- Provide adequate sidewalks to ensure space for convenient pedestrian circulation and installation of street furniture. Sidewalk design features should be selected to accommodate pedestrian circulation and street furniture within specific land use districts along the corridor.
- Construct planted medians within districts where residential uses will be significant and where gateways to the downtown area will be established.
- Construct pedestrian crossing areas with colored, textured pavement.
- Maintain on-street parking in most areas that currently have it.
- Where possible and as opportunity allows, accommodate the widening of sidewalks to fifteen feet.

Traffic Calming Strategies

One of the challenges to establishing a welcoming pedestrian-friendly street is the intimidating effect of automobile traffic. Pedestrians, especially younger and older people, can be intimidated when they attempt to cross the street, or even feel uncomfortable walking along a narrow sidewalk.

Strategies have been developed to calm traffic through the use of Traffic Control Devices (TCDs). The effects of implementing TCDs are often measurable reductions in vehicle speeds, and generally more courteous, respectful driving behavior. Traffic calming approaches recommended for Portage include:

Bump outs at the corners of signalized intersections, which shorten the distance pedestrian will walk when crossing the street and will define the areas where on-street parking can occur. The bump outs are to be located at signalized intersections to encourage pedestrians to cross the street where traffic signals have been installed. The bump outs also define areas where on-street parking will be allowed and where bus operations should take place.

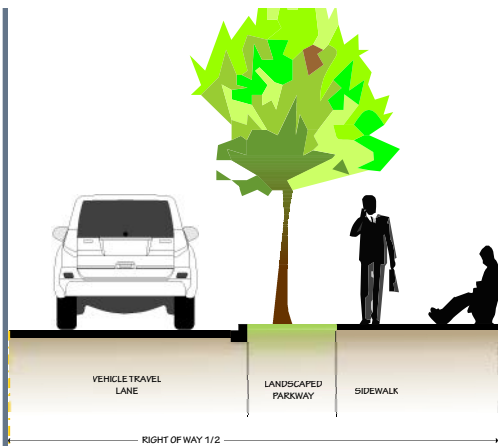
Demarcated conflict zone and crosswalk, constructed with colored asphalt. The colored asphalt will indicate to drivers that they are entering a special area. These



Bump outs extend the sidewalk out to the street beyond the parking spaces.



Crosswalk with highly visible colored concrete.



Example of adequate R.O.W to accommodate traffic calming, vehicular movement, and pedestrian facilities.

will be installed at signalized intersections to encourage their use by pedestrians that are crossing the street.

Traffic signals within the downtown area as well as near schools should include a traffic signal countdowns. This is an alternative to the standard traffic light assembly functioning as a precise, real-time, numerically displayed countdown warning device indicating the exact-moment of change from the green to the amber signal.

Pedestrian-Sheds and Sidewalks

A principle concern addressed as part of the comprehensive planning process was the need to create walkable and functional neighborhoods and commercial areas. Pedestrian-friendly streets which includes those that accommodate bicyclists, transit users, the physically handicapped and those on foot, are necessary to promote a healthy community. Every effort should be given to create both the scale and context required to promote pedestrian-friendly streets within the city of Portage.

Incorporating sidewalks within all new or rehabilitated neighborhoods is another key component of providing a healthy, interconnected city. The typically sidewalk width

within the city of Portage is five feet. However, it is recommended that sidewalks be expanded to fifteen feet in certain areas of the downtown as well as those within the sub areas in order to create sidewalk cafes, open markets and cafes.

Transit Systems

Currently, transit systems include the commuter rail service (South Shore) to Chicago and South Bend's downtown as well as bus service to the O'Hare and Midway Airports with stops in the downtown area. As part of the stakeholder interviews, the issue of providing a streetcar or trolley system from the downtown district to lake area was discussed. This was seen as one way in which the city could capture both weekend visitor to the area as well as shuttle people to and from the downtown district.

In order to determine if a shuttle service is valid, a market demand study would need to be developed. This system would include aspects of travel demand, market assessments of the area, frequency and capacity needs.

