



EVERLY SHORES BURNS HARBOR CEDAR LAKE CHESTERTON CROWN POINT DUNE ACRES DYER EAST CHICAGO  
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ROSSE LA PORTE LAKE DALECARLIA LAKE STATION LAKES OF THE FOUR SEASONS LONG BEACH LOWEL  
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OTTAWATTOMIE PARK SCHERERVILLE SCHNEIDER SHELBY SOUTH HAVEN ST JOHN TOWN OF PINES TRAI  
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**WHERE WE STAND.**

**A Snapshot of Northwest Indiana**

**September 2008**

**NORTHWESTERN INDIANA REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION**

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## *Where We Stand: A Snapshot of Northwest Indiana*

September, 2008

### **Acknowledgements**

The following NIRPC staff members contributed to the development of this report:

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### **About NIRPC**

The NIRPC of today is not the NIRPC of yesterday. Although we were created in 1965, in 2003, the Indiana General Assembly amended our enabling legislation and designated us a regional Council of Governments, representing the 41 cities and towns and 3 counties of Northwest Indiana. In addition, they charged us to plan for transportation, economic development and the environment within a comprehensive planning framework that is more responsive to the overall needs of our citizens, stakeholders and local governments alike. NIRPC now stands as the voice of regionalism in Northwest Indiana and as a developer of consensus-backed solutions.

While in years prior NIRPC's activities consisted primarily of planning for highways, we now see our role as anticipating the future and helping to shape it through visioning, goal-setting and strategic planning. We are examining and planning for ways in which transportation can help us achieve broader economic development, environmental, land use and social equity goals. We are providing a forum that enables our citizens to address these issues on a regional scale. In short, we are working toward an integrated plan for the future and an improved quality of life for the people of Northwest Indiana.

Yes, we are still a designated Metropolitan Planning Organization. As such, our duties include the preparation of a transportation plan to address our region's mobility needs. This plan, though it includes highways as a critical component, must also contain goals and strategies for mass transit and non-motorized transportation (i.e. bicycle and pedestrian). Our new plan will take us out to the year 2040 and will emerge from a visioning process that actively engages our region's citizens and stakeholders in a dialogue on the desired future of Northwest Indiana. We hope you will agree that this is a different plan from a different NIRPC. Most importantly, though, we hope that you will join us in this effort to make Northwest Indiana a better place to live, work and play, both for tomorrow and for today

## WHERE WE STAND

Northwest Indiana is moving forward. Once weighted down by the heavy yoke of “rust belt” connotations, over the last two decades, the region has experienced remarkable population and economic growth. In 2007, the U.S. Census Bureau estimated that the combined residency of Lake, Porter and LaPorte counties surpassed 1980 levels to hit an all time high of 762,469. The state projects that we will grow by another sixty thousand people by 2040. This influx of people and wealth is breathing new life into the region and inspiring great optimism for the future.

Along with countless opportunities, though, such growth brings challenges. In some cases, the scale and speed of the change caught us off-guard; and our lack of preparation is beginning to show. In other cases, we still see signs of decline and are wondering when this comeback will reach our neighborhoods. We see problems with:

Traffic congestion that hinders economic growth and fills our air with exhaust fumes;  
Urban cities littered with brownfields too costly to develop;  
Overwhelmed transportation and sewer infrastructure in rapidly-growing small towns;  
Economic development that comes at the expense of clean air and water;  
Abandoned neighborhoods of crumbling streets and vacant buildings;  
Acres of large-lot cul-de-sac subdivisions that funnel traffic into jammed roadways and channel polluted stormwater into swollen streams;  
Land use patterns that effectively rule out pedestrian access and public transit, denying access to those without cars or unable to drive.

Transportation efficiency, environmental quality, economic prosperity, social justice – these are individual issues that affect our lives daily. Taken together, they are the measures of a place; of its desirability and its livability. And while we citizens rightly pledge our greatest allegiance to our town or city, these problems do not respect political boundaries. For that reason, these issues cannot be treated separately, but require an integrated planning approach.

A growing number of government officials, business leaders, citizens and organizations are recognizing that these challenges require comprehensive, regional solutions.

Since its creation in 1965, the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC) has been advocating for regional cooperation and providing a forum that enables the citizens of Northwest Indiana to address regional issues. Recent legislation expanded NIRPC’s scope from merely transportation planning to include planning for the environment and economic development. The Marquette Plan: A Vision for Lakeshore Reinvestment was recently adopted by NIRPC. Groundbreaking in its regional vision, widespread support and immediate implementation of a number of catalytic projects, this plan now stands as a touchstone for future efforts. With that success fresh in our minds, NIRPC has begun working on a Comprehensive Regional Plan. This plan will address five areas: Transportation, Land Use, Economic Development, Natural Environment and Social Equity.

Planning for the future is not easy. It requires thinking deeply about relationships and balancing interests. This document is intended to outline some of the key trends and important issues that we face as a region. Described here is the canvas upon which we will paint the future. While this document largely separates reality into different categories and data sets, as you read through it, think about the interconnectedness of elements such as land use, transportation, economic development, environmental quality and social equity. Contemplate your role and your contribution. Then discuss them with friends and neighbors. Think about problems and envision solutions.

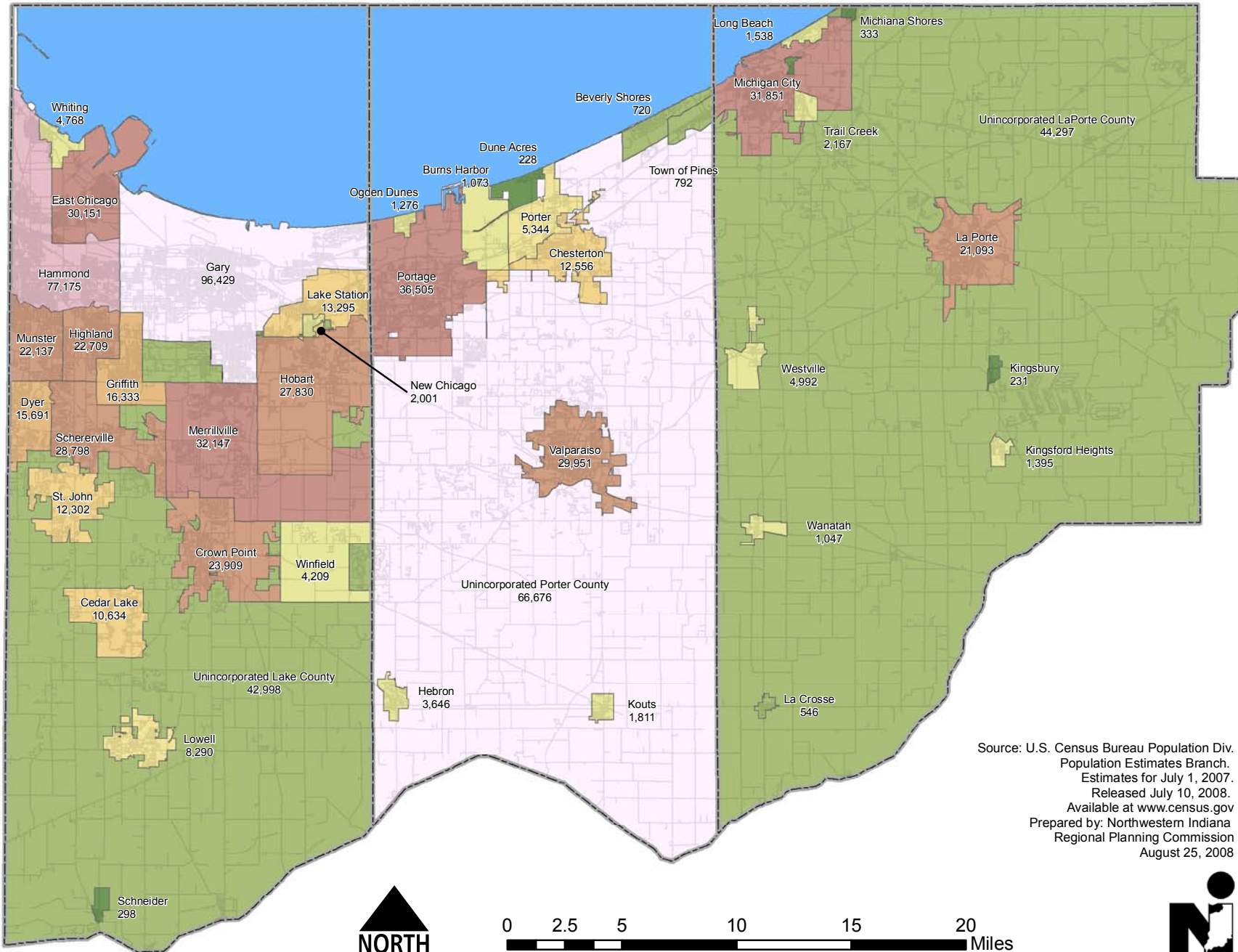
***Together we make the difference.***



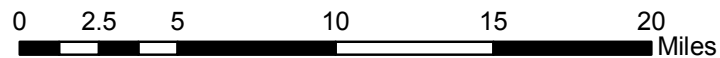
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6100 Southport Road / Portage, IN / 46368 / 219.763.6060 / TTY - 771



2007 Population Estimates



Source: U.S. Census Bureau Population Div.  
 Population Estimates Branch.  
 Estimates for July 1, 2007.  
 Released July 10, 2008.  
 Available at [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)  
 Prepared by: Northwestern Indiana  
 Regional Planning Commission  
 August 25, 2008



the issue: a shifting population

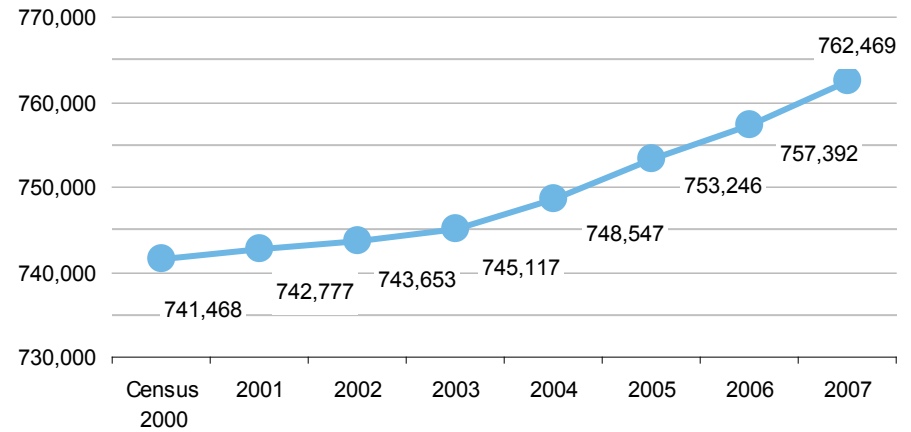
A GEOGRAPHIC SHIFT

After two decades of dramatic decline, predominantly in Lake County, the 1990s and 2000s saw Northwest Indiana's population increase. According to the latest U.S. Census Bureau estimates, the regional population hit an all time high of 762,469 in 2007. The overall growth figure, however, tells only one side of our story. The other side is the striking reality of the population shift: In the past 20 years, Lake County grew by about 16 thousand people, but the population is still 60 thousand less than its 1970 peak. During the same time period, Porter County grew steadily, nearly doubling its population. LaPorte County, on the other hand, has hit a plateau with population today only slightly higher than 1980. Additionally, the latest estimates show a slowdown in Porter County and a slight loss in LaPorte County. People are returning to Northwest Indiana, but not to the same places they left.

Population projections are literally the starting point for planning for new urban development. Comprehensive plans and zoning ordinances set guidelines for development. The development of these tools requires careful consideration of the population to be accommodated and the residential, commercial, and industrial development needed for that population. Everyone understands the importance of population projections for the planning for new schools in growing areas. Transportation planners use projected populations as a major element in predicting future travel demand when planning for new transportation facilities. The additional capacity required for water and sewer utility systems is likewise directly related to population growth. In the broadest sense, projections of future population levels provide the residents of a community with an understanding of the opportunities and challenges they face as they move into the future. Communities faced with significant population growth need to consider the implications of that growth for their communities and how they will manage that growth.

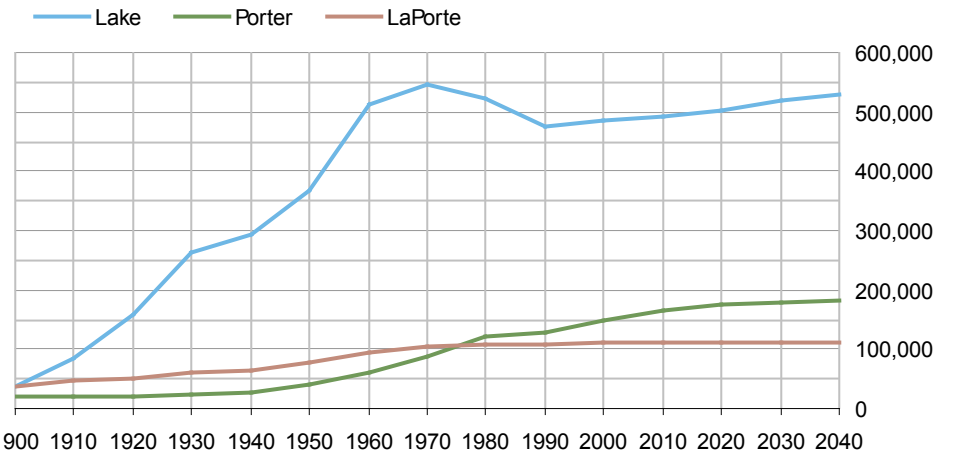
Source: "Projection Implications on the Economy: Land Use" John R. Ottensmann Director, Urban Policy and Planning, Center for Urban Policy and the Environment, School of Public and Environmental Affairs, Indiana University. Indiana Business Review Summer 2008, Volume 83, Number 2.

Northwest Indiana population, 2000 - 2007



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates Program

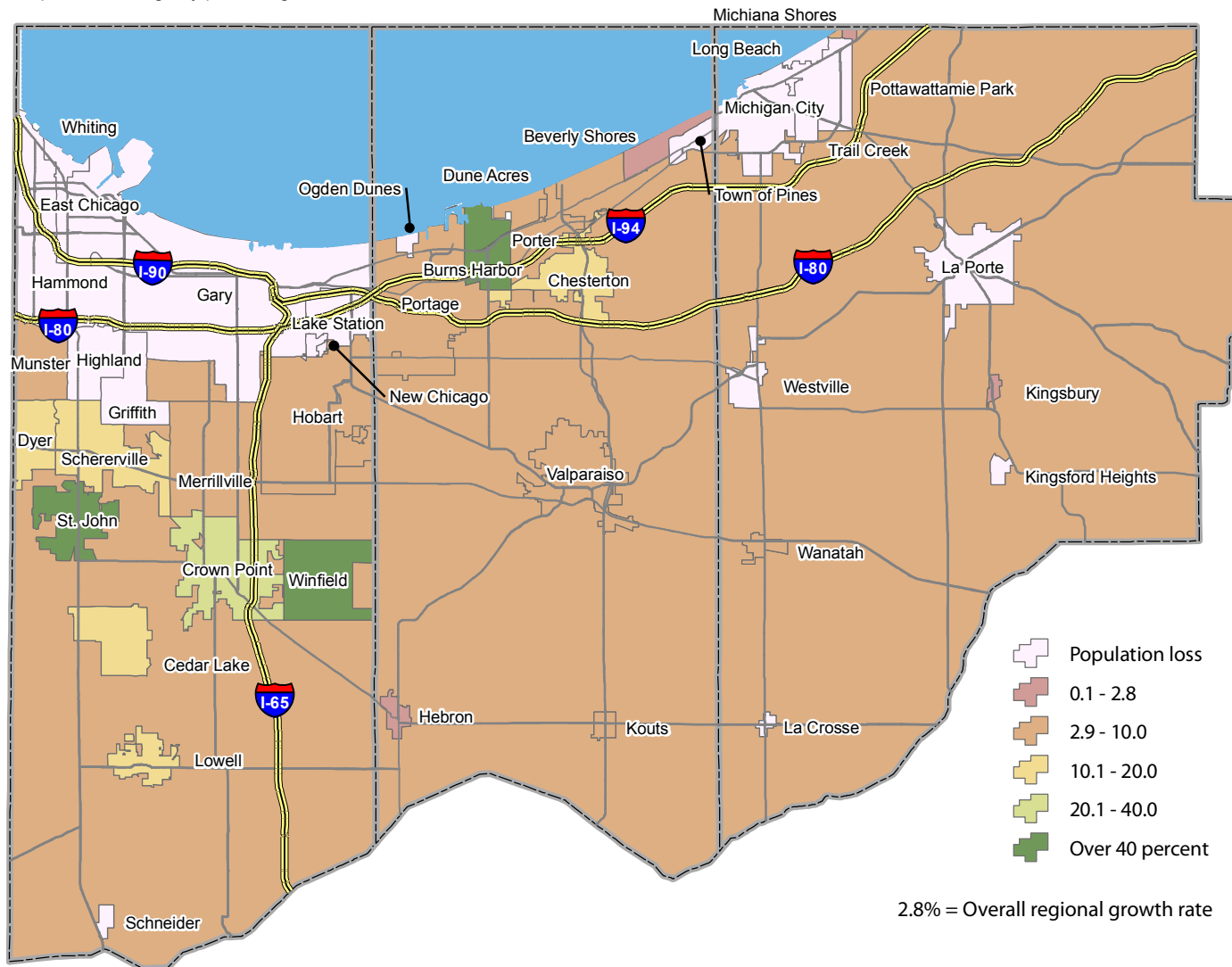
County populations beginning at 1900 and projected to 2040



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Stats Indiana

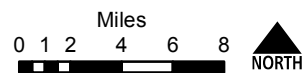
## Where are we growing?:

Population change by percentage, 2000 - 2007



2.8% = Overall regional growth rate

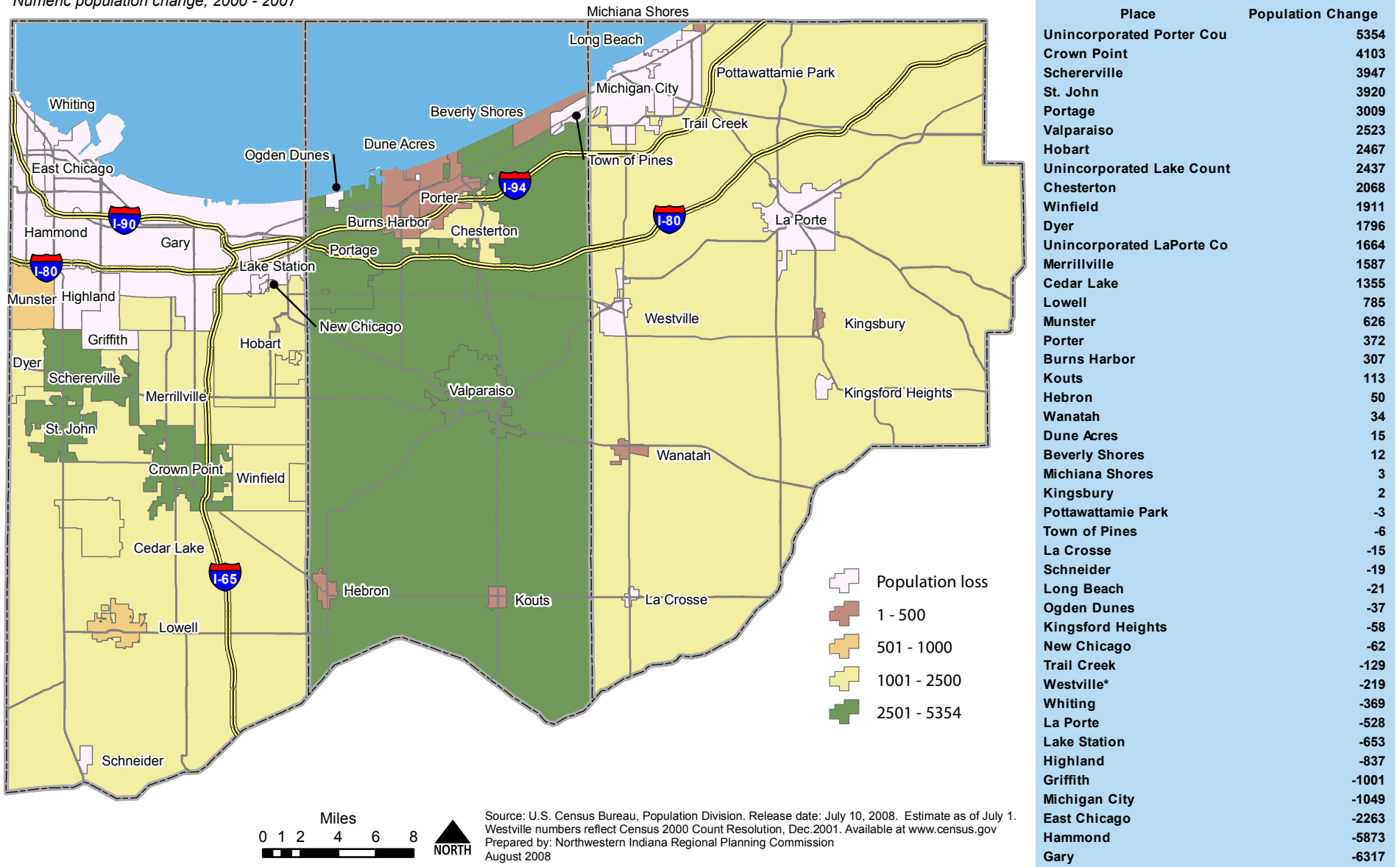
Place	Percentage Change
Winfield	83.2
St. John	46.8
Burns Harbor	40.1
Crown Point	20.7
Chesterton	19.7
Schererville	15.9
Cedar Lake	14.6
Dyer	12.9
Lowell	10.5
Hobart	9.7
Valparaiso	9.2
Portage	9
Unincorporated Porter Cou	8.7
Porter	7.5
Dune Acres	7
Kouts	6.7
Unincorporated Lake Count	6
Merrillville	5.2
Unincorporated LaPorte Co	3.9
Wanatah	3.4
Munster	2.9
Beverly Shores	1.7
Hebron	1.4
Kingsbury	0.9
Michiana Shores	0.9
Town of Pines	-0.8
Pottawattamie Park	-1
Long Beach	-1.3
La Porte	-2.4
La Crosse	-2.7
Ogden Dunes	-2.8
New Chicago	-3
Michigan City	-3.2
Highland	-3.6
Kingsford Heights	-4
Westville*	-4.2
Lake Station	-4.7
Trail Creek	-5.6
Griffith	-5.8
Schneider	-6
Gary	-6.1
East Chicago	-7
Hammond	-7.1
Whiting	-7.2



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division. Release date: July 10, 2008. Estimate as of July 1.  
 Westville numbers reflect Census 2000 Count Resolution, Dec.2001. Available at [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)  
 Prepared by: Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission  
 August 2008

Where are we growing?:

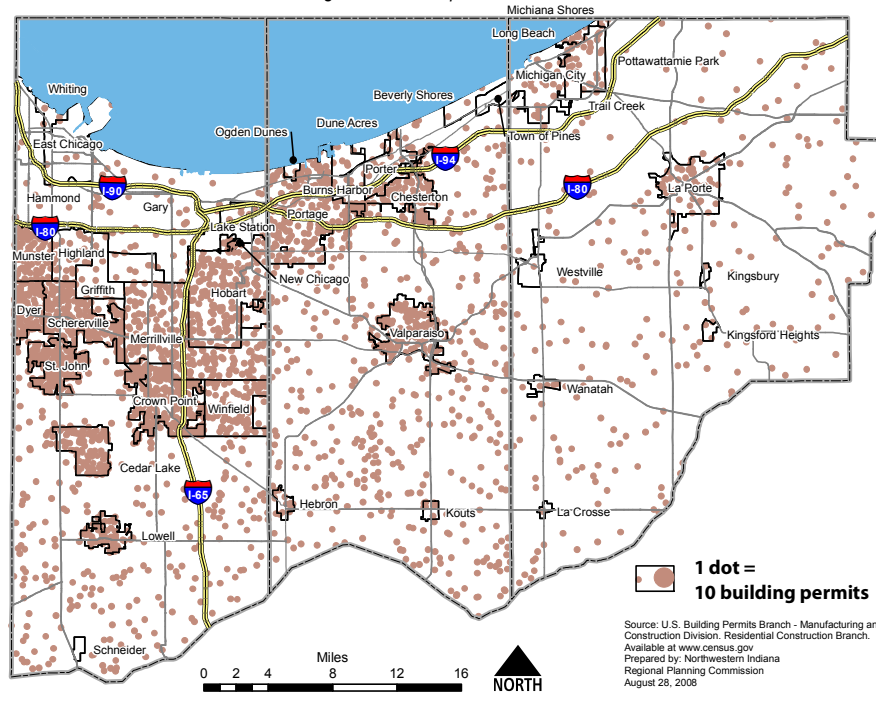
Numeric population change, 2000 - 2007





### Where is the new residential construction?

Generalized location of residential dwelling units for which permits were issued between 2000 and 2007

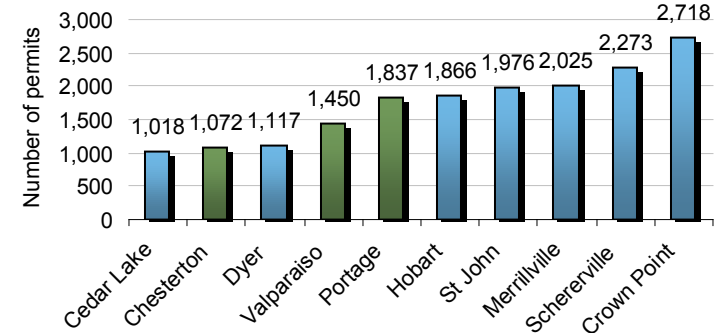


In the three-county region, the trend has been a movement away from the older, industrial cities and from the smallest towns. Overwhelmingly, these places are in Lake and LaPorte counties. Gary and Hammond have been hit the hardest. Yet, despite combined losses of over 120 thousand since the 1980s, both of these cities still rank in the ten most populous cities in Indiana. About 22 percent of the region's residents still call one of them home. Adhering closely to national trends, the inner ring suburbs of Highland, Griffith, Lake Station and New Chicago lost population as well.

