

# GUEST COMMENTARY: Planning for 2050 today in NW Indiana

[Mitch Barloga](#) Aug 29, 2018

As you can read, here at Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC) the word “plan” is firmly embedded in our mission. To this end, we plan regularly to help improve the quality of life of those living in Lake, Porter and LaPorte counties. Topics of focus have included environmental protection, relieving road congestion, improving transit options and expanding our pedestrian and bicycle network.

From time to time NIRPC produces individual documents that highlight these issues, such as the recently adopted Greenways+Blueways 2020 Plan. However, every four years we are mandated by federal law to update our long-range vision (at least 20 years out) for the region, which brings together all of our focuses into one cohesive document.

Today, this vision stretches our thinking about growth in Northwest Indiana in a document we are calling the NWI 2050 Plan. As the title suggests, NIRPC is taking a look at how best as a region we are to grow for the next 30 years. This will involve strategies which fall under four visions for the region that it be: connected, renewed, united and vibrant.

The first step of the 2050 Plan, like any good planning effort, involves soliciting public feedback on the various visions and needs which are important to our residents. We are currently in this phase, which has consisted of working with our many NIRPC-based committees, facilitating open houses and hosting “pop-up” planning displays at various events in the three counties.

From this phase, future input from our region will include preferences for issues and policies that will influence our future decisions. Further discussion will focus on identifying strategies and investments to bring about these decisions in a timely manner. A final refinement will be to establish a performance-based planning system to effectively evaluate the progress on accomplishing the goals outlined in the final planning document.

Altogether a major emphasis remains to tie new federal investments from NIRPC to those goals highlighted in the 2050 Plan. For too many years projects have been funded that are not strongly connected to previous long-range plans, and NIRPC aims to improve this going forward.

The NWI 2050 Plan is scheduled to be completed by May. As a reminder for those not familiar with regional government, NIRPC has no direct authority on local decision making. However, in conjunction with locally elected officials, we are responsible for the distribution of over \$21 million in federal highway funds per year to our region's municipalities, with the requirement that these investments relate to our long-range planning initiatives.

Since we are in the thick of developing the 2050 Plan, we welcome you to join us on this journey to help create a region that benefits and attracts us to this place we call home. To learn more about the plan, and how you can take part directly with our outreach events, please visit [www.nirpc.org/2040-plan/transportation/2050-plan](http://www.nirpc.org/2040-plan/transportation/2050-plan).

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