Recommendations

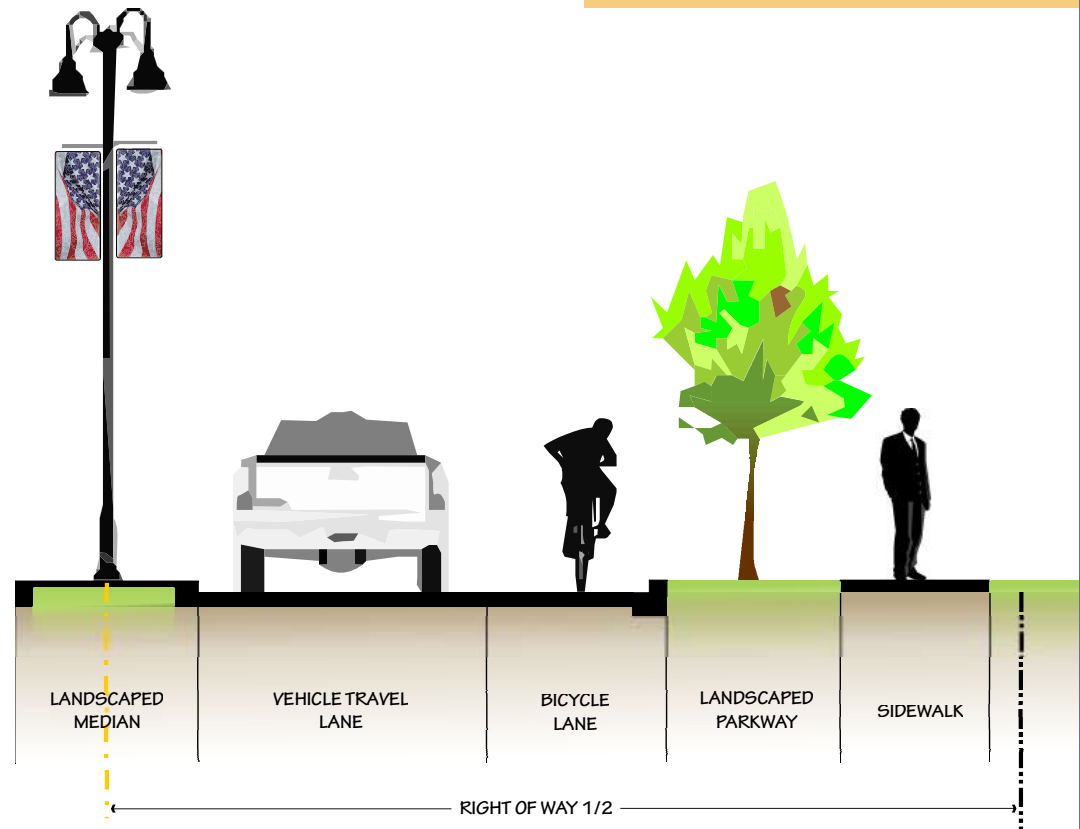
The strategies and recommendations are organized into twelve sections:

1. US 20 needs a major upgrade and long-term funding source should be explored, identified and obtained.
2. Right-of-way requirements should be planned for and sample typical sections need to be reviewed.
3. Corridor multi-modal strategies should be implemented.
4. Corridor access management strategies should be implemented to preserve the corridor.
5. Aesthetic enhancements should be applied to the corridor.
6. Cooperation to establish complimentary land use and transportation plans for specific corridors.
7. Communities adjacent to the corridor should cooperate to establish complimentary regulatory ordinances and other land use controls.
8. Intelligent transportation systems need to be developed and implemented.
9. Promote sustainable development and transportation practices.