These negative growth rates are offset by the explosive population increases occurring in central and southern Lake and Porter counties. Between 2000 and 2007, St. John and Winfield ranked in the top twenty fastest growing Indiana towns and cities (Burns Harbor did as well, but as an anomaly: in 2000, its population was only 766). During the same time period, unincorporated areas posted the highest numerical gains in Porter and LaPorte counties. Over 20 percent of our entire regional population now resides in unincorporated areas. In Porter and LaPorte counties, the figure is around 40 percent.

### HIGH GROWTH

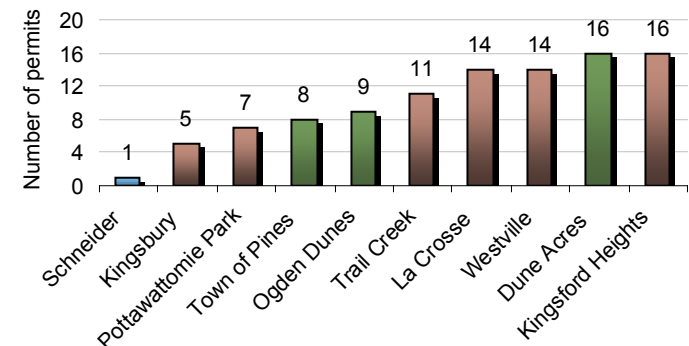
Municipalities that granted permits for over 1000 dwelling units between 2000 and 2007



Source: U.S. Census Bureau Building Permits Branch - Manufacturing and Construction Division. Residential Construction Branch.

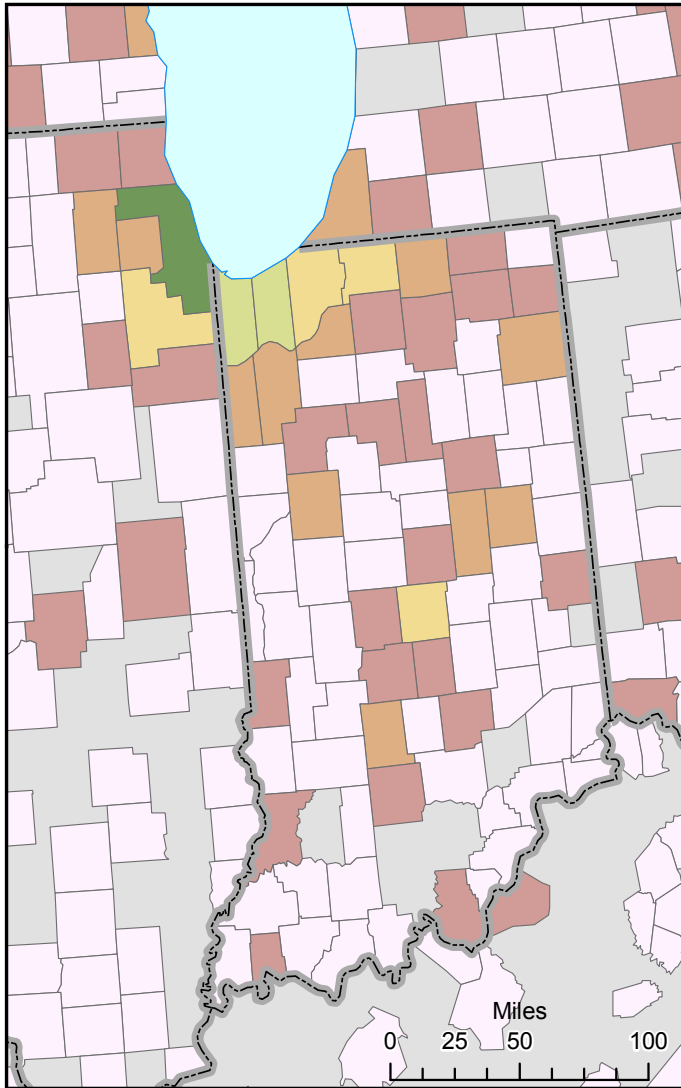
### LOW GROWTH

The ten municipalities that granted permits for the least number of dwelling units between 2000 and 2007



Source: U.S. Census Bureau Building Permits Branch - Manufacturing and Construction Division. Residential Construction Branch.

Where did they come from?:  
domestic immigrant origins, 1995 - 2000, by county

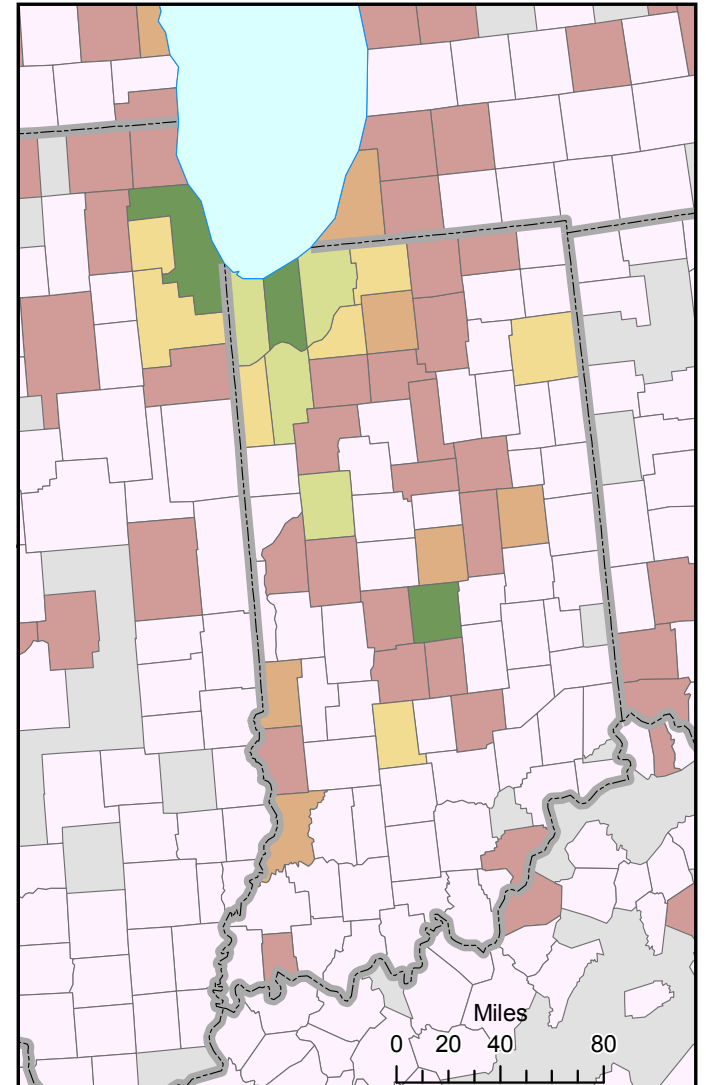


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census  
Available at [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)  
Prepared by the Northwestern Indiana  
Regional Planning Commission  
June 25, 2008

**Number of people who left for NWI**

1 - 83	1227 - 2520
84 - 357	2521 - 11348
358 - 1226	11349 - 29115

Where did they go?:  
domestic emigrant destinations, 1995 - 2000, by county



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census  
Available at [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)  
Prepared by the Northwestern Indiana Regional  
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June 25, 2008

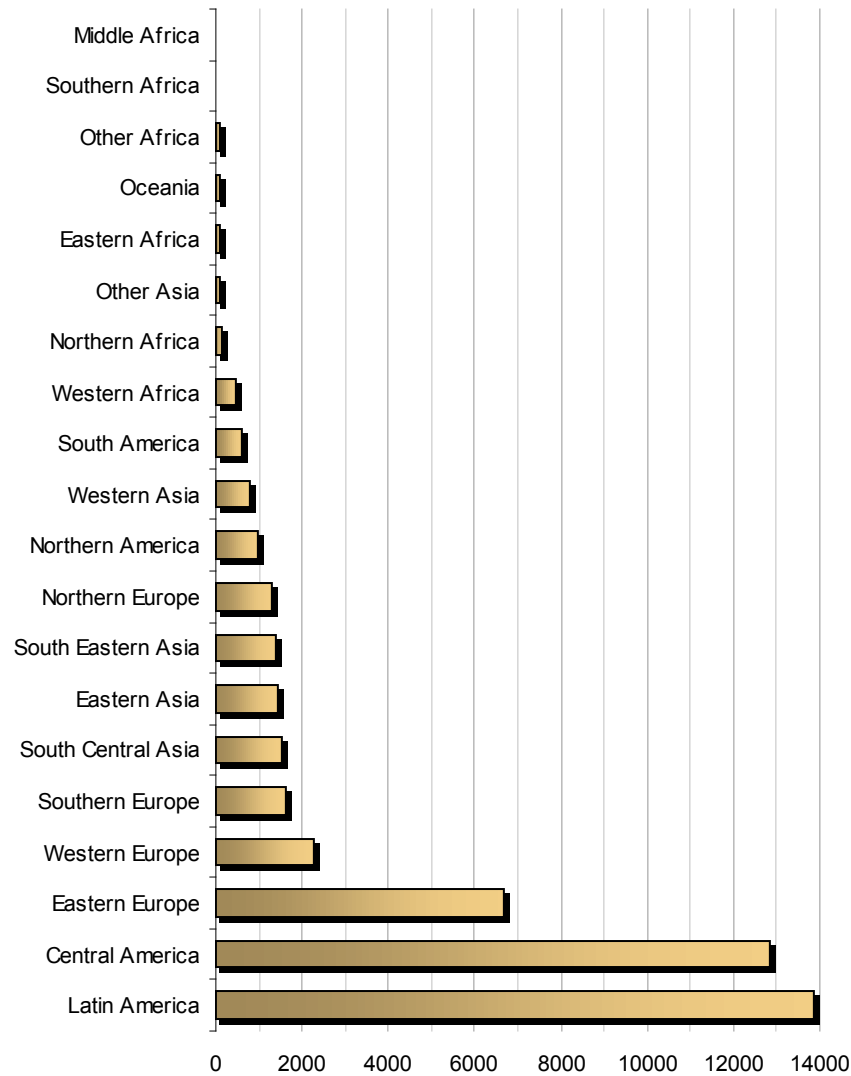
**Number of former NWI residents**

1 - 100	1001 - 2500
101 - 500	2501 - 5000
501 - 1000	5001 - 11803

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, between the years of 1995 and 2000, 76,866 people moved to Northwest Indiana from another U.S. county. Among these, about 50 came from either Indiana or Illinois. Over one third of the total domestic immigrants, 29,115 people, relocated from Cook County, Illinois.

As you can see from the maps on the opposite page, when people move away from Northwest Indiana, they generally do not move far. Most relocate to other places within the Chicago metropolitan region or to other metropolitan areas in Indiana. Tippecanoe (Lafayette), Allen (Fort Wayne), Monroe (Bloomington), Marion (Indianapolis) counties contain many of the region's expatriates, though in Tippecanoe and Monroe counties this may be due to the large student populations.

Origins of foreign born population



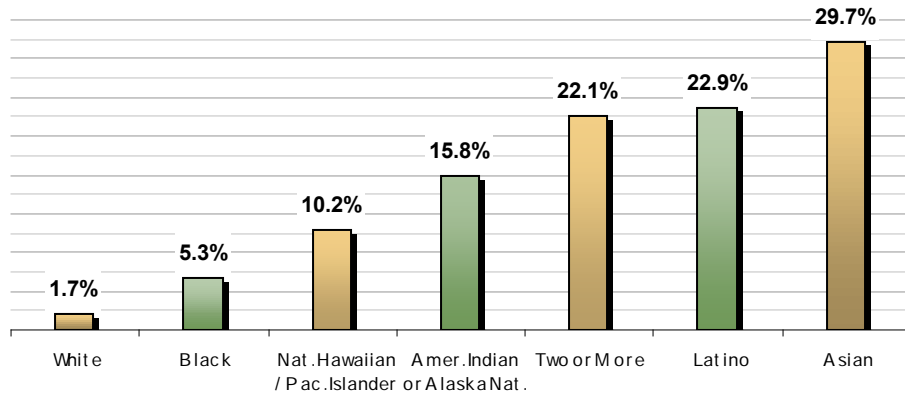
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000

### A DEMOGRAPHIC SHIFT

Two basic facts illustrate the demographic shift occurring in Northwest Indiana: First, the explosive growth in the minority population, seen most clearly in the Latino population boom; and second, the aging of the population. These trends mirror those of the United States.

In terms of demographics, what is distinctive about Northwest Indiana is that we are, on average, older, less wealthy, and less educated than the rest of the Chicago metropolitan area. In many cases, this comparison also applies to our relationship to the rest of the country.

Northwest Indiana race and ethnicity growth as a percentage, 2000 - 2007

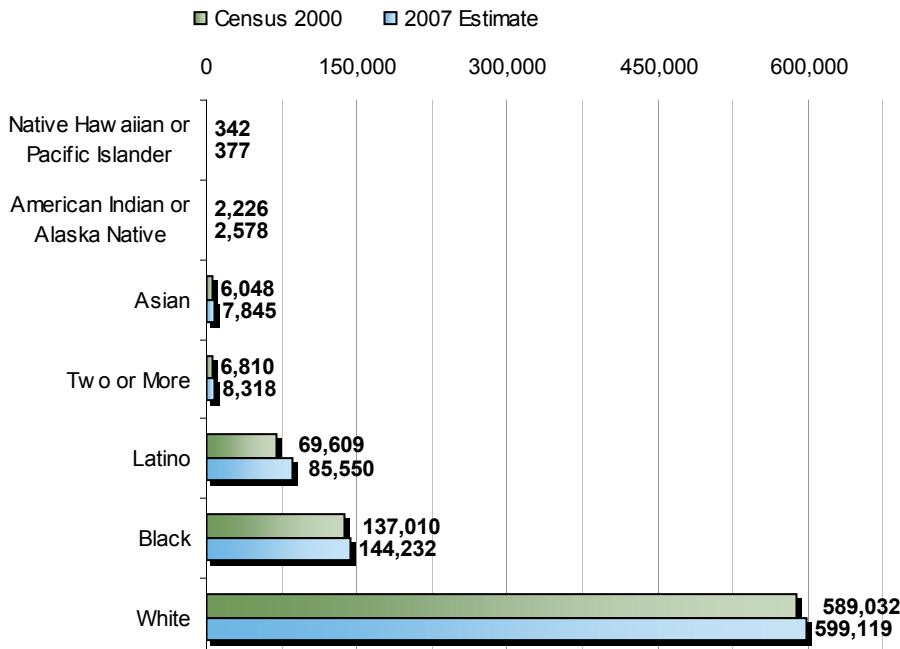


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates Program

DIVERSE...

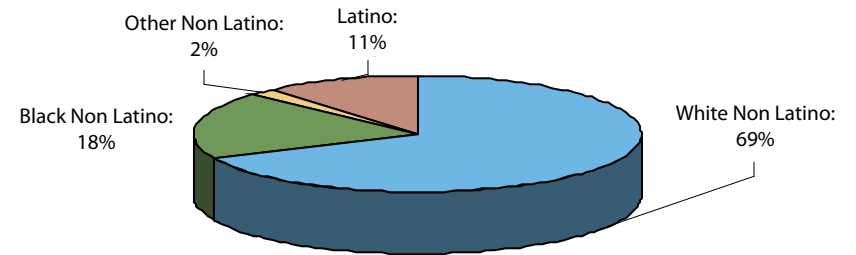
As a region, we continue to grow more racially diverse. Although the 10,087 person increase in the total white population of Northwest Indiana was numerically higher than any other race; at only 1.7 percent, it was actually the smallest proportionally. In contrast, the black population increased by 5.3 percent, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander by 10.0 percent and American Indian or Alaskan Native by 15.2 percent. The Asian and the mixed-race populations both grew tremendously, by 29.7 and 22.1 percent, respectively. Ethnically, the major growth occurred in the Latino population, which increased by 22.9 percent, while the non-Latino population grew by a meager 0.8 percent.

Northwest Indiana race and ethnicity growth, 2000 - 2007



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division, Census 2000

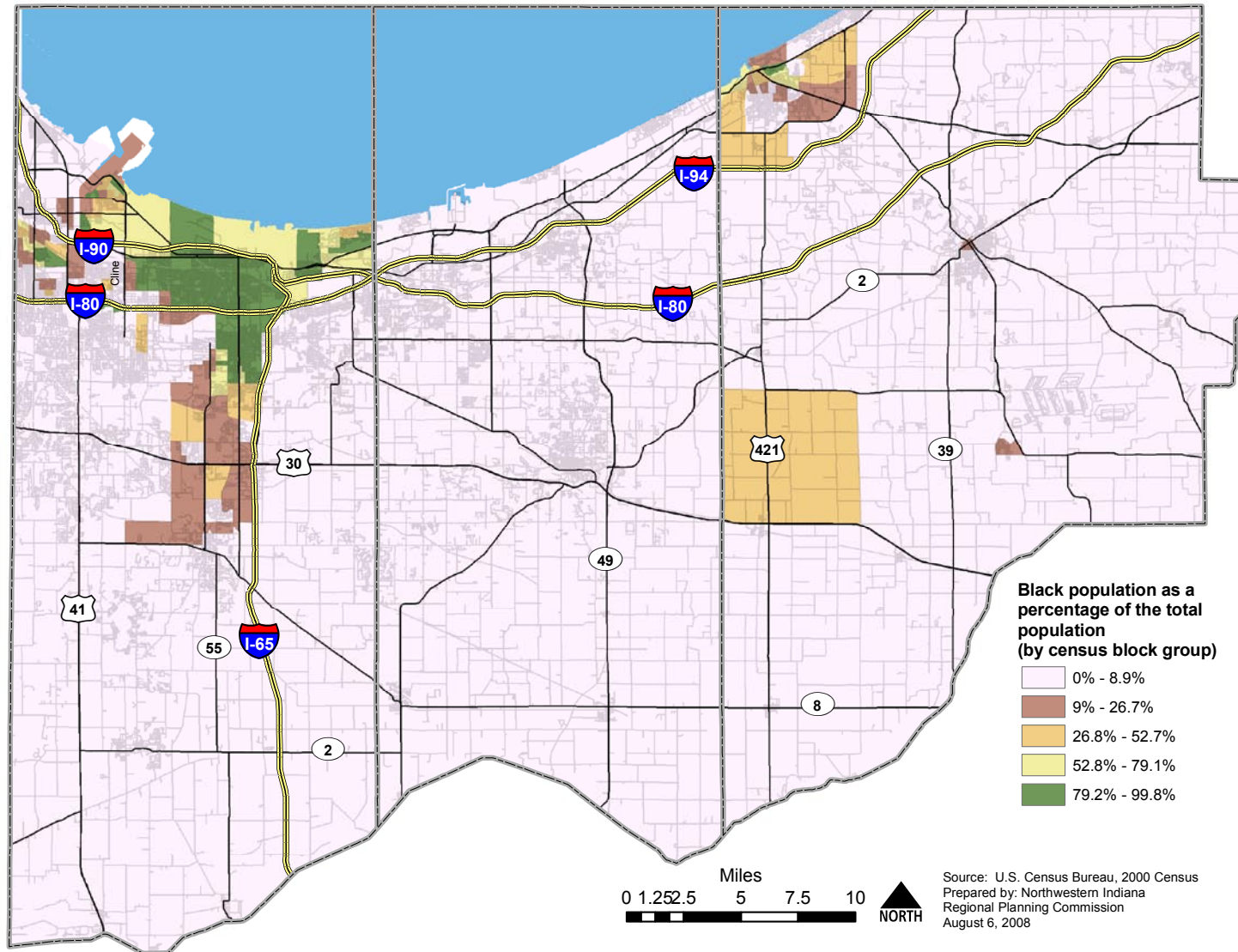
Northwest Indiana by Race and Ethnicity, 2007



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates Program 2008

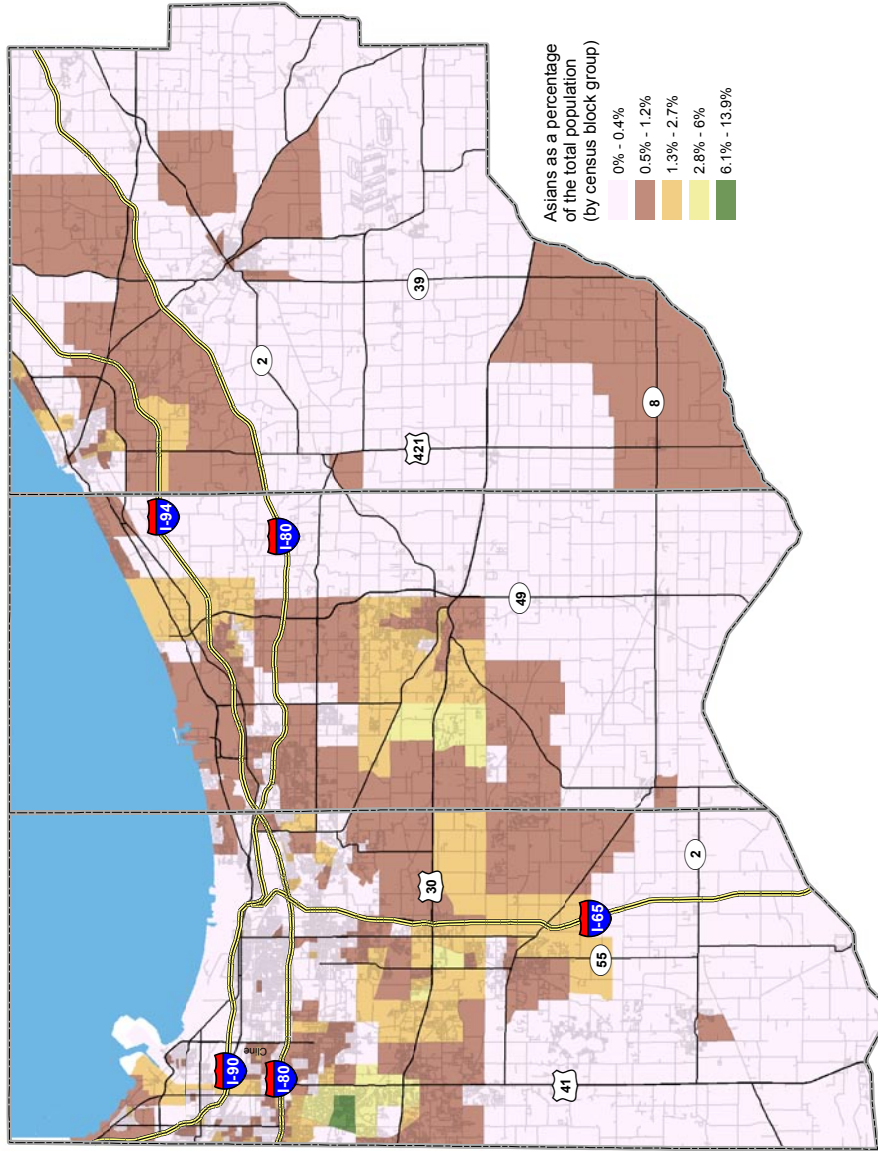
...BUT SEGREGATED

Who lives where?: Black population distribution as of 2000

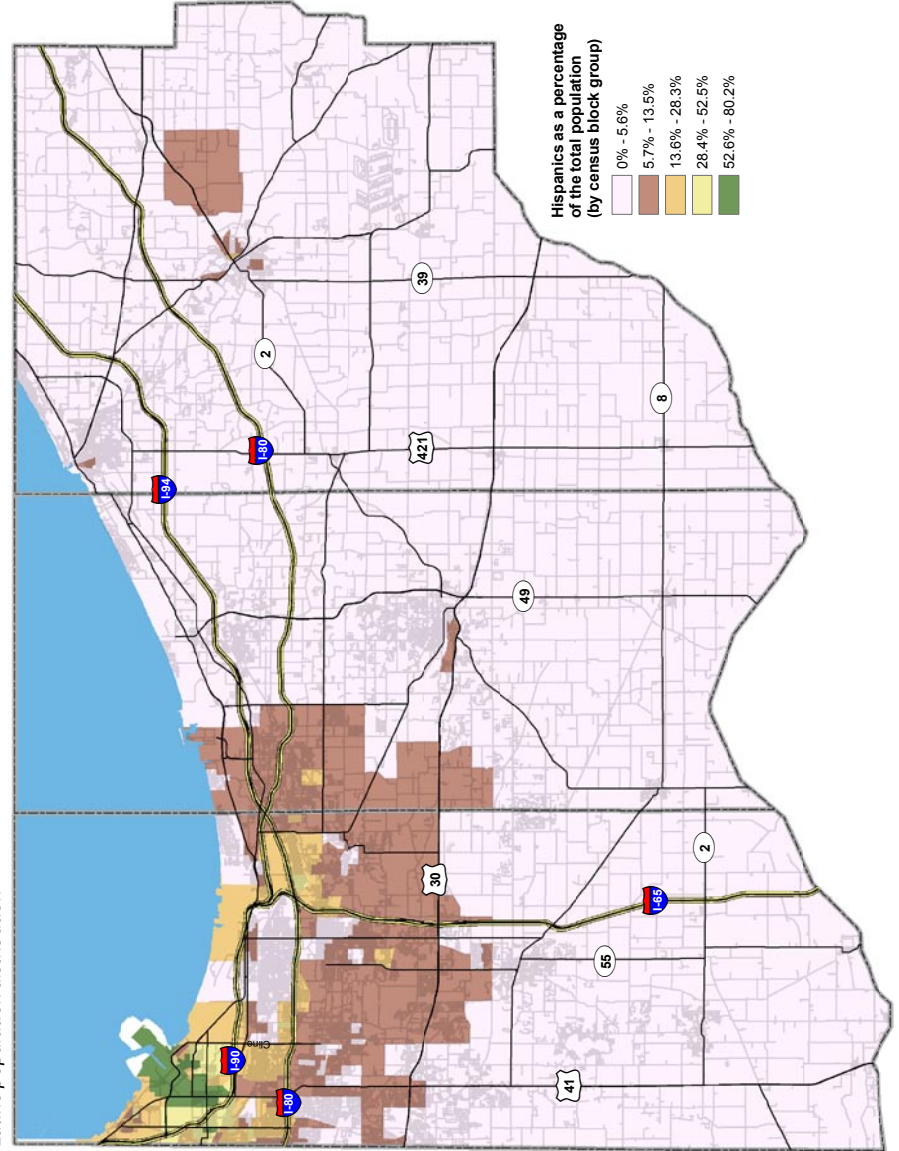


Despite rapid growth in minority populations, the region itself remains quite segregated. Generally, the two largest minority groups, black and Latino, are concentrated in northern and north-central Lake County and in the northern part of LaPorte County, near Michigan City. The highest proportions of the black population are in and around Gary while the highest proportion of the Latino population is centered on East Chicago. The third largest minority group, Asian, is more scattered, but the highest numbers reside in central Lake and Porter counties around Munster and Valparaiso.

Who lives where?  
Asian population distribution as of 2000



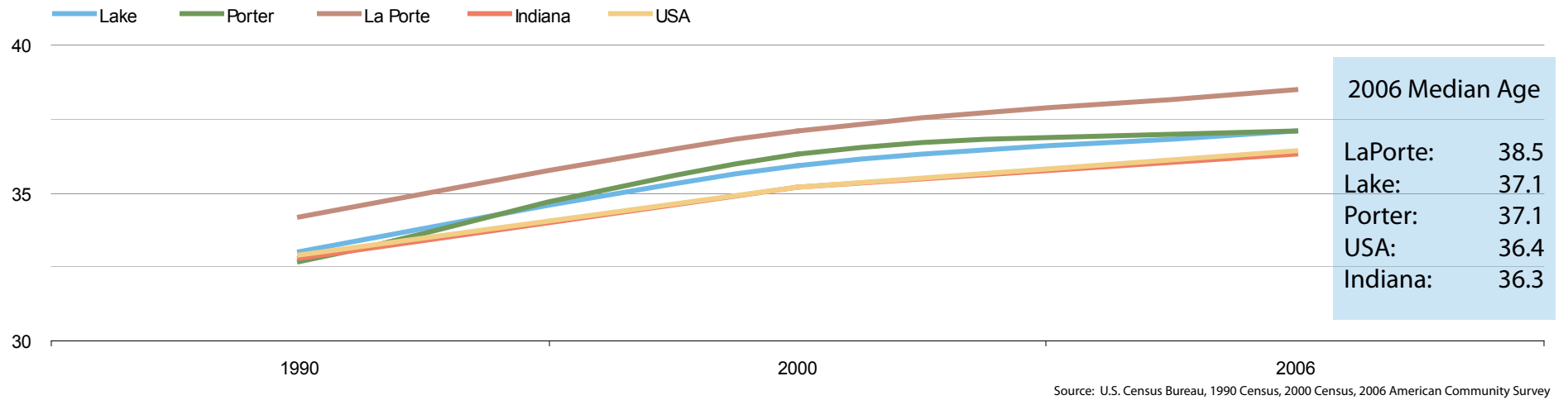
Who lives where?  
Latino population distribution



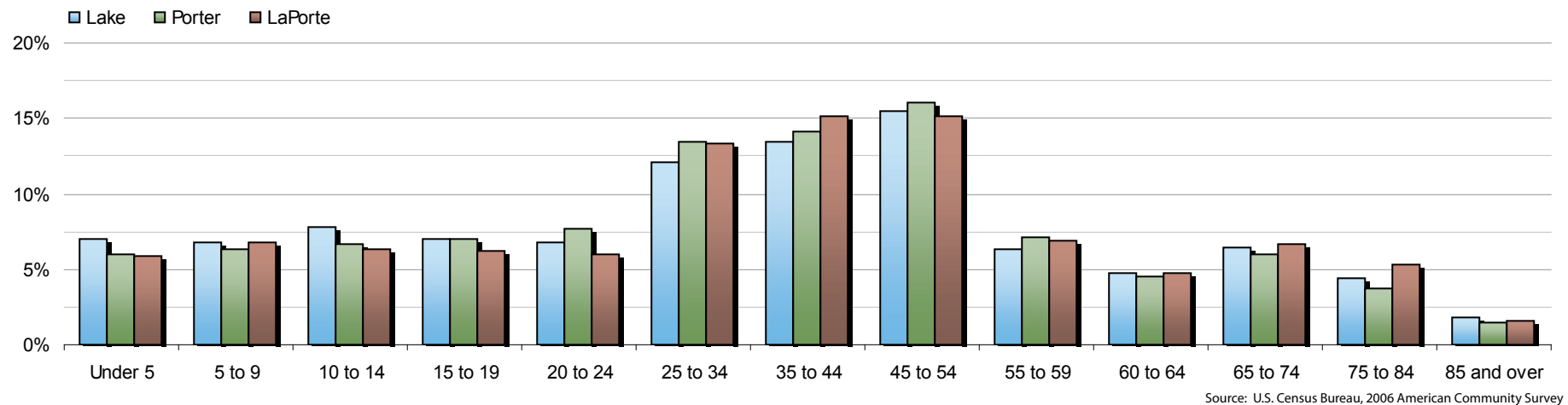
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census

Throughout the country, the baby boomer generation is approaching retirement age. The region is no exception. In fact, as the scale tips more and more towards the elderly side, the effects will likely be felt more strongly here. Already, the median age in Northwest Indiana exceeds that of Metro Chicago, Indiana and the U.S. By 2040, it is expected to increase somewhere between 2 to 5 years.

**Change in median age, 1990-2006**



**Age of population, by percentage**

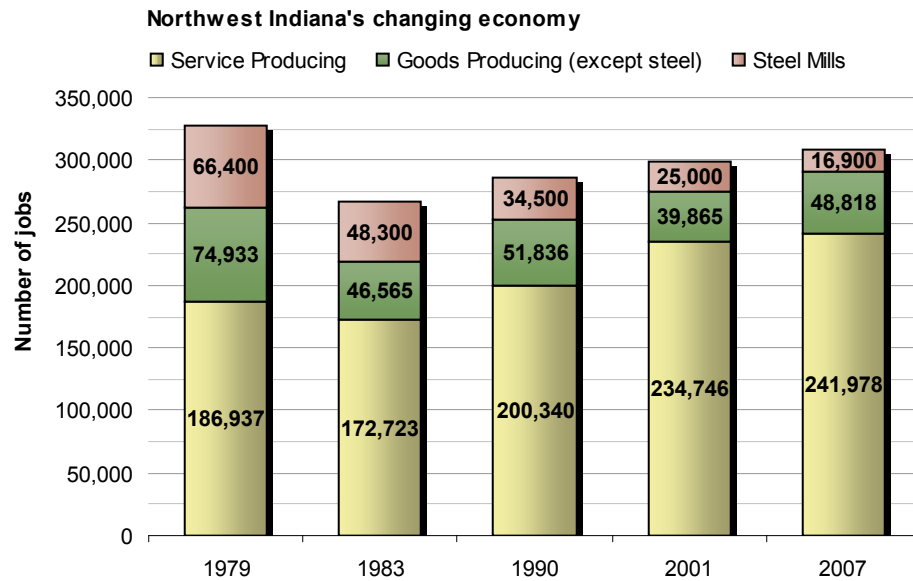


**the issue: economic development in the new economy**

Northwest Indiana gained prominence and prosperity as a manufacturing center. Indeed, neighborhoods and even cities were built as a means of housing factory workers. It is no surprise, then, that the shift from a manufacturing economy to a service economy has not always been an easy or welcome change. The decline in high-paying jobs in the steel mills in the 70s and 80s cut a wound that has not yet fully healed. Furthermore, trends suggest that we are shifting to an economy where manufacturing will play an even less central, though still significant, role in our region.

Although Indiana is often thought of as a rural state, in 2006, manufacturing jobs still employed 20.74 percent of working Hoosiers. This is one of the highest proportions in the country. Here in Northwest Indiana, the proportion of our residents who work in the manufacturing sector stood at 16.77 percent, 3 to 4 percent larger than that of both the Chicago metro and the country. Interestingly, our least urbanized county, LaPorte, has the highest proportion of its population employed in manufacturing jobs, accounting for nearly a quarter, 24.89 percent, of the total

While industry receives much of the publicity in Northwest Indiana, another traditionally prominent sector of the regional economy, agriculture, is also on the decline. Between 1997 and 2002, total market value of production dropped 17.91 percent from \$189 million to \$155 million. At the same time, the number of acres of farm land continued to fall.



Source: Indiana Department of Workforce Development Labor Market Information

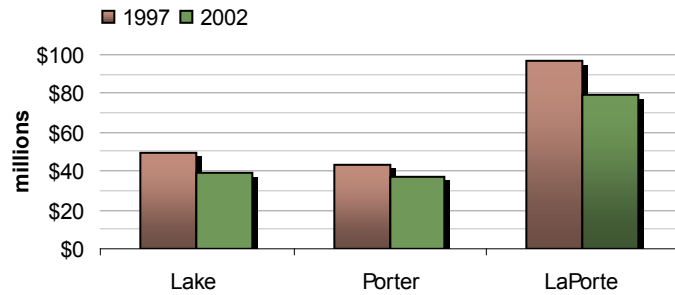


Credit: US-EPA

Mittal Steel, East Chicago

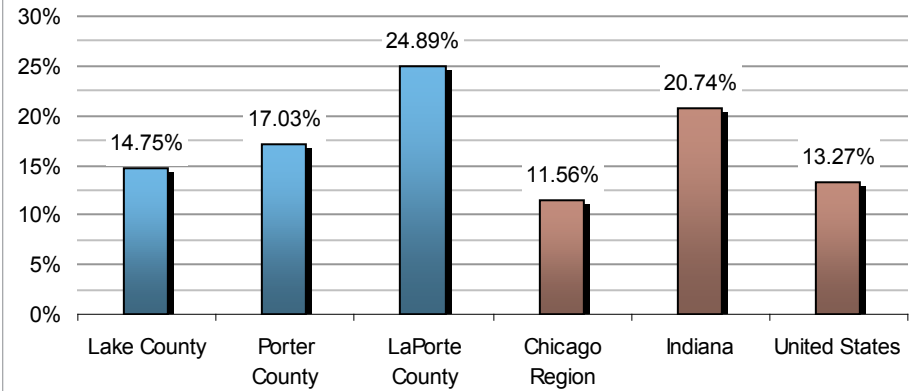


**Change in total market value of production for the agricultural sector**



Source: 2002 Census of Agriculture, U.S. Dept. of Agriculture

**Proportion of residents employed in manufacturing**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006 American Community Survey



Indiana farmhouse



Indiana Harbor and Canal, East Chicago

The reality is that the region is transitioning to a more diversified, and therefore more resilient, economy. In terms of employment, three of the five fastest growing industries are “white collar” jobs: management, education, and health care / social services. Educational services and health care / social services now provide one-fifth of all region jobs. The growing need for specialized education coupled with our aging population will likely increase the demand for these occupations.

Growing industries, 2002-2006			
Industry classification	Percent change in jobs	Number of jobs added	Average annual earnings per job
Management of companies	18.15%	246	\$75,476
Educational services	14.48%	635	\$23,732
Construction	12.85%	2,211	\$50,426
Transportation and warehousing	10.14%	904	\$39,436
Healthcare and social assistance	9.56%	3,407	\$38,556
Accommodation and food service	7.16%	1,658	\$11,839
Professional and tech services	6.67%	497	\$41,196
Retail trade	2.76%	1025	\$22,294
Other services	2.61%	281	\$23,583
Finance and insurance	1.99%	141	\$41,173

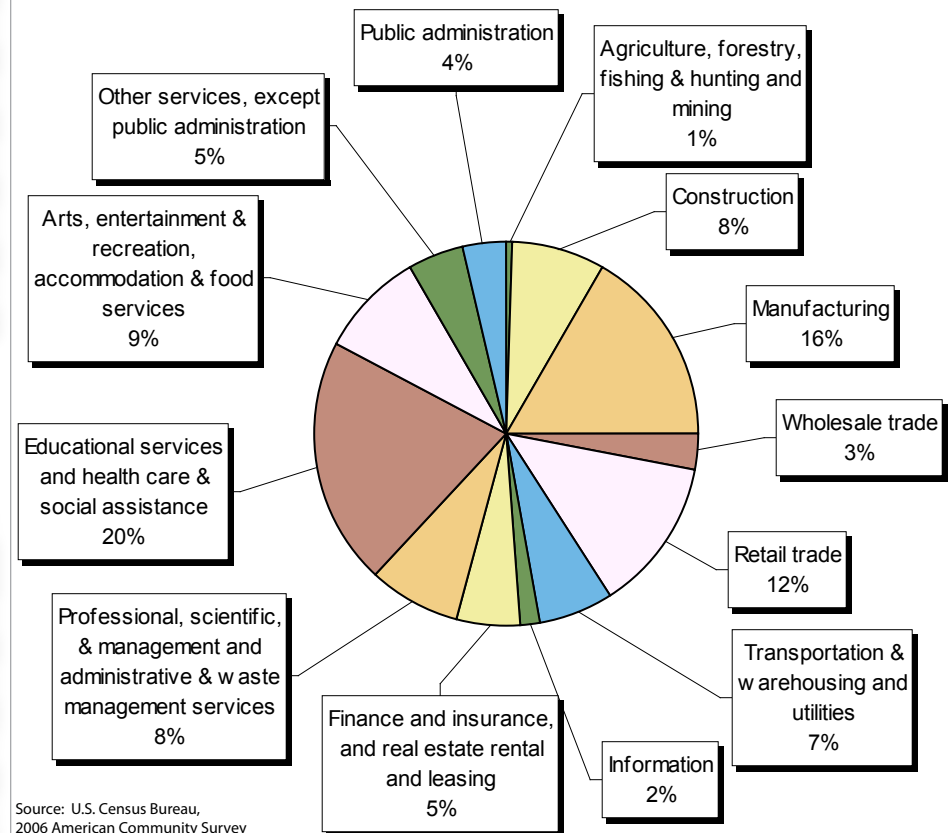
Source: Indiana Dept. of Workforce Development, as of June 29, 2007

Shrinking industries, 2002-2006			
Industry classification	Percent change in jobs	Number of jobs lost	Average annual earnings per job
Information	-16.41%	562	\$39,006
Mining	-8.19%	28	\$65,826
Arts, Entertainment, Recreation	-8.11%	818	\$29,845
Real Estate; rental and leasing	-8.04%	282	\$26,863
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting	-7.38%	35	\$12,267
Manufacturing	-6.88%	3,303	\$81,645
Administration and waste services	-4.84%	635	\$25,084
Wholesale trade	-1.28%	129	\$56,776

Source: Indiana Dept. of Workforce Development, as of June 29, 2007

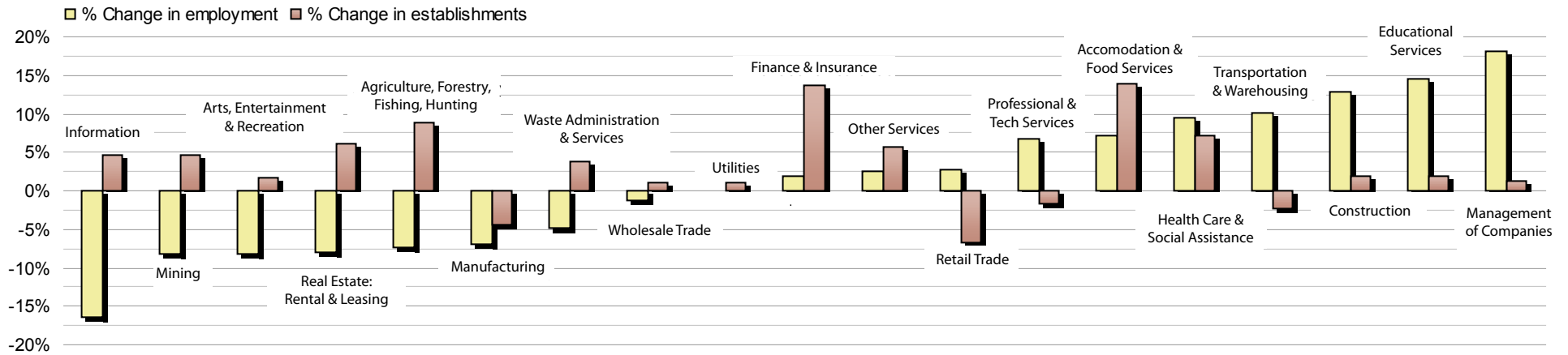
Overall job growth, however, is lagging. In fact, our labor force is growing at twice the rate of our jobs. In other words, Northwest Indiana does not have enough jobs to support its own population. This region is walking the line between two identities: that of a bedroom suburb of Chicago and that of a distinctive regional job center.