10. A feasibility study should be considered for jurisdictional transfer of US 12 from INDOT to another entity.

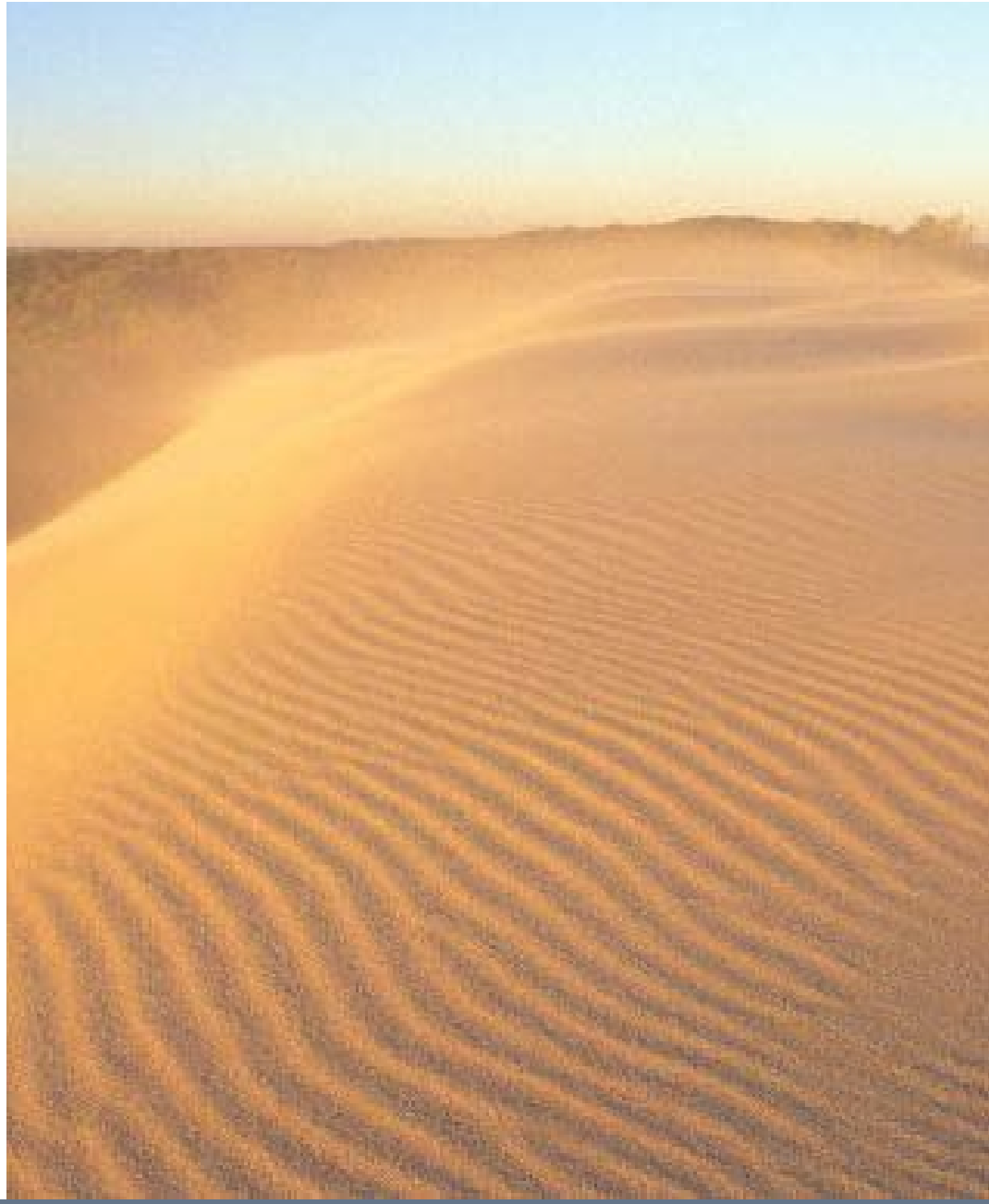
11. Implementation of Marquette Plan Phase II projects.

Many of the strategies and recommendations for the corridor can be implemented as stand alone short-term improvements or as incremental improvements toward a long-term alternative.



9

ACTION PLANS



Stormwater Management Planning

Purpose:

In the past, the Stormwater Board has worked closely with city departments to employ a variety of stormwater management techniques and strategies of improving the collection system and overall quality of life in the community. In 2005, the Stormwater Board adopted the "City of Portage Drainage & Stormwater Management – Best Management Practices Manual" to address the stormwater quality and quantity issues.

To address the community's long-standing stormwater concerns and the more recent problems highlighted by the flooding that occurred in the summer of 2008, the city of Portage adopted a Stormwater Management User Fee. The fee consists of two major parts: 1. Bond Funded Projects, and 2. Operations and Maintenance Funding. Components of the Stormwater Management program are included in the following action steps.

Action Steps:

Implementation of the Operations and Maintenance Program includes: stormwater cleaning, small drainage projects, stormwater equipment and department staffing. The O & M Program personnel will assist in meeting state reporting requirements and for the inspection of new development and construction projects.

Stormwater Bond Issue priority projects will include the following:

1. Central Avenue (Hamstrom Road to Scott Street) – Robbins Ditch overtops Central Avenue during heavy rain events. The culverts under Central are undersized and improvements are necessary to convey stormwater through this drainage area. Improvements to the drainage system and roadway construction of Central Avenue and at the intersections of Airport and Hamstrom Roads are planned.
2. Airport Road Improvement Project – Drainage and intersection improvements are planned at both Central Avenue and Pan Am Boulevard. Drainage improvements are also planned for an arm of Robbins Ditch between Robbins Road and Lute Road.
3. Hamstrom Road/Crisman Ditch Improvement Project – The reconstruction of Hamstrom Road from Main Street to Portage Avenue has been delayed for some time due to the complicated drainage problems in the area associated with Crisman Ditch. This project will allow for correction of the drainage issues associated with this area and reconstruction of Hamstrom Road.
4. Stone Avenue Improvement Project – Willowcreek to County Line Road. The goal of this project is to install stormwater infrastructure large enough to accept stormwater pipelines from intersection streets. Improvements will include stormwater, sanitary, and roadway improvements. Currently, stormwater infrastructure in this area is extremely limited to unavailable.
5. Robbins Ditch Reconstruction Project – The goal of this project is to improve the waterway by improving portions of the ditch by removing long-standing impediments, and replacing undersized roadway culverts.
6. Willow Creek Regional Watershed Project – The goal of this project is to intercept stormwater prior to Willow Creek and store it within a retention facility where it can be released at a controlled rate over a longer period of time. This watershed contains over 3.5 square miles of area.