What we do for a living: Employment of Northwest Indiana residents by industry, 2006



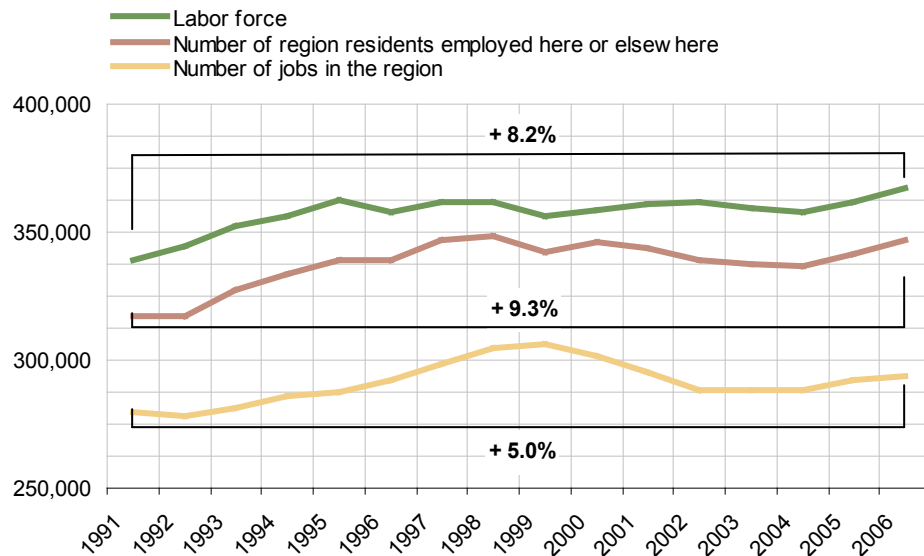
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006 American Community Survey

**Percent change in employment and number of establishments by sector for Northwest Indiana, 2002 - 2006**



Source: Indiana Dept. of Workforce Development, as of June 29, 2007

**Regional employment and job availability**



Source: Labor Market Information Unit, Indiana Dept. of Workforce Development

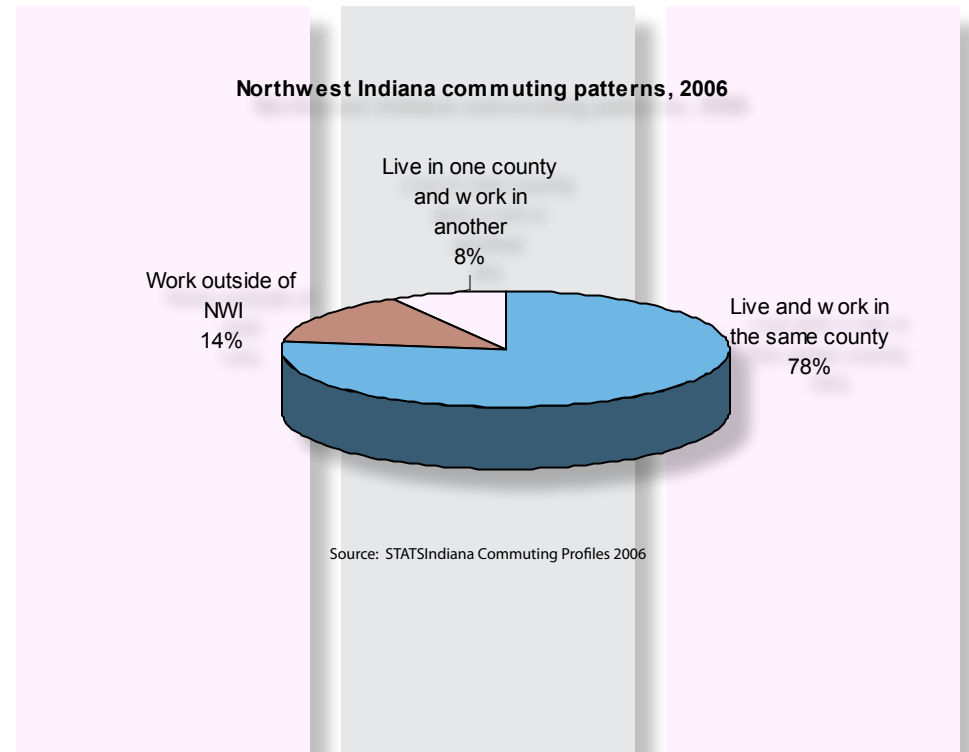


Porter Hospital, Valparaiso

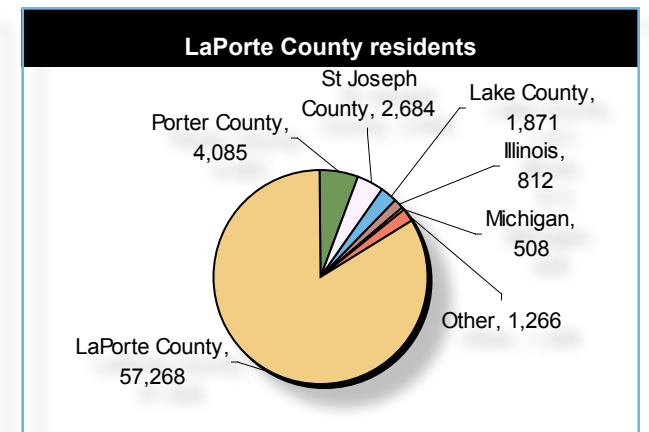
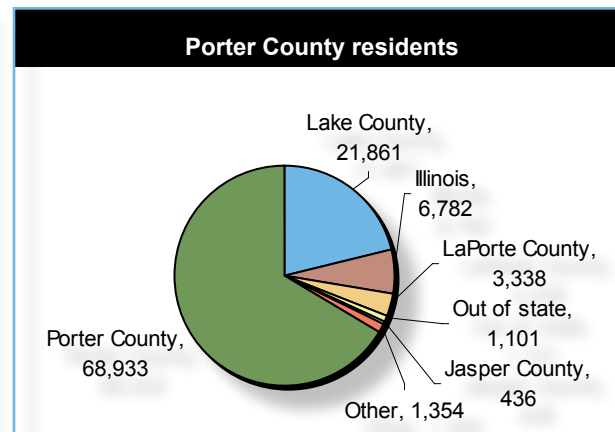
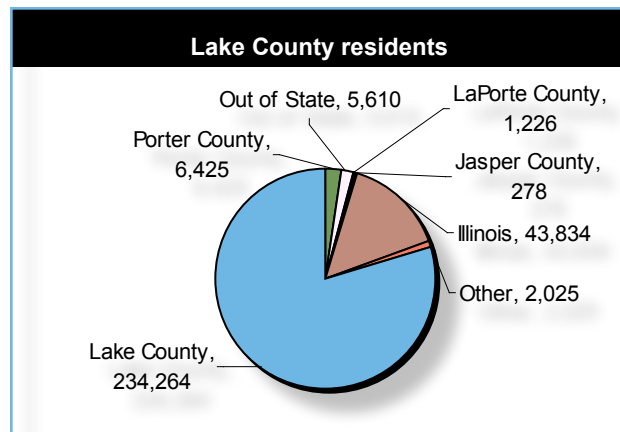
**A REGION WITHIN A REGION**

Even while it is diversifying, our economy is growing more regionally integrated. As it stands now, 14 percent of region workers leave Northwest Indiana for work. The largest percentage of these workers, numbering about 50 thousand, travels to Illinois. Of the remaining 400 workers, the vast majority, 78 percent, live and work in the same county. Most of the 8 percent who commute across county lines work one county to the east. Porter County has the largest proportion of out-commuters, over a third of its workers, but Lake and LaPorte counties each export 20 and 16 percent of their workers, respectively.

The crossover between city, county and even state lines means that we have a vested interest in the economic success of the entire region. The old cliché claims that a chain is only as strong as its weakest link. In Northwest Indiana, we have seen that failures in one place can negatively impact the lives of those throughout the region. In order to remain competitive on the global, national and even greater regional scale, we must acknowledge that we are indeed linked together. Then we can begin to work together.



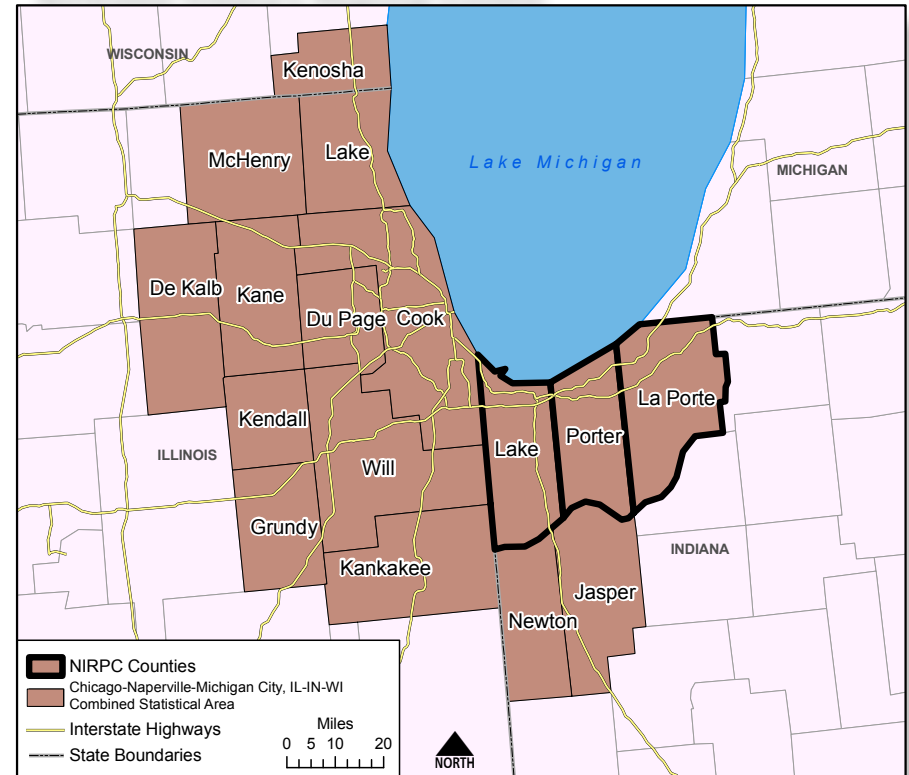
Where we work: 2006 working and commuting destinations



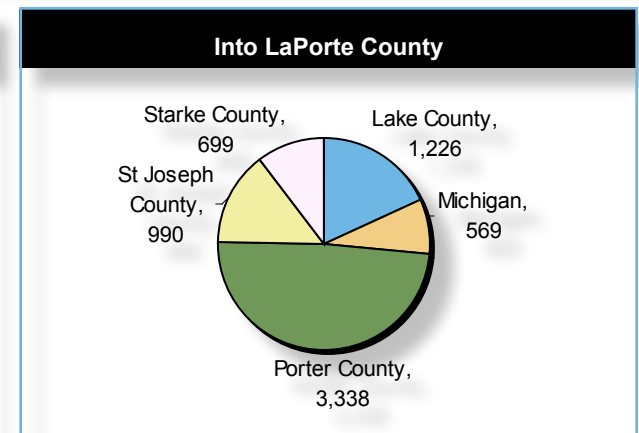
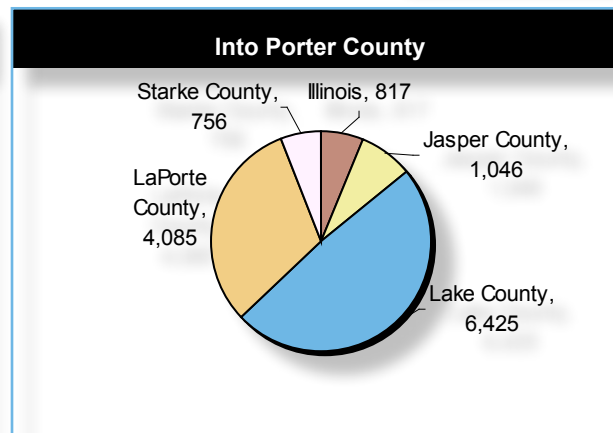
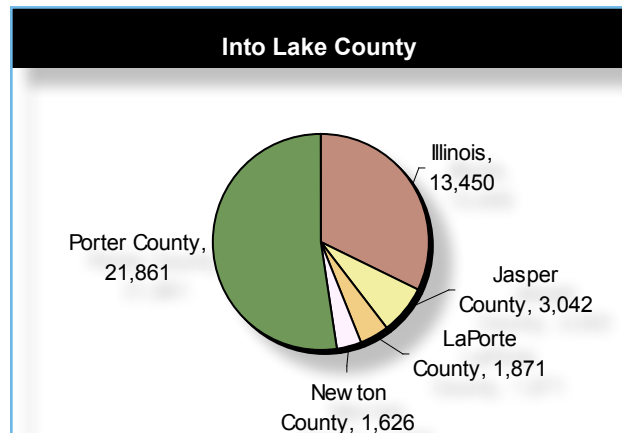
According to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, the Chicago region had a 2005 gross domestic product of \$461 billion. This region, to which we belong, is the third largest economic center in the U.S. and creates more wealth than many nations. Northwest Indiana, situated directly east of the city of Chicago, enjoys numerous benefits from this relationship. At the same time, we are politically separated by the state line. Therefore, even though Illinois' continued success benefits us, we are often in direct competition for investment, especially with places like Chicago's south suburbs. As the location advantage is equalized, issues such as quality of life, housing affordability, governmental integrity and worker availability take on an increasing significance. For better or for worse, in the economic development game, Northwest Indiana is often judged as a region. Consequently, regional coordination is of utmost importance.

NIRPC works closely with a number of economic development agencies. On a regional level, these include the Northwest Indiana Forum (with whom we share a building), the Regional Development Authority, the Center for Workforce Innovations and the Indiana Economic Development Corporation. On the local level, NIRPC is actively working to engage government officials, planners and business people through our Economic Development committee.

### Northwest Indiana's Regional Context



Top 5 origins of workers commuting into Northwest Indiana

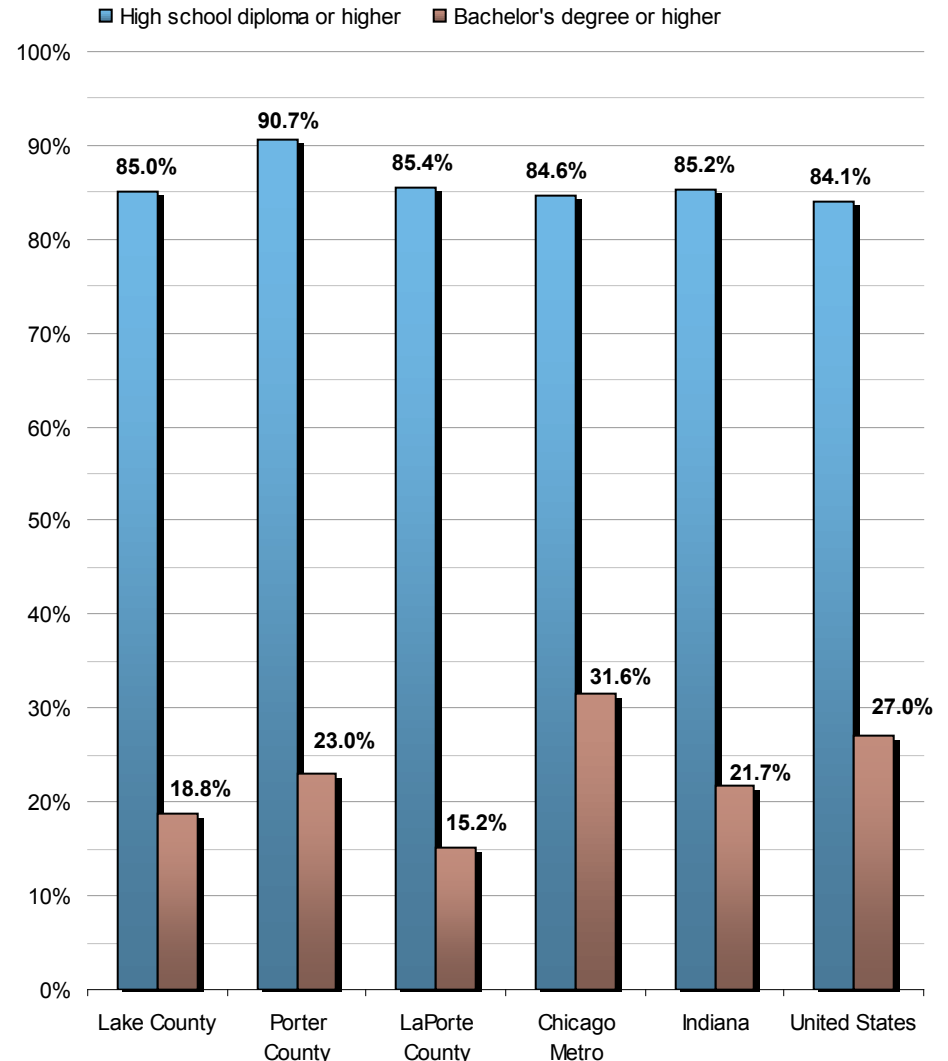


**EDUCATION**

On the whole, Northwest Indiana has a strong foundation in secondary education. All three counties possess a higher proportion of high school graduates than both the country and the Chicago metro area. Porter and LaPorte counties' proportions also exceed that of the state. In terms of higher education, though, our region is lagging. Despite the presence of major educational institutions, including Calumet College, Indiana University Northwest, Valparaiso University and Purdue Calumet and North Central, the proportion of adults with a bachelor's degree or higher is lower in Northwest Indiana than it is in the rest of the Chicago metro area, the state, and the country.

In 2006, 80.49 percent of our high school graduates indicated their intent to pursue higher education and 66.38 percent their intent to attain a 4 year degree. Retention of our educated youth and attracting more college grads is the issue here. It is clear that the Chicago metro is a magnet for educated persons, but it is just as obvious that those persons are not choosing to live in Northwest Indiana.

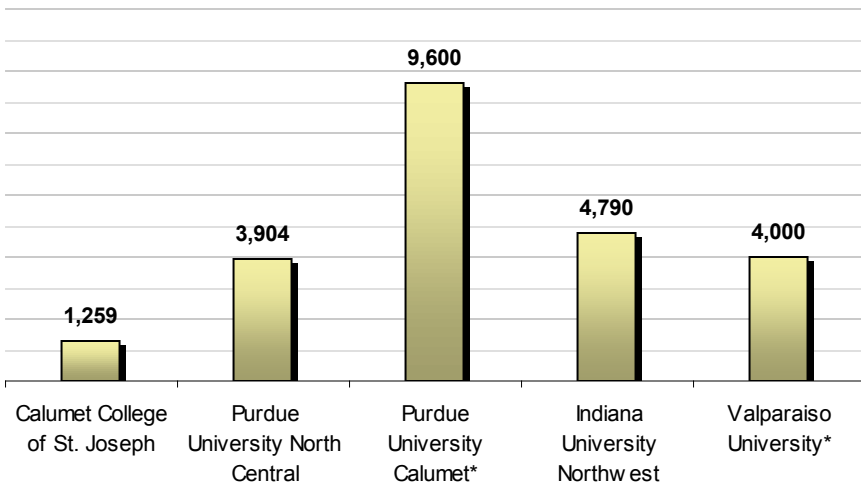
**Comparing education level by county, region, state and nation**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006 American Community Survey



Northwest Indiana college and university enrollment, 2007

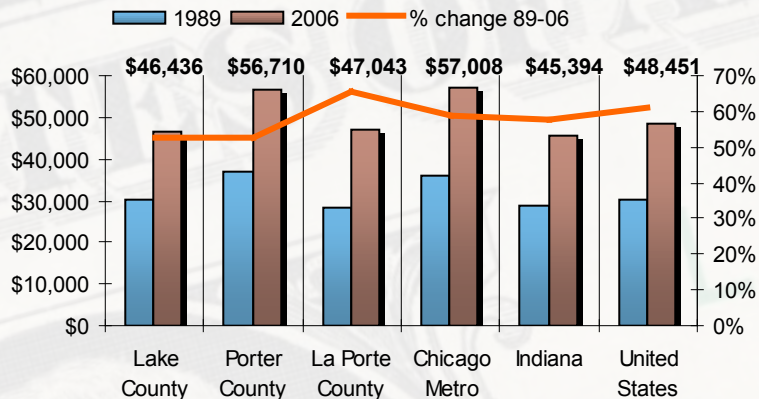


\*Number is approximate

Sources: University websites: [www.cosj.edu](http://www.cosj.edu), [www.pnc.edu](http://www.pnc.edu), [www.purduecal.edu](http://www.purduecal.edu), [www.indiana.edu](http://www.indiana.edu), [www.valpo.edu](http://www.valpo.edu)



Change in median household incomes, 1989-2006



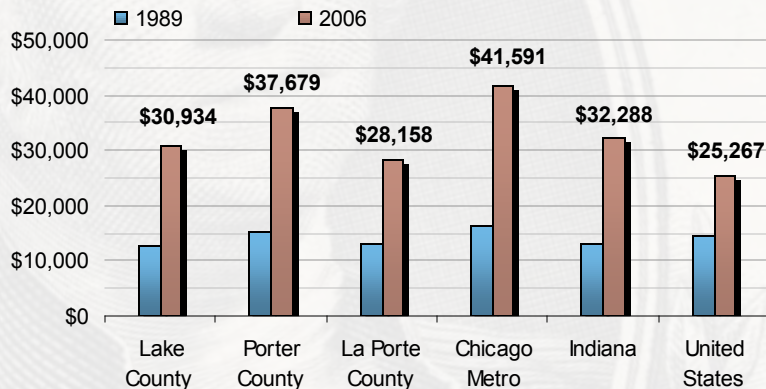
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1990 Census, 2006 American Community Survey

INCOME

Median household incomes in the Northwest Indiana counties are generally lower than that of the Chicago metropolitan region, but to different degrees. For example, our wealthiest county, Porter, is closest to the level of the Chicago metro, \$57,710, while Lake and LaPorte counties adhere more closely to the national average of \$48,451. All three counties exceed the median household income of the state of Indiana. However, Lake and Porter counties' incomes are growing much more slowly than the rest of the region, state and country.

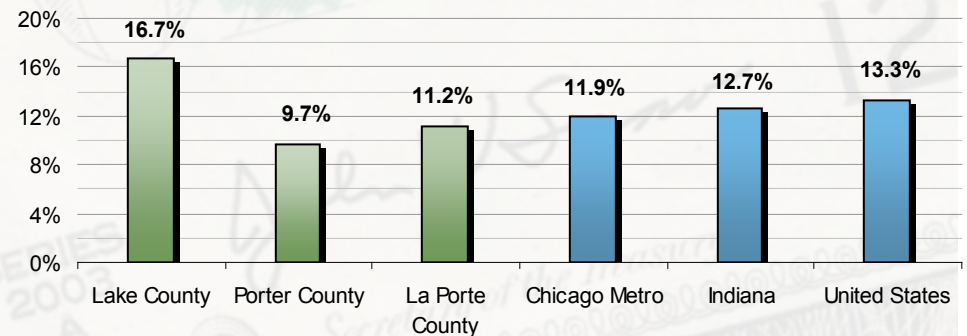
Accordingly, the highest poverty rate in the region is in Lake County. At 16.7 percent, this rate is 2 percent above the national average, 3 percent above the state average and almost 4 percent above the Chicago regional average. Porter and LaPorte counties, on the other hand, boast poverty rates below the national, state and regional levels.

Per capita personal income



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census, 2006 American Community Survey

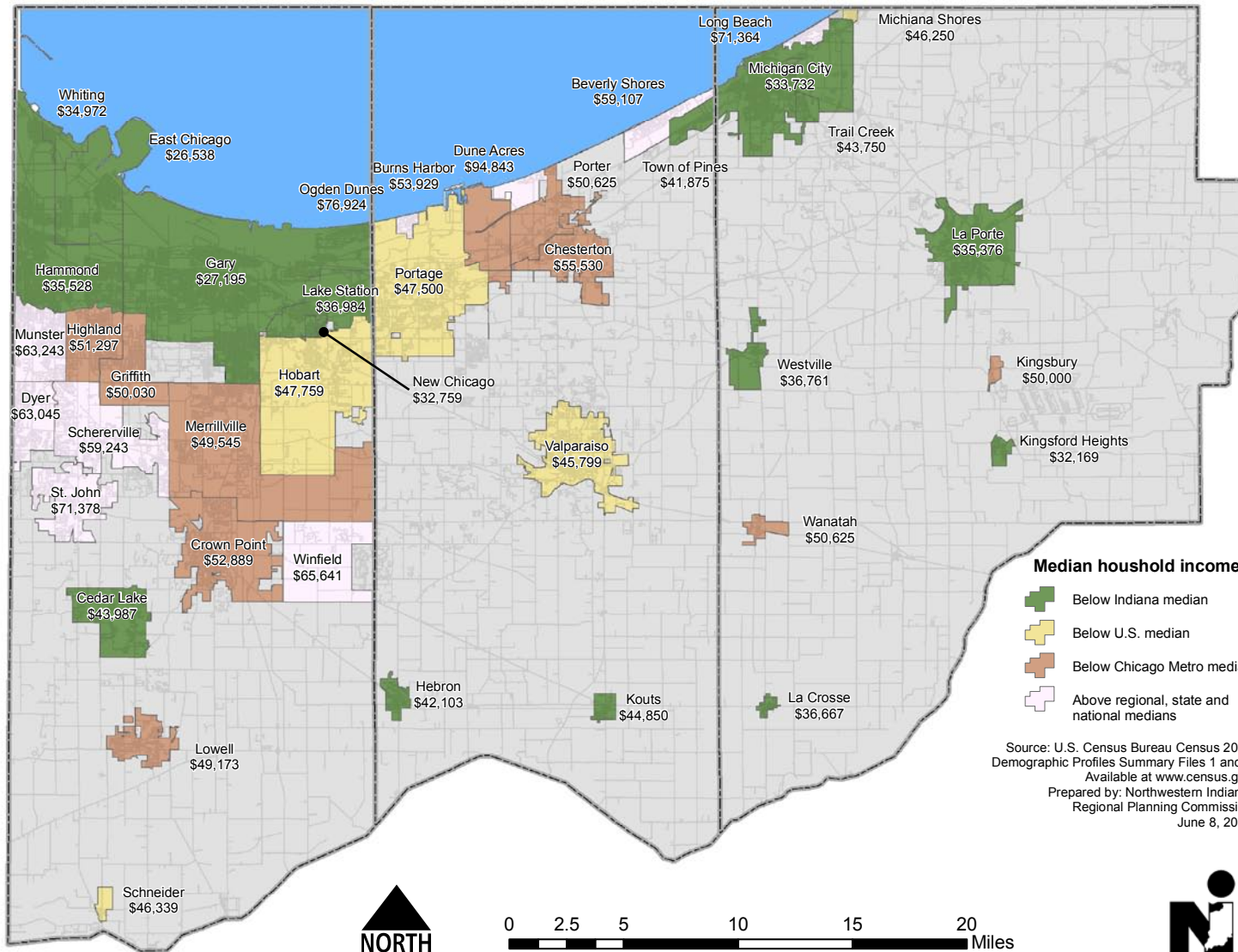
Percent of total population with incomes below the poverty level



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006 American Community Survey



Median household income, by municipality



Incomes vary widely among not only the counties in Northwest Indiana, but the individual communities as well. East Chicago and Gary, the lowest in the region, have median household incomes of \$26,538 and \$27,195, respectively. In stark contrast to this stand Dune Acres, with a household income of \$94,843, and the towns of Ogden Dunes, St. John and Long Beach, the incomes of which are all above \$70 thousand. This computes to a gap of \$68,305 between the highest income communities and the lowest.

Geographic distribution corresponds roughly to the population trends: municipalities with high growth rates have high incomes and those in decline generally have lower incomes.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau Census 2000 Demographic Profiles Summary Files 1 and 3 Available at [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)  
 Prepared by: Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission  
 June 8, 2008

**the issue: maintaining an efficient transportation network**

Regional economic coordination requires an efficient transportation system. The region's location at the southern tip of Lake Michigan forces a large portion of the national surface transportation system to converge on Northwest Indiana. Three of the seven major east-west transcontinental interstate highways converge in northwest Indiana resulting in an extraordinary concentration of national traffic (for both people and freight) on the regional highway system. The national railroad system also converges on Northwest Indiana with lines crossing the region from every direction.

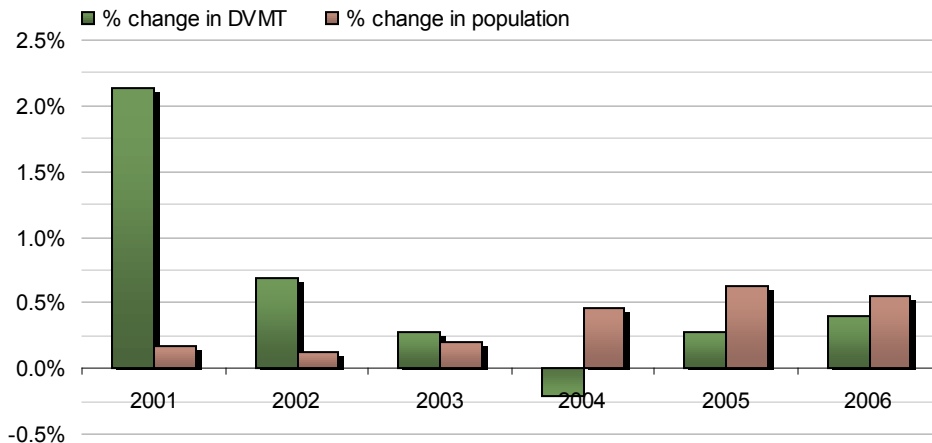
Road Classification	Length in Miles	Share of Vehicle Miles Traveled
Interstates	135	29%
Freeways	16	44%
Arterial highways	762	
Collector roads	1021	27%
Local roads	3589	

Trunk lines of the three major eastern railroads pass through, offering further challenges for separation and orderly movement of traffic in the region.

In an already stressed transportation system, the smallest incident can quickly snarl traffic for miles. Inefficient transportation and lack of mobility cost us millions of dollars a year in wasted time, wasted fuel, and missed opportunities. Skyrocketing energy prices multiply that cost. The time may come when idling in traffic is a luxury few of us can afford.

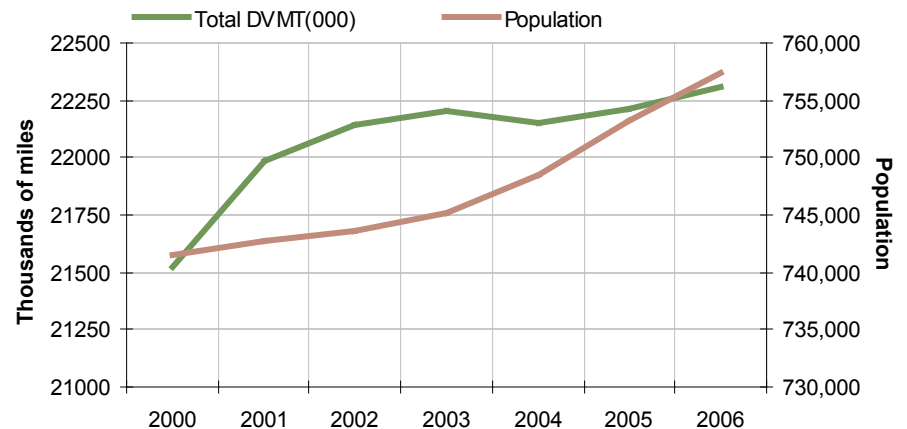
Over the last 30 years, the number of vehicles on our roads has been rising at a rate far higher than that of the population: people are driving further and driving more. This trend shows signs of reversal, though. Around 2000, per capita daily vehicle miles traveled (DVMT) began to drop. Between 2003 and 2004, the total regional DVMT actually decreased, even as the region's population continued to grow. Since then, the population growth rate has consistently exceeded that of DVMT. Early estimates for 2007 suggest an overall decline in DVMT.

**Percentage change in population and total daily vehicle miles traveled (DVMT)**



Source: The Highway Performance Monitoring System (HPMS) provided by NIRPC

**Numeric change in population and total daily vehicle miles traveled (DVMT)**

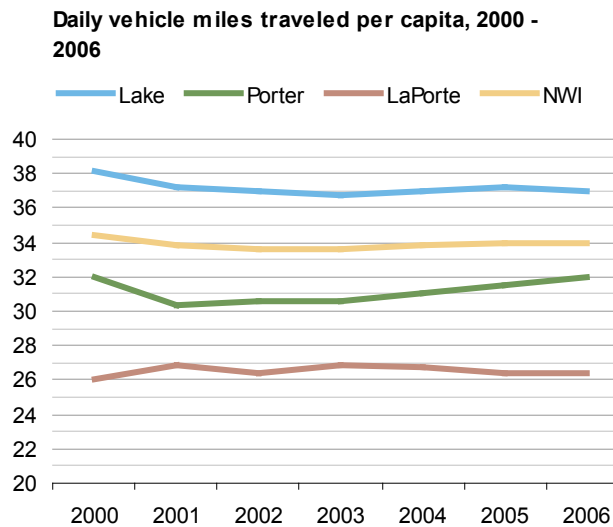


Source: The Highway Performance Monitoring System (HPMS) provided by NIRPC

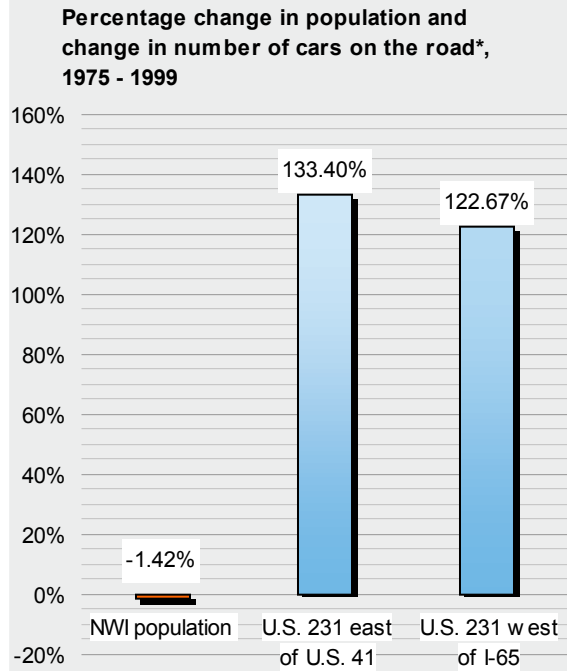
While this trend is most likely the result of market forces, such as a struggling economy and rising energy prices, strategic actions could capitalize on this opportunity. Investing now in public transportation and pedestrian and bicycle amenities could pay immediate dividends. Many people are looking for ways to avoid driving, but hesitate to use alternative transportation modes if they are not convenient, safe and accessible. Moreover, some people are not waiting for local governments to provide them with adequate sidewalks, trails or bike lanes and are walking and cycling, in less than safe conditions.



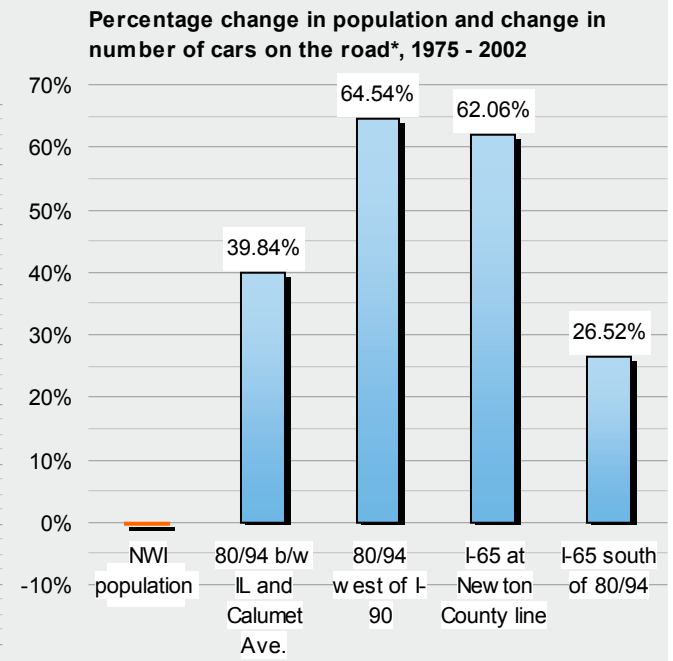
These two graphs give an indication of the extent to which automobile traffic has increased in and through Northwest Indiana in the last few decades. They reflect both the increase in truck shipping and the increase in personal use of the automobile. Within this context, the recent dip in DVMT seems to be merely an aberration, but with the proper response, it could become a trend.



Source: The Highway Performance Monitoring System (HPMS) provided by NIRPC



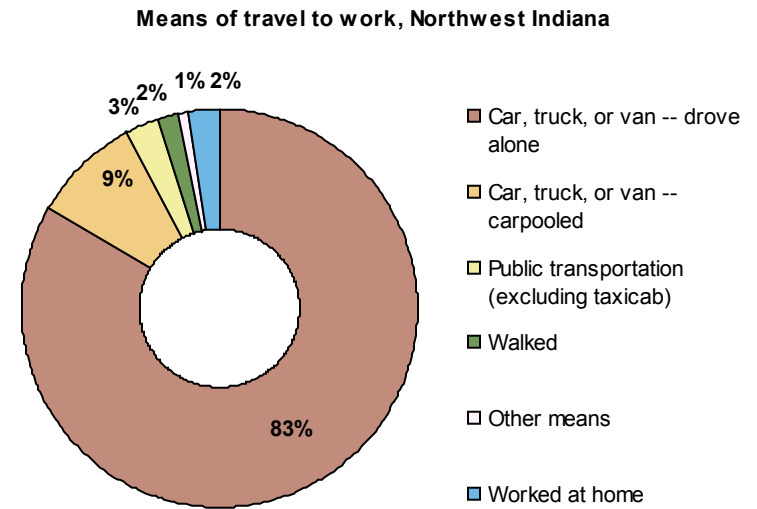
\*Cars on the road refers to average daily traffic (ADT)  
Source: NIRPC, U.S. Census Bureau



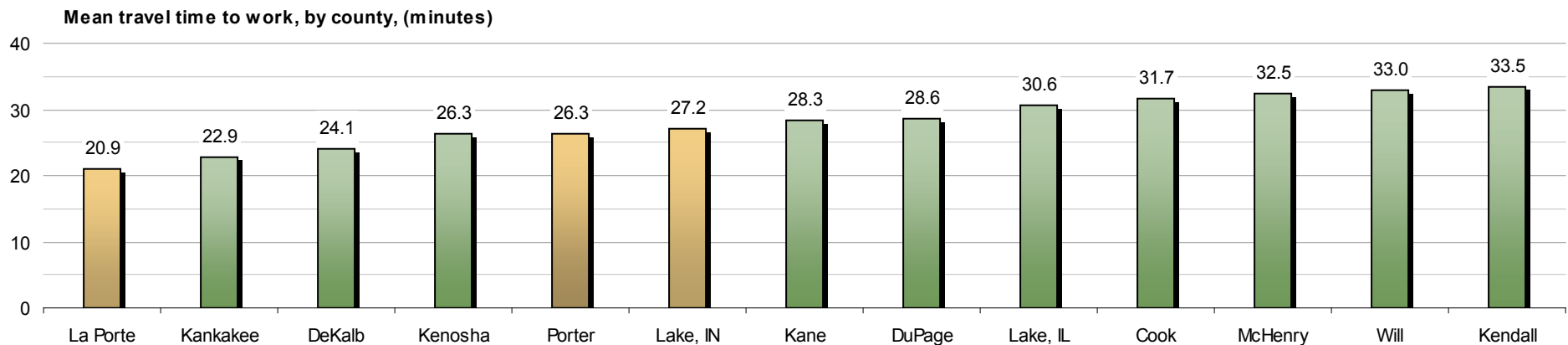
\*Cars on the road refers to average daily traffic (ADT)  
Source: NIRPC, U.S. Census Bureau

Traffic congestion also imposes heavy environmental costs. Although air quality has improved, Northwest Indiana is still a designated non-attainment area for ground level ozone (O<sub>3</sub>), particulate matter (PM10), and fine particulate matter (PM2.5). This means that the air in our region exceeds National Ambient Air Quality Standards for these pollutants, both of which are linked to respiratory problems. While industry is often saddled with the blame, much of this pollution comes not from the smokestacks of our factories and mills, but from the exhaust pipes of the cars and trucks that daily traverse the region.

Perhaps out of necessity, the vast majority of Northwest Indiana workers drive to work: 83 percent alone and 9 percent in a carpool. At 27.2 minutes, Lake County workers have the longest average commutes, followed by Porter County. Though these figures are some of the lowest in the Chicago metro, none are lower than LaPorte County workers' average commute length of 20.9 minutes.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006 American Community Survey

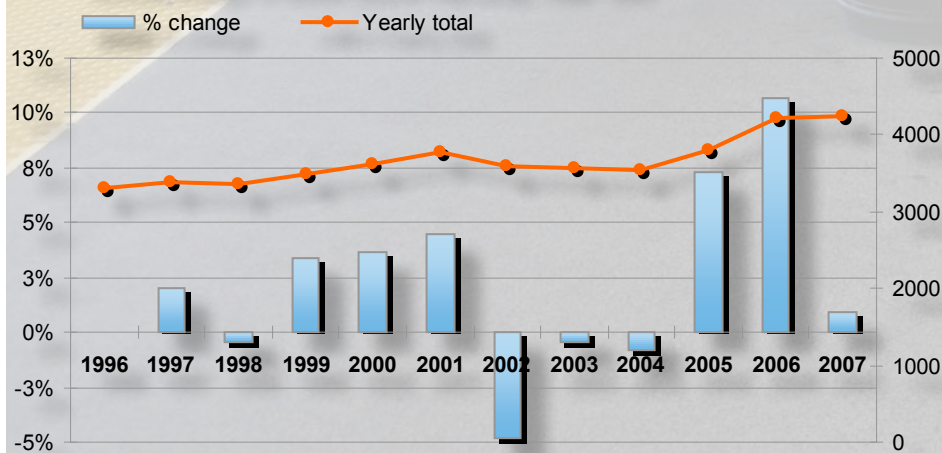


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006 American Community Survey

Public transportation in Northwest Indiana consists of three types: the Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District (NICTD) or South Shore line, an electric interurban train service operating between South Bend and Chicago; municipal fixed-route bus service; and demand-response transit, which is operated by various entities both public and private.

In 2007, ridership on the South Shore reached 4,245,900, a 28 percent increase from 1996. Recent plans call for extensions of this service to Lowell and Valparaiso. This project has struggled to obtain the highly competitive federal "New Start" funds and to secure the necessary local matching dollars. Additionally, the South Shore remains one of the nation's only commuter rail operations without a dedicated source of local funding.

Annual change in South Shore ridership, 1996 - 2007



Source: American Public Transportation Association



East Chicago South Shore station

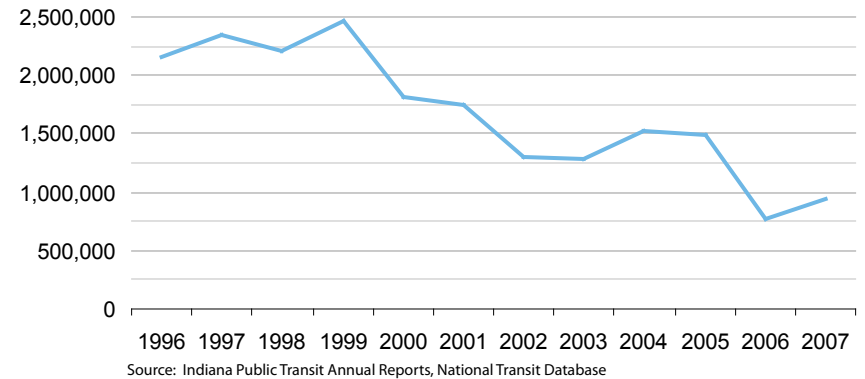
Credit: Liz Bustamante

**BUS TRANSIT**

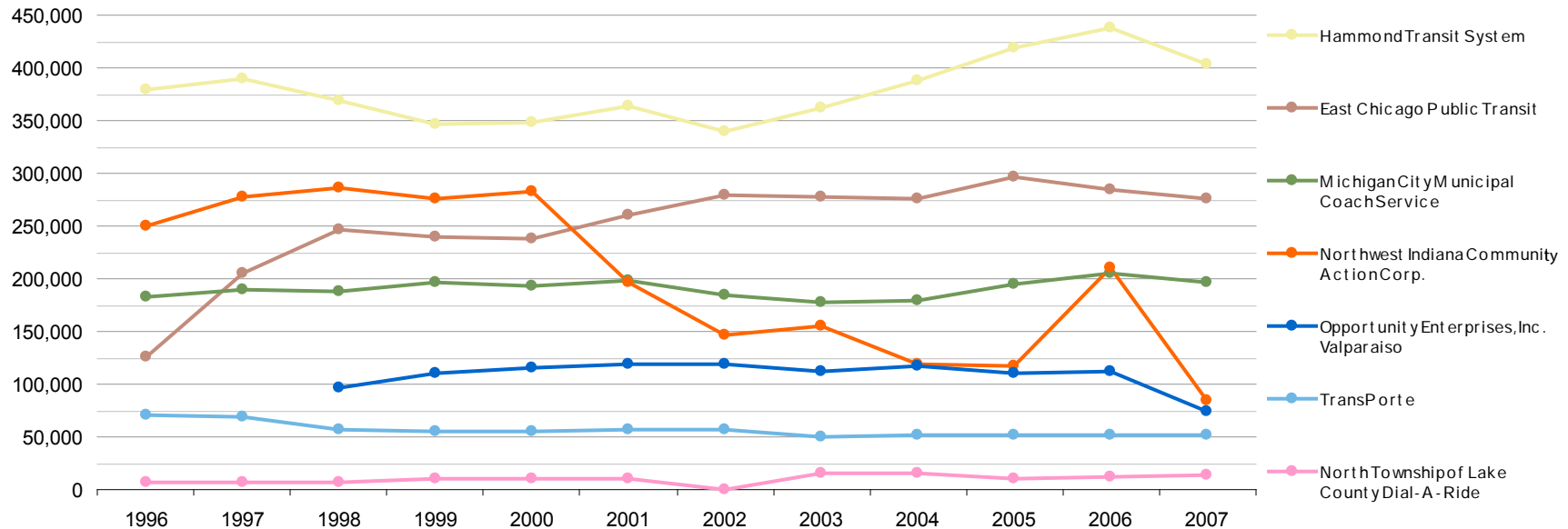
Currently, only the cities of Hammond, East Chicago, Gary, Michigan City and Valparaiso offer fixed route bus lines. These municipal bus lines (excluding the Valpo V-Line, which opened in October 2007) carried 1,699,551 passengers in 2007. Overall ridership on municipal transit peaked in 2006 and then dropped in 2007. The Gary Public Transportation Corporation showed the greatest decline, plummeting 64 percent from 1996 levels. During that same time period, East Chicago Public Transit posted the highest gains, 120 percent, while both Hammond and Michigan City's ridership also increased by over 5 percent.