Additional stormwater/road improvement projects have been described in the Stormwater Bond Issue and will be implemented as resources and costs are evaluated.



Planning Applications and Review

Purpose:

The city of Portage has seen a constant rate of growth over the past several decades. As new growth and redevelopment occurs, it is critical that planning applications and review continues to be conducted in a fashion built upon the strict interpretation of the Zoning and Subdivision Ordinance. Planning applications also have to meet all necessary requirements for review by the Planning Commission, Board of Zoning Approval and City Council.

Throughout the Comprehensive Planning process the need for a streamlined planning and application process was discussed. Specifically, the community felt that planning applications, building reviews, development applications and formal zoning and planning review should be developed and placed on the City's website and made available at City Hall.

Action Steps:

- All planning related applications including applications for variances, rezoning requests, site plans, platting, and amendments should be placed on the city's website and made available at the city's planning department. Each application should include the process for review, average timeline, information required by the applicant and estimated fees associated with each planning application.
- Portage Technical Planning Review Committee (PTPC) (2009). The purpose of this committee is to ensure that all applications continue to be reviewed with Planning Staff and Planing Commission members prior to a full submission of a plan.
- Make streamlining the review process a priority by eliminating repetitive and unnecessary steps.
 1. Staff Review (Preliminary)
 2. Application to Plan Commission
 3. Development Review (DRC)
 4. Plan Commission



Street Design and Connectivity

Purpose:

One of the most important aspects of neighborhood design is the establishment of street and sidewalk connections between neighborhoods. By establishing direct connections between neighborhoods, negative impacts of dead-end streets or long cul-de-sacs, are diminished. Street and sidewalk connectivity creates additional travel choices as well as creates multiple options for automobile, bicycle, and pedestrian movement. Perhaps the biggest impact on greater street connectivity is on emergency vehicles that have multiple route choices, which contribute to higher response rates compared to low-connectivity street networks.

Street design and wayfinding enhancements were identified as an important aspect of the comprehensive planning process. Because of the distinct areas within Portage, most notably the downtown and lake area, wayfinding systems will assist motorists and pedestrians to major destination points within the city. While there has been some work completed related to wayfinding and signage, additional work is needed, as identified by the public engagement process of this plan.

Action Steps:

- Update Subdivision Standards (2009-2010). In order to develop connectivity standards for streets within Portage, the city should consider updating subdivision standards that incorporate connectivity standards and update block length standards. This review should be made on a staff level with information reviewed by the city's Planning Commission. The purpose of this revision and review is to create smaller blocks which incorporate a five-minute pedestrian shed within each block for new or redeveloped subdivisions. The city should periodically review installations of wayfinding signs for appropriateness and usefulness.
- Wayfinding Study (2009-2010) - A wayfinding study completed in conjunction with the Planning Commission, should identify key areas and intersections within the Portage for additional signage. Particular attention should be developed in guiding people towards the downtown, train station, lakefront, community trail system and points of interest. Design and preliminary wayfinding placement have been adopted with funding provided by the city and PEDCO.
- Street Design Guidelines (2010-2012) - Street design guidelines should be developed in conjunction with the city's wayfinding and urban design study.



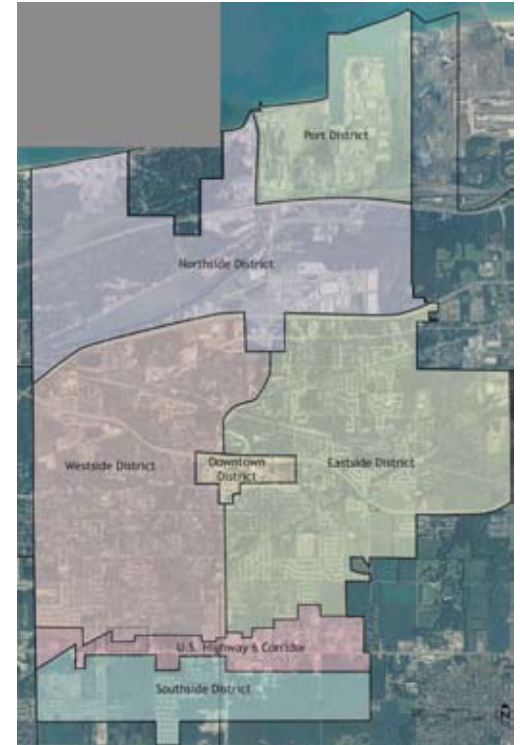
Planning Districts

Purpose:

A total of eight planning districts have been identified throughout the city to add in the future Land Use Plan (and these specific planning districts). These areas were subdivided based upon their physical boundaries, geographic conditions, street patterns, land marks, or because they were a part of past planning studies. The planning districts identified as a part of the Portage Comprehensive Plan include: The Port District, Northside District, Westside District, Downtown District, Eastside District, US Highway District, Southside District, and an Urban Growth District.

Action Steps:

- Plan Updates (2009+) – The city’s Planning Commission, as part of its annual review of the Comprehensive Plan, should review and amend districts as needed. Each of the planning districts serves as a guide for future land use within each area.
- Utilize the established planning districts to develop strategic planning efforts for specific areas of the city.



Comprehensive Plan Review

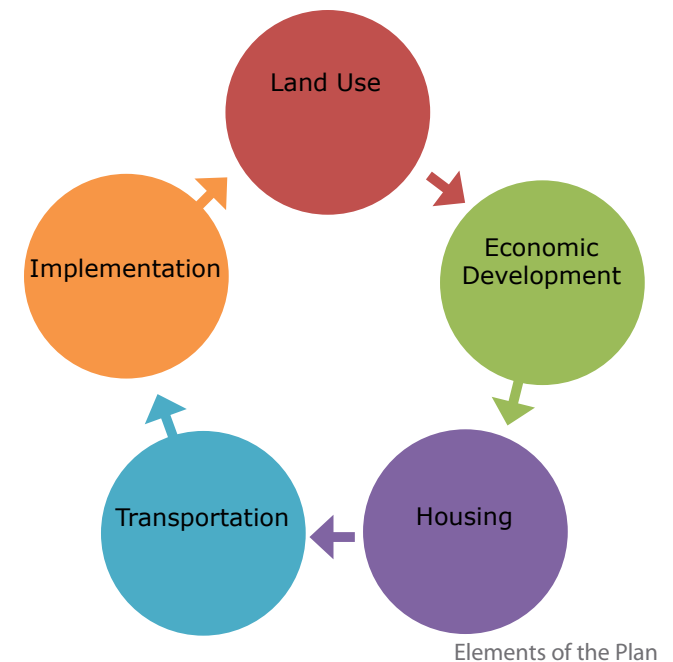
Purpose:

The city's comprehensive plan is the official growth and development policy document for the planning jurisdiction of the city of Portage. The purpose of this planning document is to provide guidance related to land use, transportation, economic development and urban design. The key element of this plan is the introduction of action cards related to specific elements of the plan. These specific elements include action steps and general timelines needed to update each specific planning element.

In order to ensure that this Comprehensive Plan is continuously updated and reviewed, the city must review the document on an annual basis.

Action Steps:

- Annual Review (First Planning Commission and City Council meeting of each year). During the first official meeting of each year, the city staff, Planning Commission and City Council will review action cards and timeframes of the Comprehensive Plan. During this meeting, the City will examine priorities, review action steps that have been achieved and determine new action steps for the calendar year.
- The City should consider updating the Comprehensive Plan every 10 years to ensure that appropriate goals and policies are achieved well into the future.
- Each year, the Planning Commission will review the action steps of the comprehensive plan to ensure that items are addressed and new action items are developed.



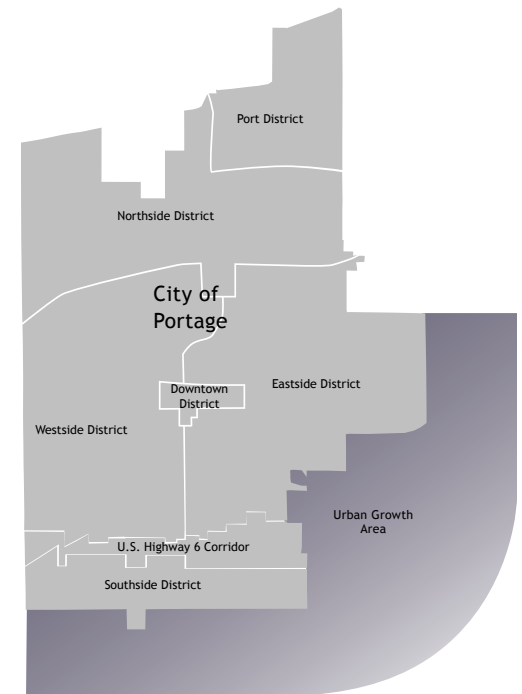
Extraterritorial Planning

Purpose:

Over the past several years, developers/land owners have approached the city of Portage requesting **voluntary** annexation of land in close proximity or contiguous to the city's limits. Annexation of this land resulted in development of large-tract greenfield sites within the corporate limits. Today, few large-tract green field sites are available for development. Given this trend, it is important for the city to look beyond its borders to ensure continued, orderly growth.

Action Steps

1. Create a **voluntary** Annexation Checklist (2009). The checklist will outline requirements, criteria, or factors to be considered before action on the request is taken.
2. Meet with Porter County to discuss extra-territorial planning authority in the urban growth area identified in the plan (2009).
3. Develop premature subdivision standards for the urban growth area (2010).
4. Incorporate ghost platting requirements as part of all primary plat applications within the urban growth area (2010).
5. Develop a Capacity and Facility Plan for the eastern and southern sections of the urban growth area (2009/2010).
6. Develop a Comprehensive Park/Open Space and Trail Plan for the urban growth area (2009/2010).
7. Commission the Willowcreek Road Corridor Extension. The Corridor Plan will identify the preferred route and development characteristics of Willowcreek Road from County Road 700N to Indiana 130 (2011).



Zoning and Subdivision Updates

Purpose:

The city's existing zoning and subdivision ordinance should be updated to reflect the guiding principles of this document. The City's existing ordinance is based on Euclidian zoning principles that focus primarily on the separation of uses rather than incorporating them into an urban context. By incorporating a form-based code a building's typology, and not necessarily the specific use, can be developed. This approach would allow the City to focus on building types unique to the different districts within the city. The form-based code is also based heavily upon pedestrian accessibility, building function and the scale and character of surrounding development.

Action Plan:

- Review the city's zoning ordinance to determine inconsistencies with the newly updated comprehensive plan. (2009)
- Update the city's Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Ordinance to ensure consistence with the comprehensive plan and urban design objectives. (2010-2011)



Design Enhancements and Infill Strategies

Purpose:

The development of design guidelines is an important way to determine the appropriate size, scale, massing and density within a specific neighborhood. Since the city has a unique character and varying degrees of urban form, it is critical to develop the following action steps as they pertain to design guidelines.

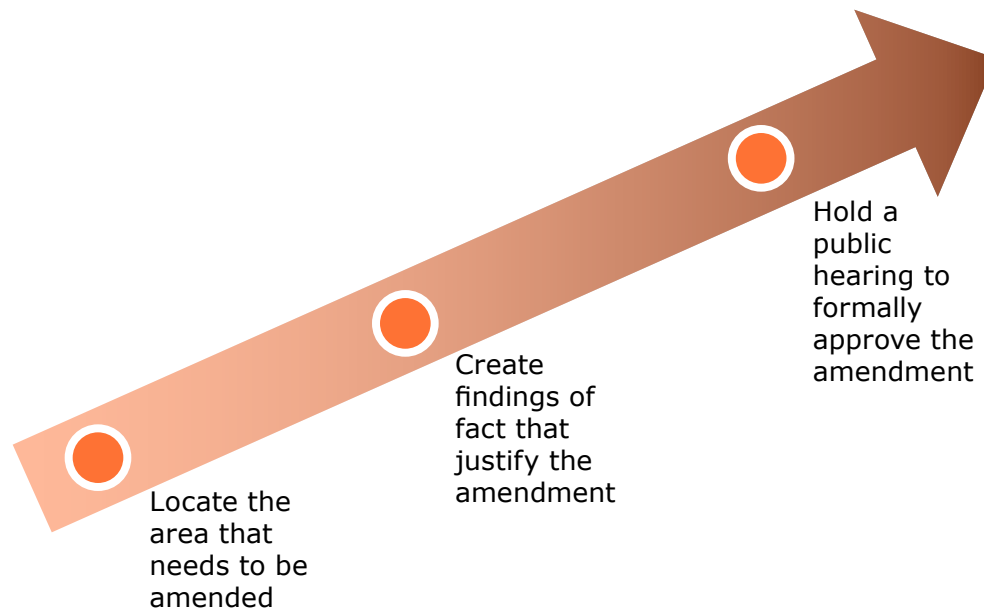
Action Steps:

- Incorporate strategies for infill development in areas where mixed uses are encouraged within the Comprehensive Plan so that mixed-use development, density, transit, scale and massing are properly maintained. This can be done in association with the zoning and subdivision update.
- Create a set of design guidelines for key gateways within the city. These guidelines will further explain overall site design standards, parking and loading standards, building location, perimeter conditions, access, bulk requirements, signage, public spaces, public art and other design issues. (2010-2011).
- Ensure that infill development is compatible with the character, scale and density of surrounding neighborhoods.
- Encourage walkability and thru accesses in infill development.
- Consider transitions (character, density, etc) when reviewing infill parcels that adjoin different land uses (i.e., high intensity commercial to residential).
- Consider development of form based standards to address the unique characteristics of infill development.

Amending the Comprehensive Plan

Purpose:

Comprehensive planning is a fluid and organic process. The urban fabric of Portage has changed greatly over the past fifty years and will continue to change over the next 50. Therefore, this comprehensive plan should not be seen as a plan that cannot be changed over time. Amending the Comprehensive Plan is a policy decision that the city officials, with the assistance of staff, can make from time to time. However, an amendment to the comprehensive plan should not be taken for granted. Any amendment, no matter the size, should be viewed within the best interest of the community and done so only within the context ensuring the health, safety and general welfare of the city. An amendment should also include specific findings of fact that support the need to amend the plan.



Neighborhoods

Purpose:

Creating redevelopment and reinvestment strategies to address the stabilization of existing housing within the City of Portage is an important issue. Portage has a mix of quality housing found throughout the city. In most areas, housing design, quality and housing value has been maintained. The following implementation strategies have been developed to assist with the long-term housing stabilization process for Portage.

Action Steps:

- Continue to address “problem properties,” which are considered those that have on-going building code or maintenance issues, through consistent code enforcement.
- Develop a GIS mapping system to identify areas within the city that have code enforcement issues and address these issues on a neighborhood basis through newsletters and neighborhood clean-up events.
- Offer developer incentives for appropriate infill development opportunities in areas within the city.
- Develop a comprehensive citywide investment program for infrastructure.
- Address foreclosed properties and the trend of public acquisition and redevelopment. Utilize neighborhood program funding opportunities.
- Promote existing quality neighborhoods and identify the factor that make them desirable.



Action Step	Responsible Party	Target Date

Economic Development

Purpose:

There has been a concerted effort to diversify the composition of Portage for investment opportunities. As a result of past and current efforts, Portage has recognized areas for development that have been served by utilities or have geographic boundaries that create logical land use opportunities. The city has developed a well organized and comprehensive approach to economic development. The following is a flow chart of the economic process in Portage.

Action Steps:

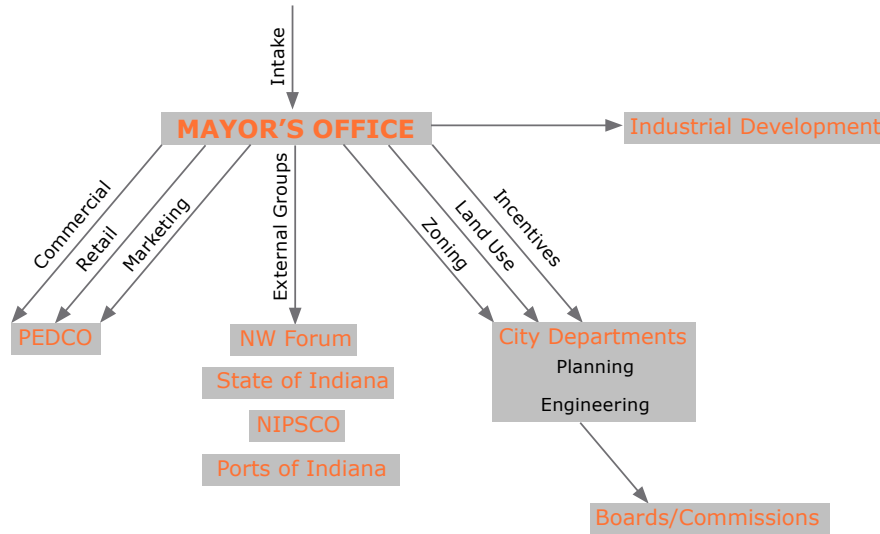
The city of Portage and/or its designees should consider the following internal and external economic development activities:

Internal:

- Include all stakeholders for the continued success of economic development in Portage
 - City will coordinate incentives, infrastructure and planning
 - PEDCO will facilitate site catalog, retail and commercial
- Establish a system for evaluation of incentive request including tax abatements, tax increment financing and revenue bonds.