Outside of Valparaiso, the central and southern areas of the region are served by demand-response transit services. These services carried 400,729 passengers in 2007.

**Gary Public Transportation Corporation ridership, 1996 - 2007**

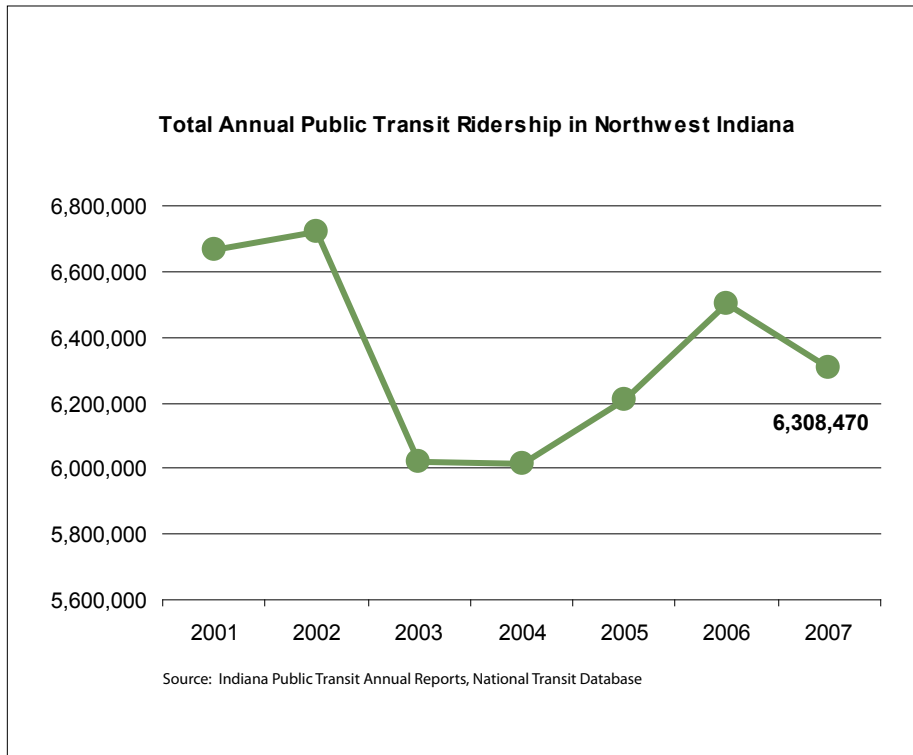


**Public transportation ridership (not including Gary), 1996 - 2007**



The Regional Bus Authority, formed in 2005, is seeking to fill in some of the gaps that exist in our public transportation system with a truly integrated regional system. As of yet, though, this goal has not been met. As with the South Shore railroad, the issue of a dedicated source of funding for bus and demand response transit is critical to the success of a regional public transportation network.

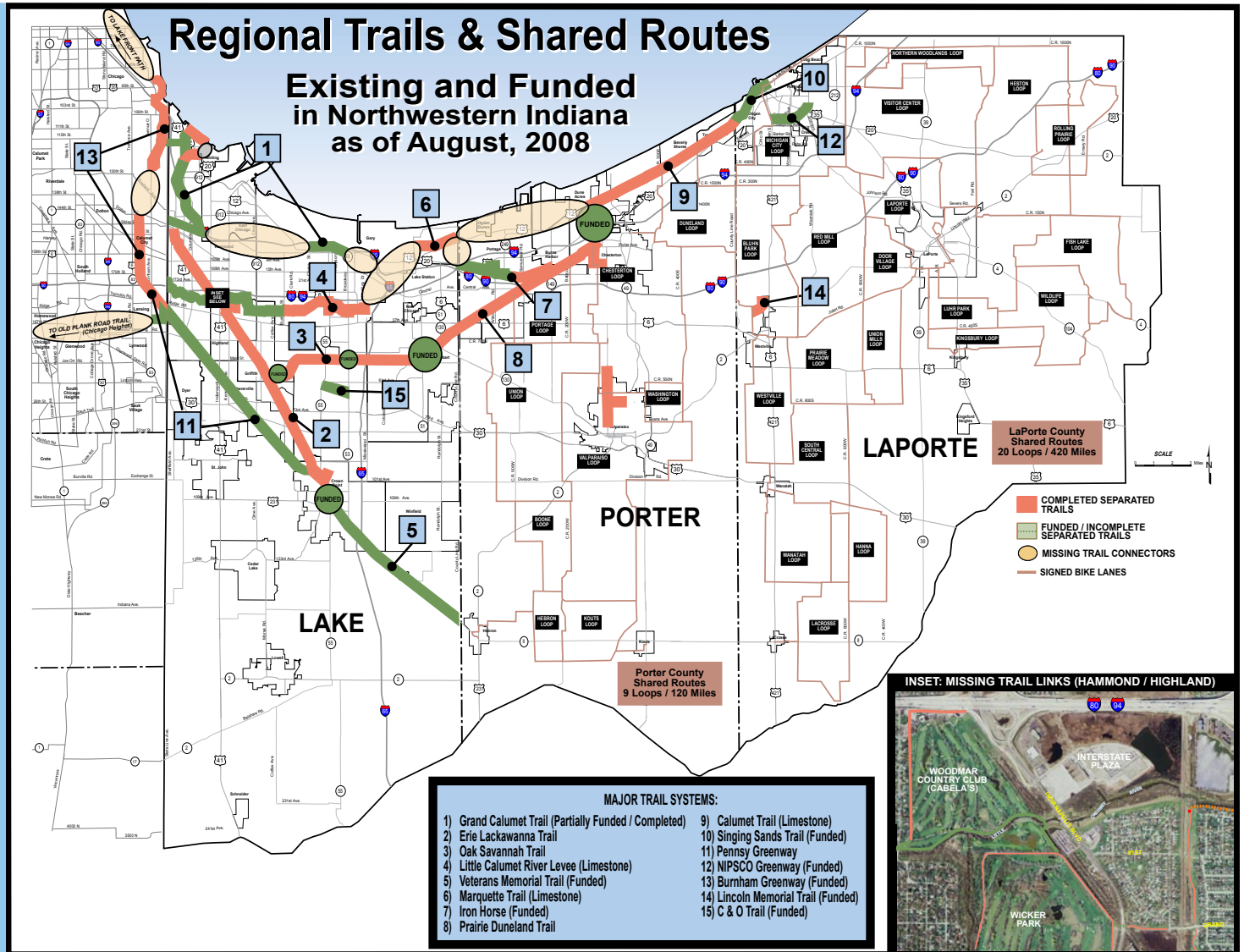
Along with the funding and the necessary infrastructure, the success of mass transit relies just as much upon land use and development patterns. Fixed-route transit is able to serve decentralized, sprawling cul-de-sac suburbs, but it is difficult to do so efficiently. On the other hand, more densely developed, walkable, mixed-use centers can encourage transit ridership. Likewise, a regional mass transit system will never be practical unless communities work together to prioritize routes and plan for and around such a system.



Credit: American Public Transportation Association

AN ALTERNATIVE

In addition to motorized transportation, Northwest Indiana is developing an extensive network of bicycle and pedestrian trails. The coast-to-coast American Discovery Trail, set to pass through Lake County, will link Northwest Indiana with the rest of the country. Frequently built on abandoned railroad rights-of-way, these trails are opening connections between towns and cities and providing important recreation and open space opportunities. While it certainly improves the quality of life in the region, whether this trail system will become a viable link in our transportation system remains to be seen.





### Built Trails

City/Town	County	Trail Name	Miles
Crown Point	Lake	93rd Avenue Path	1.2
Crown Point	Lake	Merrillville Road Path	1
Gary	Lake	Little Calumet Levee	8.65
Gary	Lake	Marquette	2
Gary, Griffith, Hobart	Lake	Oak Savannah	8.1
Griffith, Highland, Hammond	Lake	Erie-Lackawanna	12
Hammond	Lake	George Lake	0.9
Hammond	Lake	Wolf Lake	0.8
Highland	Lake	Various local	1.7
Hobart	Lake	Oak-Savannah / Local sidepath	0.7
Lake Station	Lake	Local Route	0.7
Munster	Lake	Various local	8.7
Chesterton	Porter	Local sidepath	1.6
Portage	Porter	Iron Horse	2.2
Portage, Chesterton	Porter	Prairie Duneland	9
Porter, Burns Harbor, Beverly Shores, Pines	Porter	Calumet	9.1
Valparaiso	Porter	Lakewood Park Connector	1.5
Valparaiso	Porter	Various routes	2
Michigan City	LaPorte	Peanut	0.8
Westville	LaPorte	Lincoln-Bluhm Park Connector	1.4
<b>Total built</b>			<b>74.05</b>

Source: NIRPC



Erie-Lackawanna trail, Griffith

### Funded Trails

City/Town	County	Trail Name	Miles
Crown Point	Lake	Penn-Erie	1.6
Crown Point, Leroy	Lake	Veterans Memorial	8.7
East Chicago	Lake	Various routes	2
Gary	Lake	Grand Calumet Trail, Phase 1 & 2	5.2
Gary	Lake	Little Calumet Levee	3.7
Griffith	Lake	Oak-Savannah & Erie-Lackawanna Connector	2
Hammond	Lake	Grand Calumet Phase 1	3.9
Hammond	Lake	Wolf Lake – Forsythe Park	2.7
Hobart	Lake	Oak Savannah/ Various Routes	3.9
Merrillville	Lake	C&O	1.7
Munster, Schererville	Lake	Pennsy Greenway	4
St. John	Lake	Local route	1.25
Whiting	Lake	Marquette Greenway – Whiting Phase	0.8
Dept. of Natural Resources	Porter	Dunes State Park Connector	0.8
Portage	Porter	Marquette Greenway – Portage Phase	2.3
Portage	Porter	Cross-Town Connector	2.2
Portage	Porter	Iron Horse, Phase 2	1
Porter	Porter	Brickyard	3
Porter	Porter	Waverly Road Path	1.5
Michigan City	LaPorte	Singing Sands	2.8
Michigan City	LaPorte	NIPSCO	2.7
<b>Total Funded</b>			<b>57.8 miles</b>

Source: NIRPC



Future Pennsy Greenway, Schererville

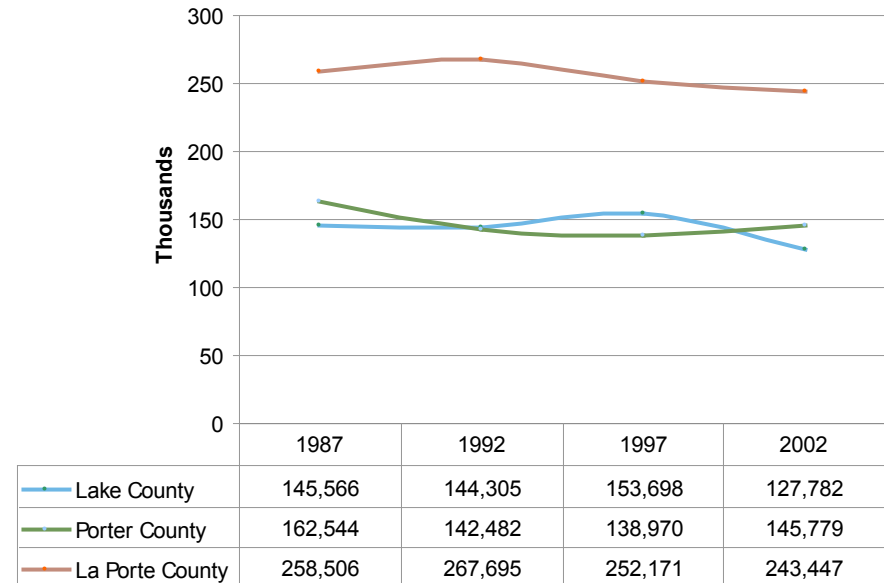
### the issue: striking a balance in future land use

In central and southern Lake and Porter counties, recent decades have seen thousands of acres of former agricultural or vacant land subdivided and converted into new neighborhoods, shopping centers, and industrial parks. In 1992, Northwest Indiana contained 197 square miles of developed land, not including agriculture. By 2001, this figure had jumped to 307 square miles: an increase of 56 percent (as a point of reference for the magnitude of this number, the population grew by 4.3 percent between 1990 and 2001.) Around 20 percent of our region's land is now developed for residential, commercial and industrial purposes. It should come as no surprise that between 1987 and 2002, 10 percent, 77 square miles, of our farmland was converted to another use.

While this rural land is rapidly developing, weeds grow in vacant lots and bulldozers demolish abandoned buildings in our older cities. If the growth of our region is to be sustainable, we must strike a balance between new development and redevelopment. A myriad of infill and rehab sites lie vacant in urban areas. Likewise, suburban and rural areas contain numerous opportunities for higher levels of development in existing (or potential) town centers. Growth need not be sprawling or come at the expense of our natural and working landscapes.

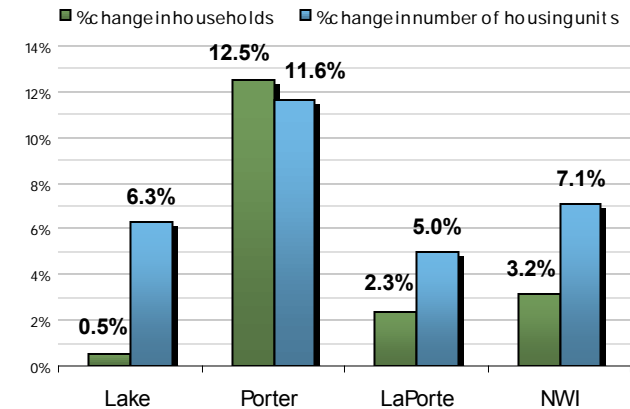
The relationship between the change in number of households and the change in number of housing units speaks to the way in which the region is developing. In Lake and LaPorte counties, we are building houses faster than we are creating new households. This creates a glut of unnecessary and possibly vacant housing. In Porter County, on the other hand, demand is outpacing supply, which can drive housing costs up.

Change in number of acres of farmland, 1987 - 2002



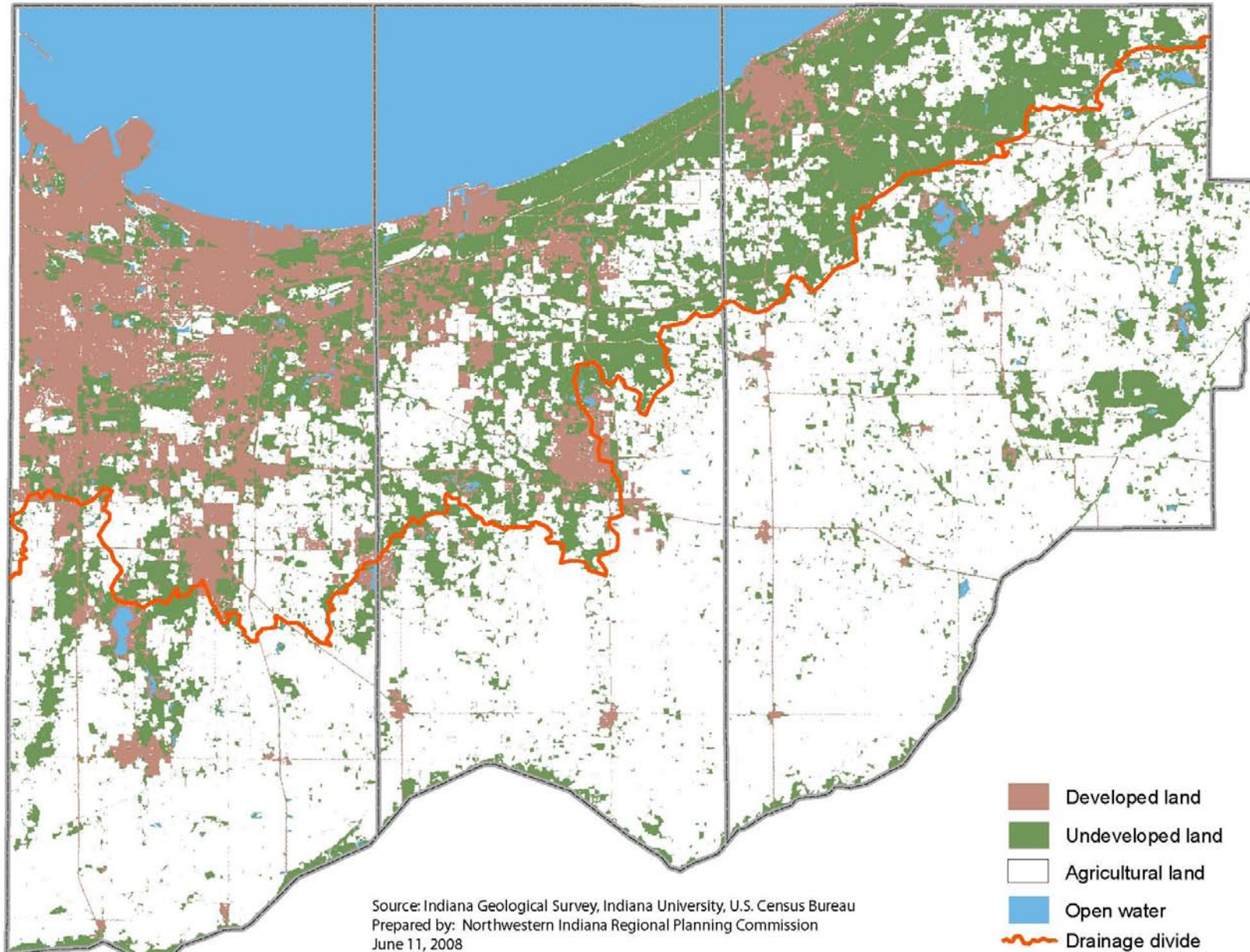
Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Indiana Agricultural Statistics Service, 1992 Census of Agriculture

Household and housing change, 2000 - 2006



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Annual Estimates of Housing Units for Counties, 2000 Census, Population Division

General regional land uses in 2002

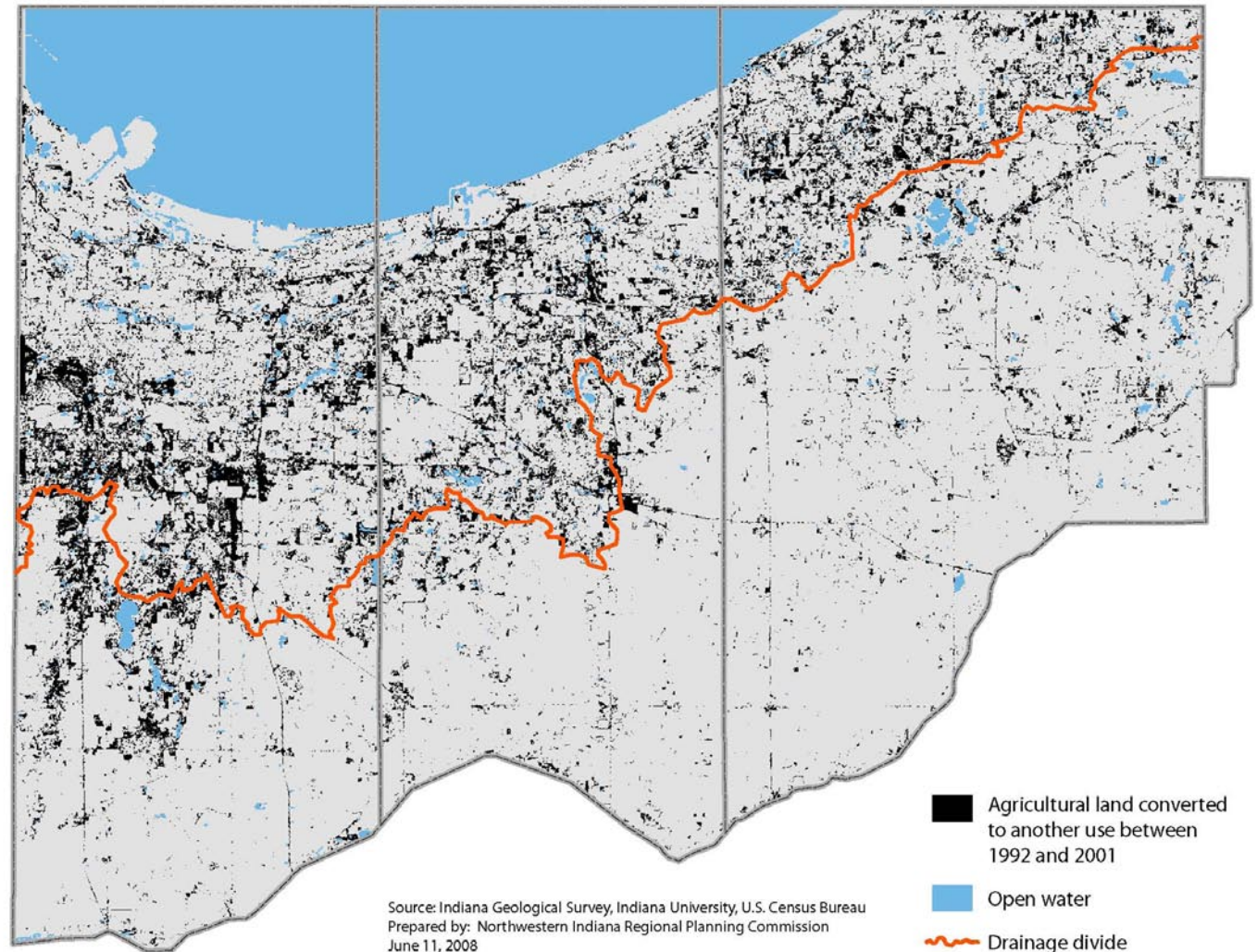


Source: Indiana Geological Survey, Indiana University, U.S. Census Bureau  
Prepared by: Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission  
June 11, 2008

Regional land use changes between 1992 and 2001

Declining farmland - 77 square miles

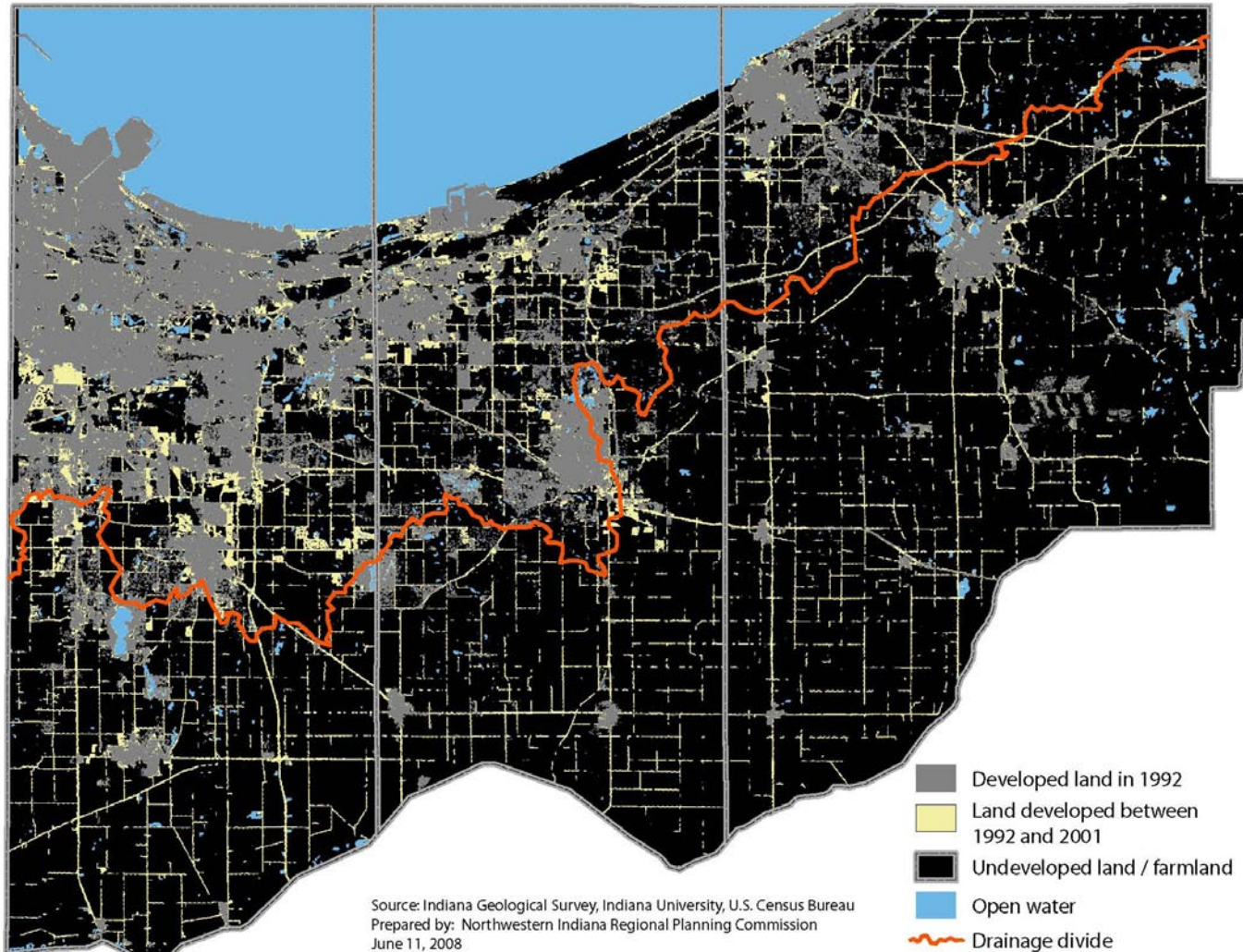
This map shows where agricultural land was converted into commercial or residential land. It also bears testimony to a vanishing way of life, a breaking with our history, and a disappearing landscape. The small farms that were once a part of nearly every Northwest Indiana town, even in the highly industrialized north Lake County, are being quickly replaced by residential subdivisions, retail strip centers and industrial warehouses.



Source: Indiana Geological Survey, Indiana University, U.S. Census Bureau  
Prepared by: Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission  
June 11, 2008

Regional land use changes between 1992 and 2001

Increasing development - 110 square miles

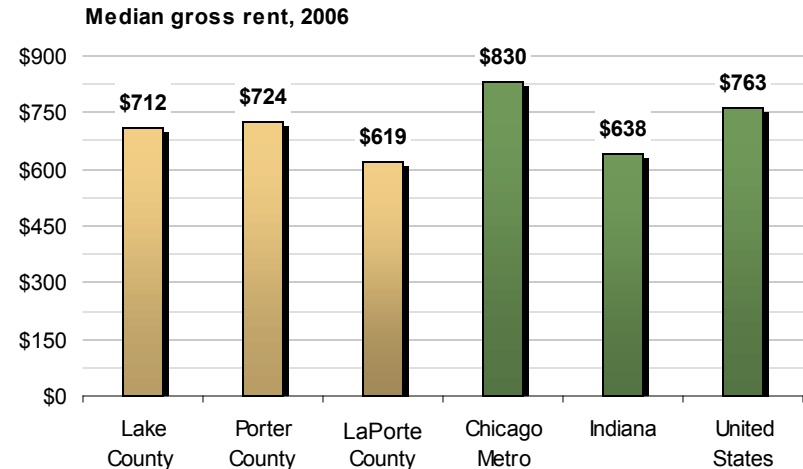


This map depicts the relationship between transportation and land use. At one time our region was mostly a collection of city and town centers connected by highways, but surrounded by undeveloped and agricultural land. As recently as fifteen years ago, development was relatively concentrated within centers. Flash forward to 2001. Along with the expansion of existing centers into one another, we now see ribbons of development spreading far out into the countryside. Notice that they clearly follow the grid pattern of major roads. This is frequently development that is accessible only by automobile.

**HOUSING**

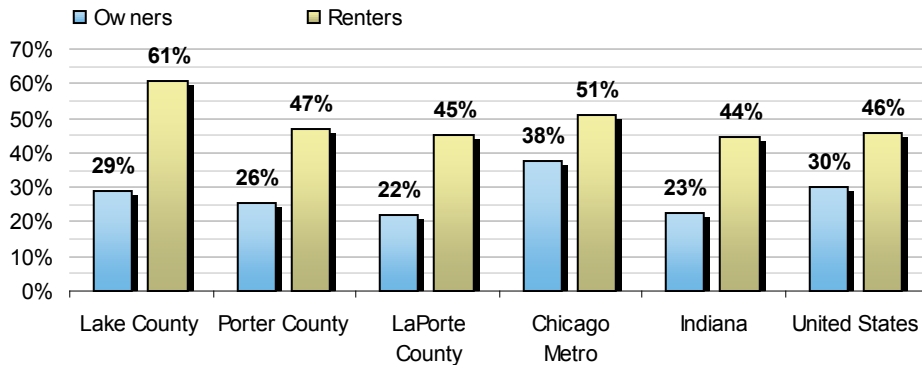
Housing in Northwest Indiana is among the most affordable in the Chicago Metropolitan region. As a result, homeownership rates are fairly high in much of our region. The median housing value is slightly more than half that of the entire Chicago region, a competitive advantage which has done much to attract home-buyers from Illinois. On the national scale, the average home sells for 40 to 60 thousand dollars more than it does in Northwest Indiana.

Similarly, median gross rent is more than a hundred dollars less in our most expensive county than it is in the rest of Chicagoland. Unfortunately, a higher proportion of renters is paying at least 30 percent of their income on housing. This may reflect less upon the affordability of the housing stock and more upon the quality of jobs available.



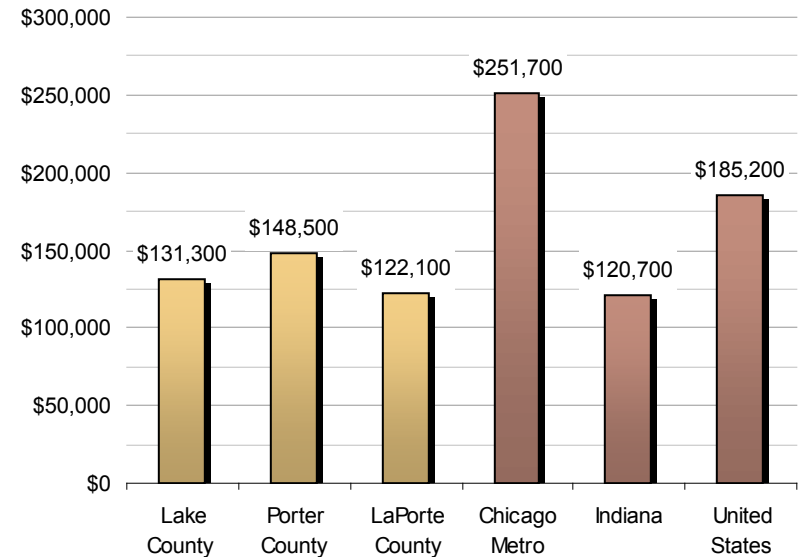
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006 American Community Survey

**Percent of population paying at least 30% of their monthly income on housing costs**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006 American Community Survey

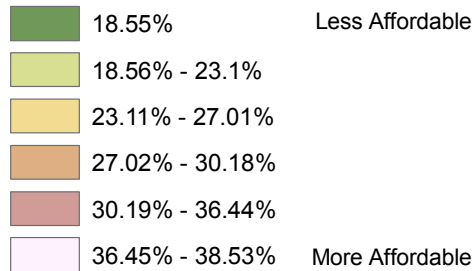
**Median value of owner-occupied housing units, 2006**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006 American Community Survey

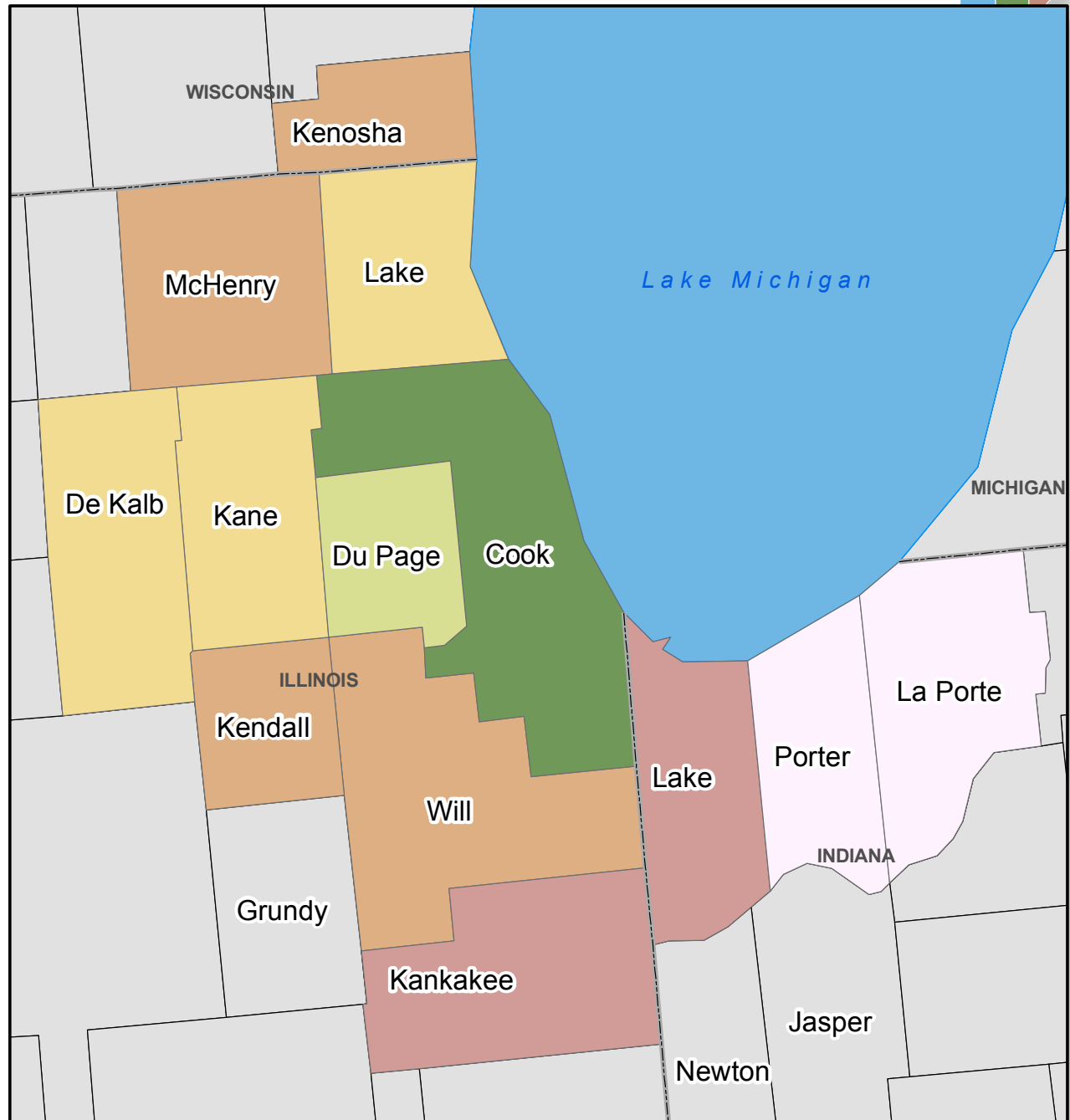
# Housing affordability, by county\*

Median household income as a percentage of median housing value

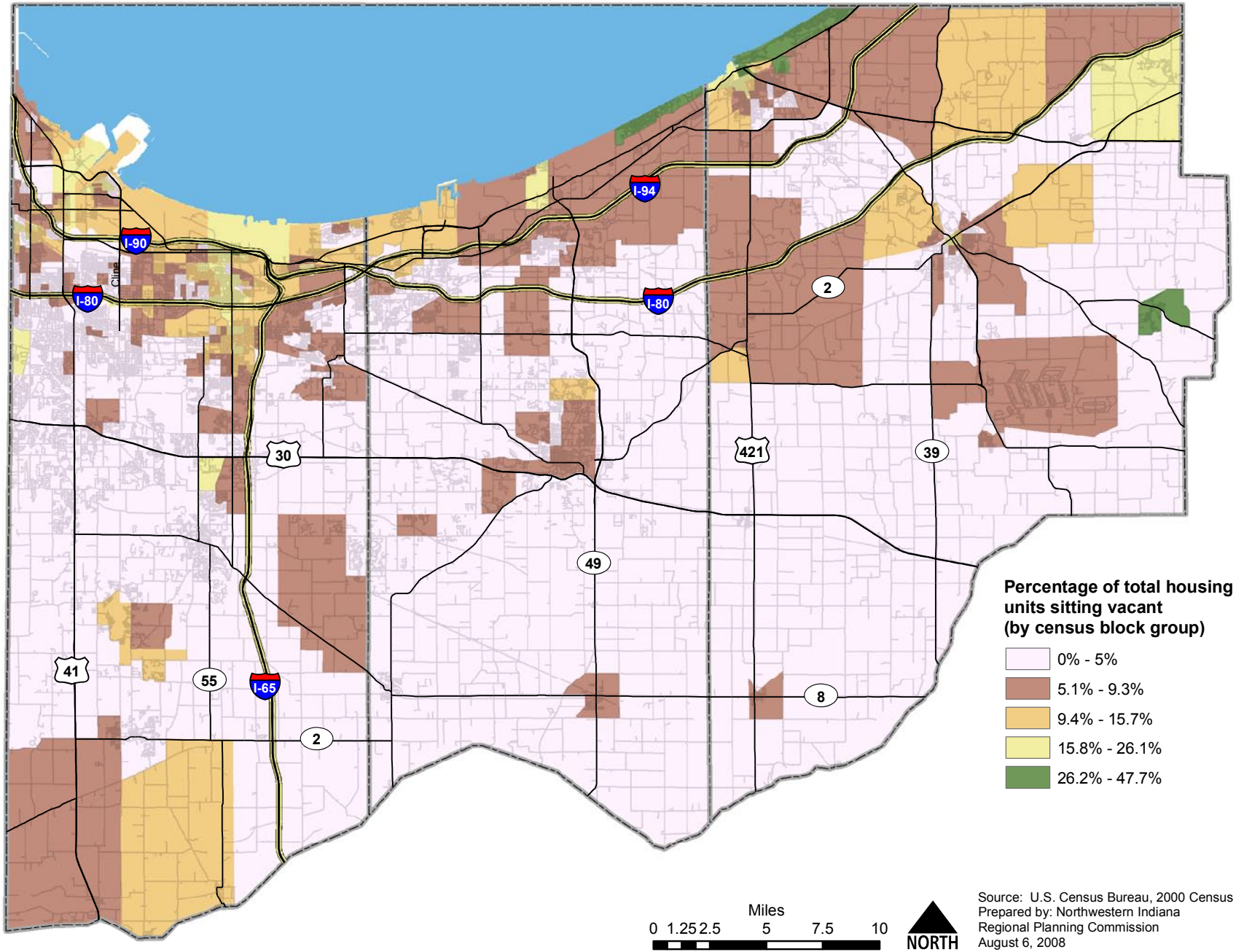


\*Data not available for Newton, Jasper or Grundy counties

Source: U.S. Census Bureau  
 2006 American Community Survey  
 Available at [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)  
 Prepared by:  
 Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning  
 Commission, June 16, 2008

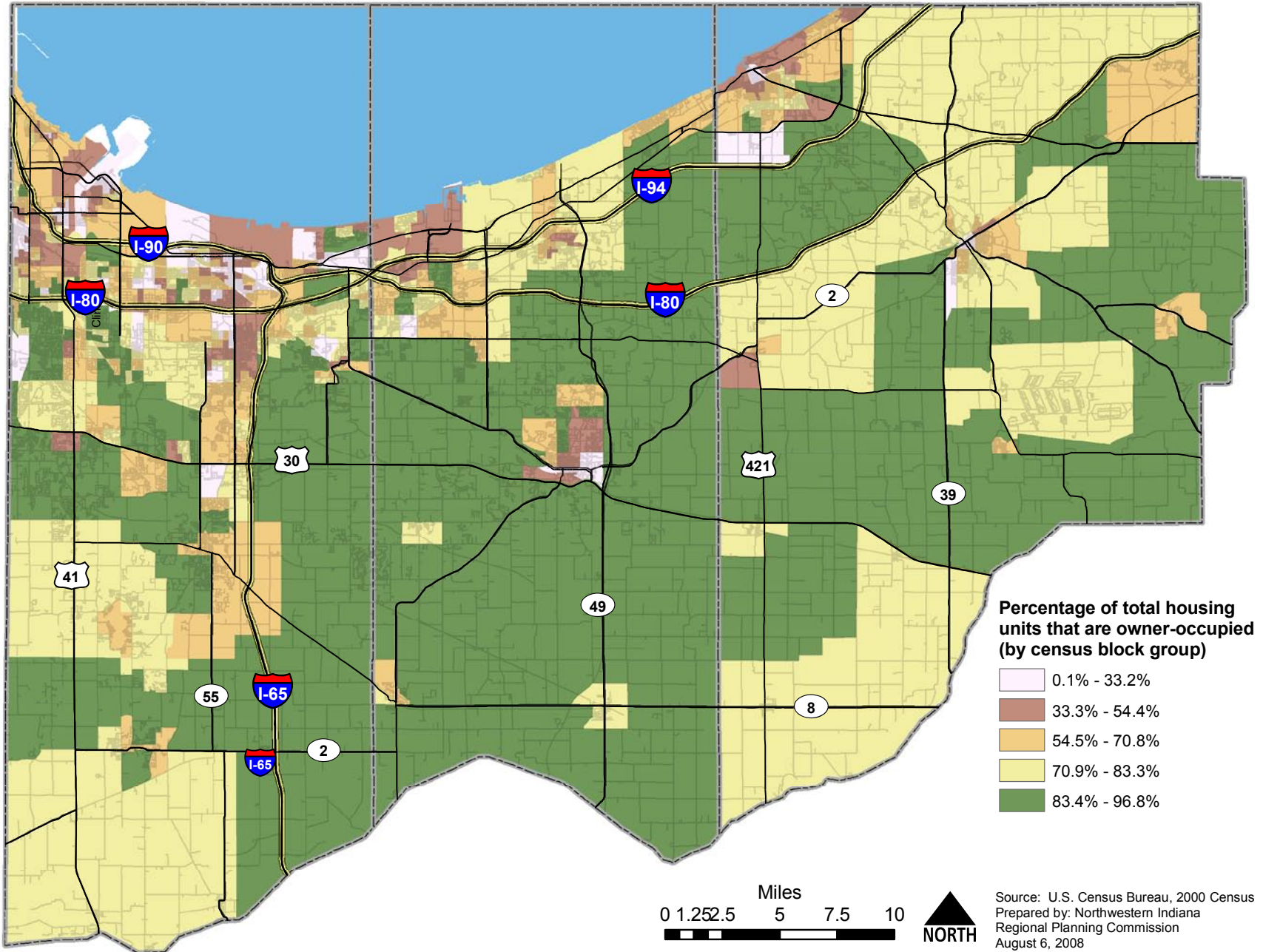


Distribution of vacant housing units





Homeownership rates



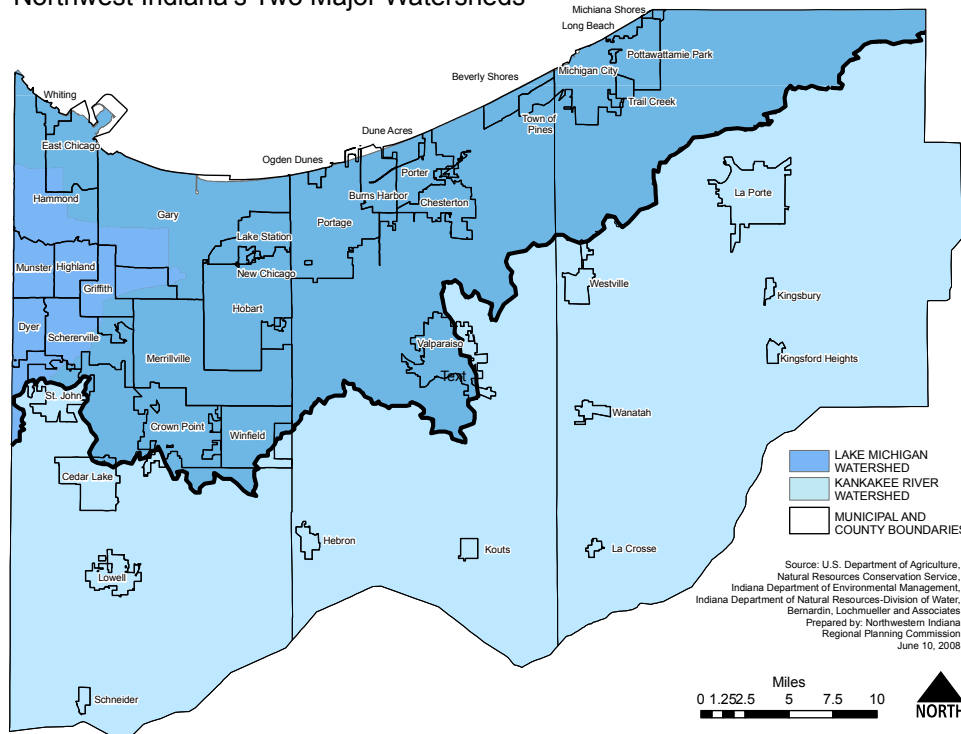
## the issue: protecting our natural resources

### WATER QUALITY

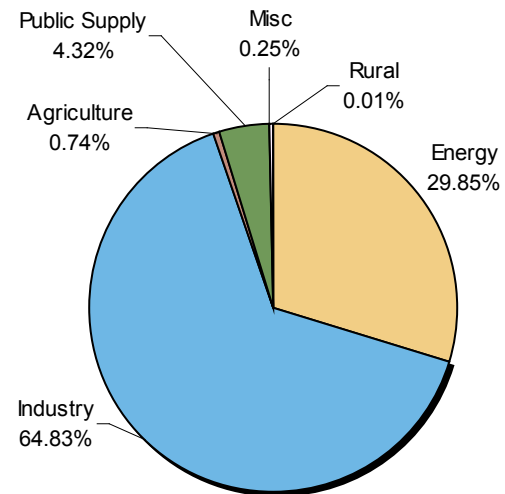
Northwest Indiana is split nearly in half, north and south, by the drainage divide that separates the Lake Michigan and Great Lakes basins from that of the Kankakee and Mississippi Rivers. The Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin Water Resources Compact, a recently approved eight state agreement, restricts diversions of Great Lakes water from the Great Lakes watershed. Therefore, this line also divides those communities eligible to receive Lake Michigan water and those that must rely upon other surface water or wells. This compact was approved by the U.S. Congress and signed into law on October 3, 2008.