External:

- Develop targeted listing of business promotion activities including:
 - Trade shows
 - Publications
 - Memberships
- Identify and promote a point of internal contact for all inquires and methodology.
- Utilize technology as a means of cost effective promotion of sites, incentives and demographics in the city of Portage.



Park, Trails and Natural Areas

Purpose:

The city is responsible for the delivery of quality infrastructure, facilities and public services including: the sanitary sewer system, the stormwater conveyance system, local streets and sidewalks, parks, trails and natural areas, and public buildings and facilities. By developing a comprehensive approach for the management of the community's infrastructure, facilities and public services, the city can ensure their continued ability to meet the needs and expectations of the residents.

The city has developed a comprehensive approach to preserving and maintaining parks, natural areas, park facilities and open spaces. Prioritization of maintenance, upgrades, and expansion of these areas are based upon the level of need and value within the city of Portage.

Action Steps:

- The city will continue to preserve, protect and maintain existing parks and facilities including trails, picnic areas and general maintenance and clean-up.
- Additional neighborhood park areas are needed in the growth areas south of U.S. Highway 6. Portage Parks should also consider coordination with the Portage Township Schools on possible school/park opportunities in the growth area.
- A priority of the Portage Parks and Recreation Development is the acquisition of land along the Salt Creek Corridor for the protection of the watershed and enhancement of water quality of Lake Michigan. The use of "greenway and blueway" development would be an excellent benefit to the community.
- Mittal Steel Property – Acquisition of a 187 acre parcel of land near Salt Creek and the Little Calumet River is critical to the protection of these riparian corridors and connection to the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore. Grant applications have been made for funding of this acquisition. Once acquired the Park Department will begin planning for this areas recreational uses.
- Lakefront Park Expansion – Opportunities exist for the expansion of the new Portage Lakefront Park to the south. The city has ongoing discussions with owners of these southern parcels and has prioritized this as a goal in the overall Northside Plan and Marquette Plan.
- Northside Development Area – The new Northside Development has potential for multi-use development and new park, recreation and open space. Park land and trail opportunities along with the future use of the Portage Yacht Club should be addressed as the development of the commercial uses begin to generate funding for additional city amenities.
- Founders Square – This new park site located in the Central Business District is to be a focal point and an example of ways to develop an urban park. As implementation of the downtown area continues this park will be an integral component of this experience.
- Countryside Park/Historical Society – Improvements at this location are ongoing. A sub-area plan is included in this Comprehensive plan update that addresses opportunities for trail systems to be integrated into the Countryside park system.
- Trails and Greenways – Expansion of neighborhood trails is a priority of the Parks Department. This include construction of the Downtown Trail Connector, as well are regional trail systems connecting the Portage system to other communities. A priority project for the city should be connection of the Marquette Trail from the Town of Burns Harbor, through Ameriplex, the Northside Development and the ultimate connection to US Highway 12.



Public Buildings and Facilities

Purpose:

The city is responsible for the delivery of quality infrastructure, facilities and public services including: the sanitary sewer system, the stormwater conveyance system, local streets and sidewalks, parks, trails and natural areas, and public buildings and facilities. By developing a comprehensive approach for the management of the community's infrastructure, facilities and public services, the city can ensure their continued ability to meet the needs and expectations of the residents. The following action steps have been identified for the continued maintenance and development of public buildings and facilities.

Action Steps:

- Consideration should be given to the development of a Street Department complex within the south growth area of the community.
- Continued implementation of the higher education center in the downtown is encouraged.
- A capital improvement strategy should be developed for updating and/or expansion of public buildings and facilities as the population and land area continue to expand.



Sanitary Sewer

Purpose:

The city is responsible for the delivery of quality infrastructure, facilities and public services including: the sanitary sewer system, the stormwater conveyance system, local streets and sidewalks, parks, trails and natural areas, and public buildings and facilities. By developing a comprehensive approach for the management of the community's infrastructure, facilities and public services, the city can ensure their continued ability to meet the needs and expectations of the residents.

The city has developed a comprehensive approach to management and maintenance of its infrastructure. Prioritization of maintenance, upgrades, and expansion of infrastructure projects are based upon the level of need and value within the city of Portage.

Action Steps:

- In addition to the recommendations found within the stormwater management plan, the city will continue to seek opportunities to address areas within the city that do not have municipal sanitary sewers or potable water.
- The city will seek to reduce, whenever possible, the number of septic and well systems within this urbanized area.