95 percent of water used in northwest Indiana comes from Lake Michigan. Energy production accounts for 30 percent of this use and industrial use accounts for another 65 percent, leaving 4 percent for public consumption. Water obtained from the surface of the Kankakee River accounts for 4 percent of all the water used in Northwest Indiana, primarily for energy production and industry. In the Kankakee River Basin, 98 percent of public water supply comes from groundwater sources and 2 percent from surface water sources. In the Lake Michigan basin, 97 percent of the public water supply comes from surface waters and only 3 percent from groundwater.

Northwest Indiana's Two Major Watersheds

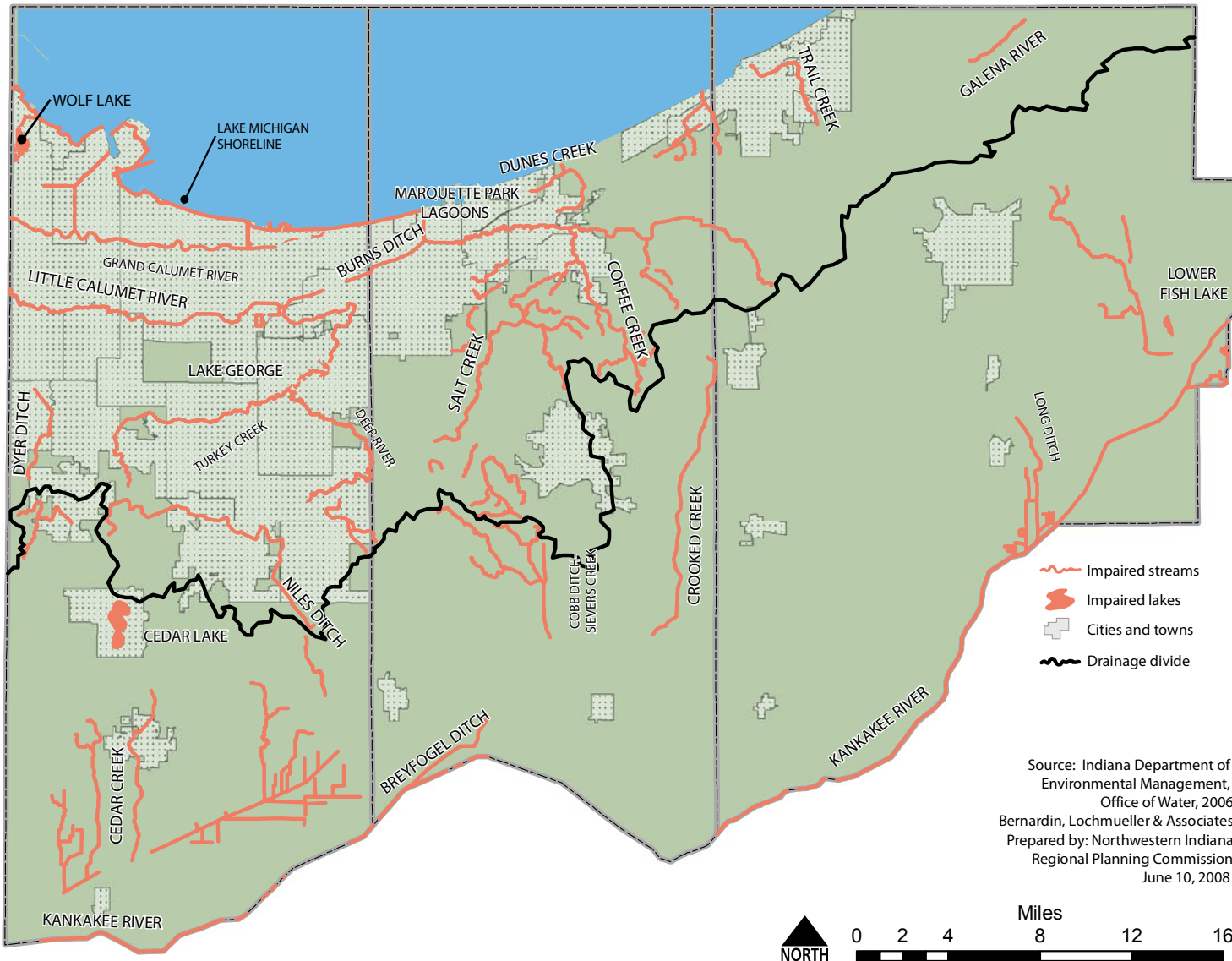


Total regional water withdrawals by category, 2006



Source: Indiana Department of Natural Resources / Division of Water  
Significant Water Withdrawal Facility Data, available at [www.in.gov/dnr/water](http://www.in.gov/dnr/water)

Indiana Department of Environmental Management Designated Impaired Waterbodies



A waterbody is considered impaired when it contains levels of pollutants that exceed U.S. Environmental Protection Agency standards. In 2006, 28.8 percent of all stream miles (607 of 2,111 miles) in Northwest Indiana were designated impaired. In other words, nearly a third of our streams and rivers are subject to restrictions on recreational human use and fish consumption.

Historic water pollution, Northwest Indiana



Credit: US-EPA



Credit: US-EPA

Source: Indiana Department of Environmental Management, Office of Water, 2006  
 Bernardin, Lochmueller & Associates  
 Prepared by: Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission  
 June 10, 2008

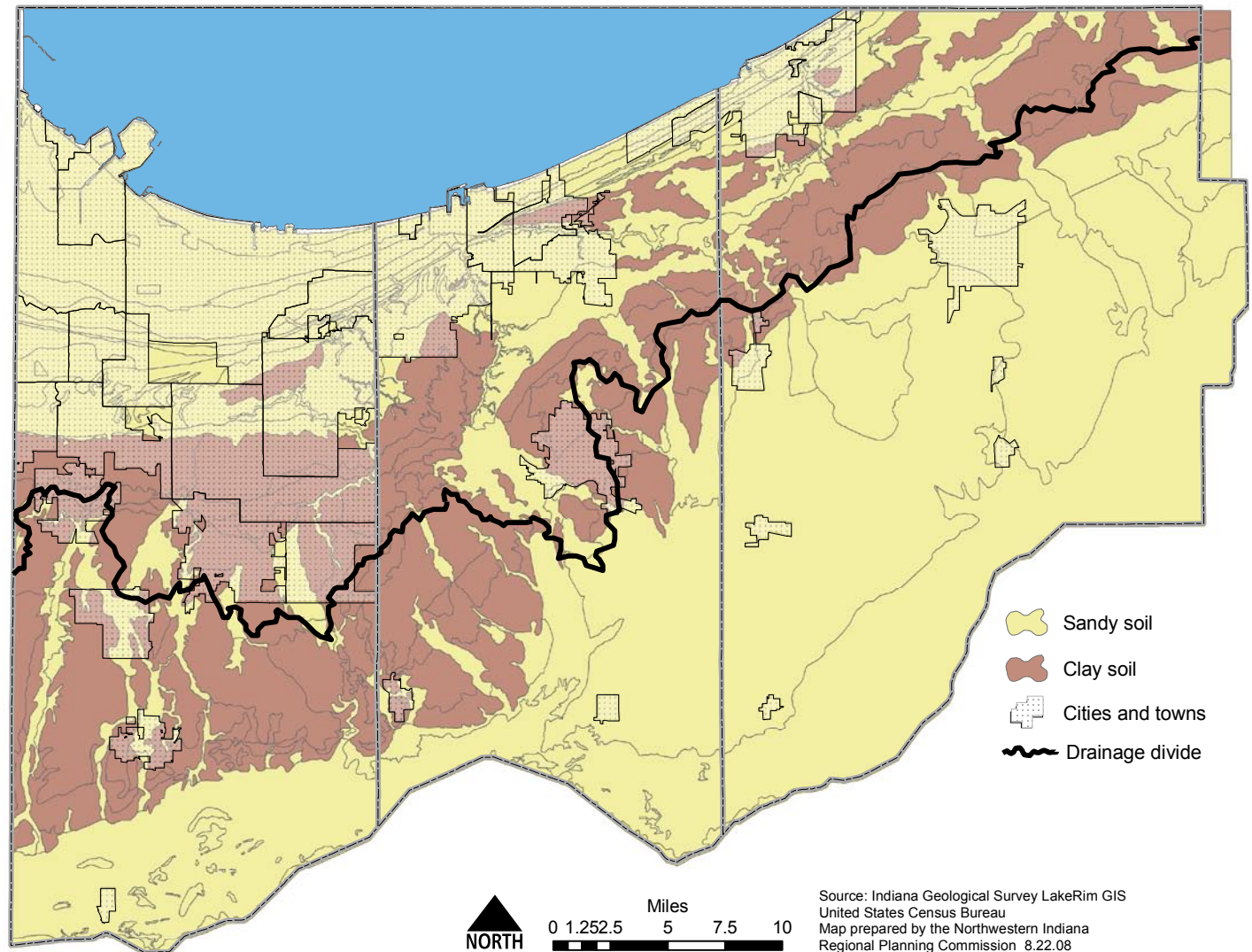
## LIMITING FACTORS

Northwest Indiana is divided into three general soil type areas. In the northern and southern portions of the region, the soil is sandy, allowing for good infiltration and replenishment of groundwater. In the central area, which follows the Lake Michigan-Kankakee River basin divide, the soil is clay, meaning less infiltration, poorer qualities of shallow groundwater and slower groundwater recharge.

This knowledge is important as we make decisions regarding future development. A significant portion of new residential and commercial development is taking place outside of the Lake Michigan basin. Consequently, in the central area of our region, more demand is being placed on groundwater that, due to the less permeable clay soil, is not easily replenished. Increased risk of flooding is also an issue.

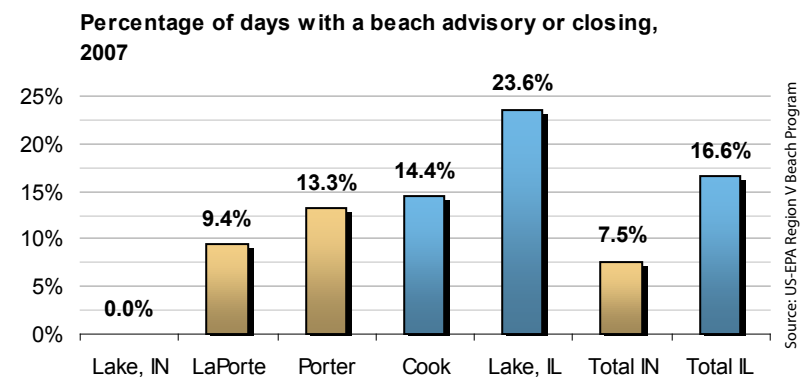
Meanwhile, development further south must also rely on wells that, due to the more permeable sandy soil, are increasingly susceptible to pollution. Furthermore, both types of soil pose problems for the siting of septic systems, which are often used for wastewater treatment outside of urban areas.

## Northwest Indiana's General Soil Characteristics



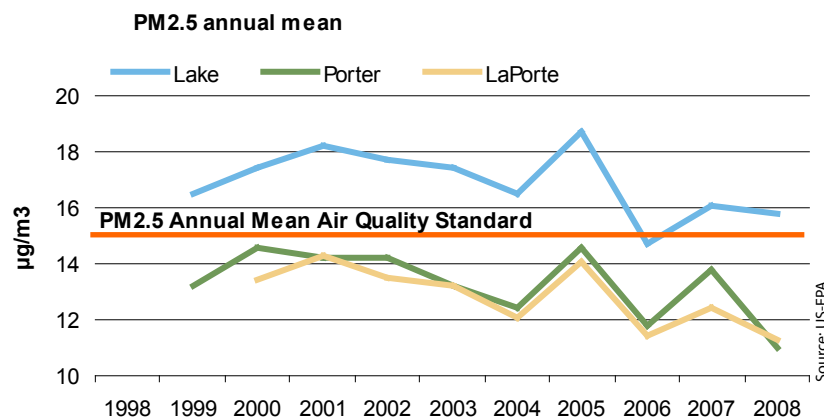
Environmental quality remains a major concern in the region. Local advocacy groups like the Save the Dunes Council and South Shore Clean Cities are working hand in hand with federal, state and local agencies (including NIRPC) to protect the environment, preserve our natural areas, remediate brownfields and improve quality of life. As a result of these efforts and more than thirty years of oversight by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, our air and water are now the cleanest they have been in decades.

At the same time, though, land use and transportation choices continue to produce detrimental side effects, which point to the interrelatedness of regional environmental challenges. On a local level, older cities with combined sewer systems (sanitary and stormwater) continue to dump sewage into our waterways during large storm events. Careless development practices often fracture ecosystems and degrade water quality. Sprawling development patterns bring traffic congestion and the attendant air pollution. This need not be the case, though. Places like Tryon Farm and Coffee Creek, built using smart growth and sustainable development techniques, prove that the built and natural environments can benefit and improve one another, even in Northwest Indiana.

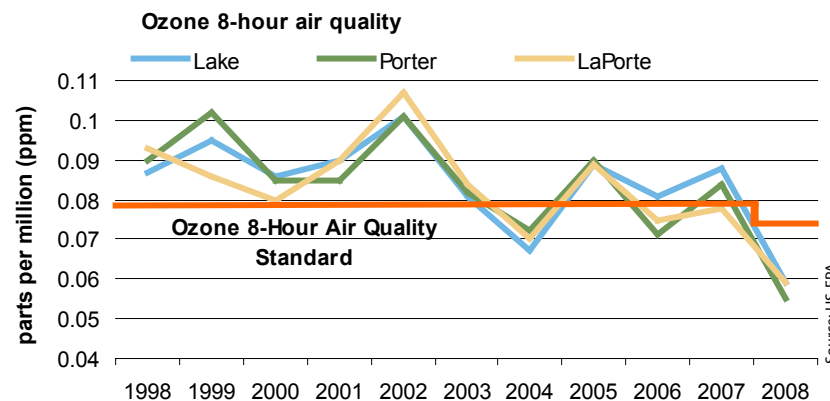


### AIR QUALITY INDICATORS MONITORED BY THE EPA

*Fine particulate matter (PM2.5)* is produced by all forms of combustion from engines, wood burning, open burning, and industrial processes. It includes dust, dirt, soot, smoke and water droplets that pose a health concern because they can be inhaled into and accumulate in the respiratory system.



*Ozone (O<sub>3</sub>)* is an odorless, colorless, highly reactive gas. Ground level ozone forms when its precursors (i.e., nitrogen oxides and volatile organic compounds (VOC)) mix with high temperatures, bright sunlight, and calm winds to form smog. Cars, power plants, refineries, chemical plants, gasoline storage, and household paints and solvents emit NO<sub>2</sub> and VOCs. Ozone may cause respiratory irritation and damage, especially to the very young and very old.

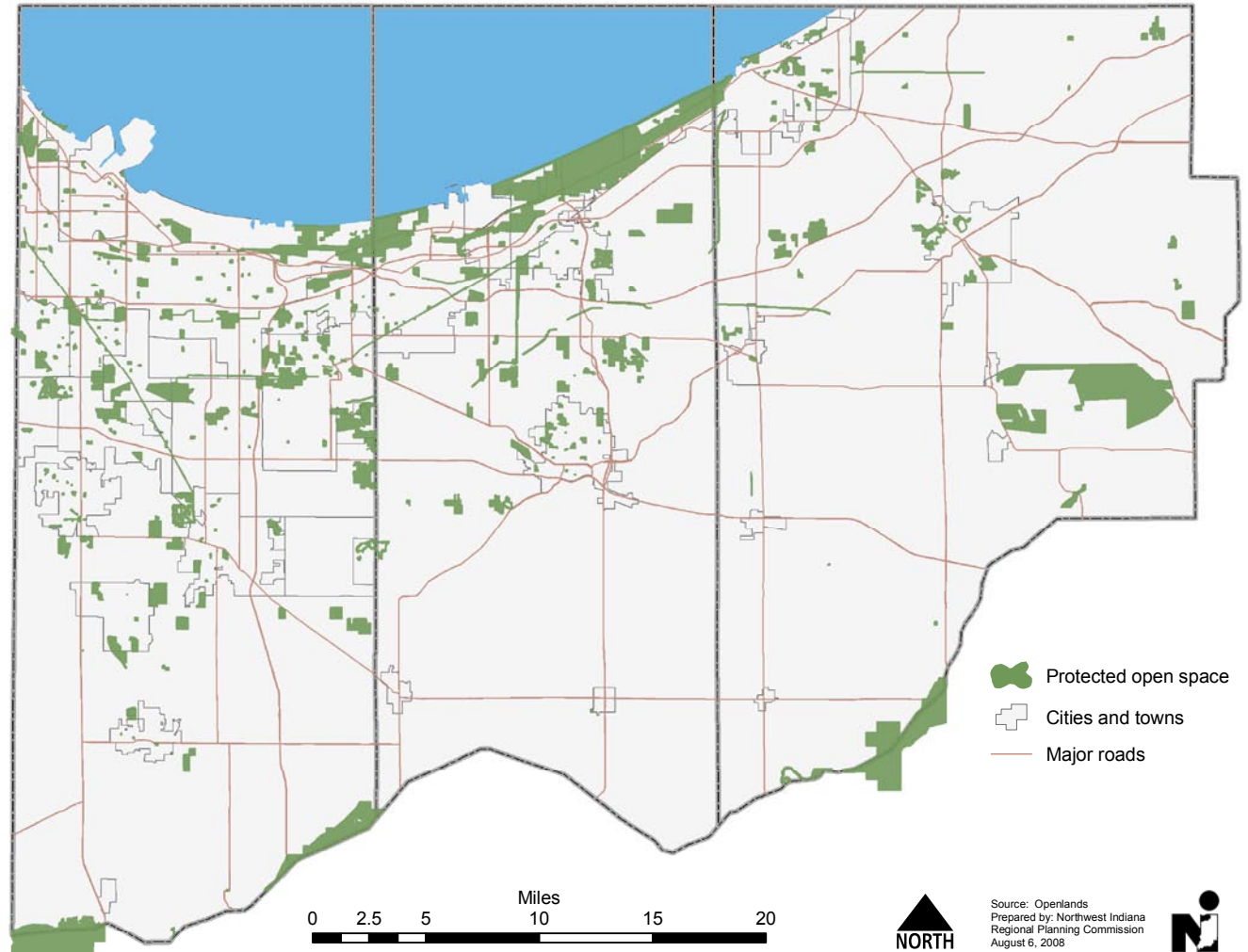


The ways in which our two watersheds have been developed are quite different. Within the Lake Michigan watershed, many of the rivers and streams, as well as much of the coastline itself, are heavily industrialized and bear the scars of years of unrestrained pollution and contamination. Conversely, early settlers channeled and straightened the Kankakee River and many of its tributaries, thereby draining the wetlands and uncovering vast stretches of prime farmland. Periodic flooding and bank erosion are two issues that continue to concern residents.

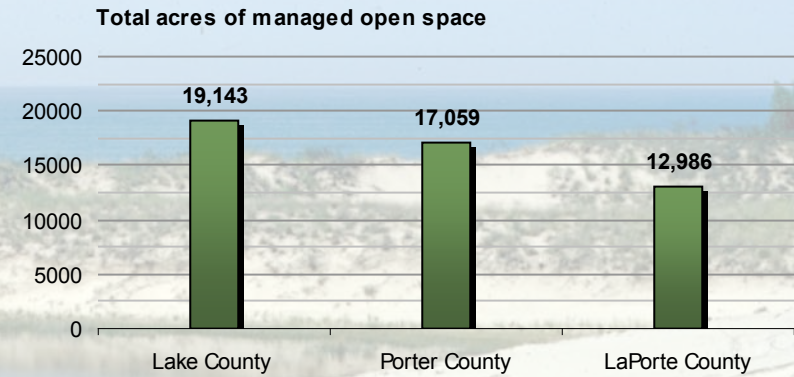
In their original states, both of the region's "coasts" were places of legendary biodiversity and natural wonder. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, University of Chicago professor Henry Chandler Cowles frequently visited the Indiana Dunes. His studies of plant succession there contributed to the development of ecology as a science. In the South, the Kankakee River, a miles wide, slow-moving stream bordered by forest and wetlands, teemed with wildlife and hosted fishing and hunting clubs all along its banks. President Benjamin Harrison was among its more prominent visitors.

Although much of these wild areas has been developed, significant remnants do remain. Many of these parcels are protected and managed by government agencies and non-profit conservation groups. The National Park Service manages the largest single portion: the 15 thousand acre Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore.

Northwest Indiana's protected open space network, as of 2006

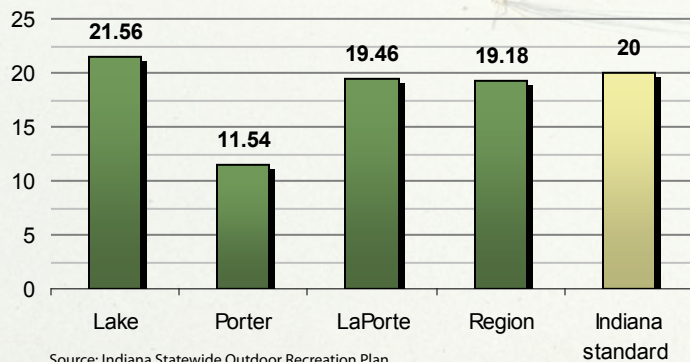


Including the National Park land, Northwest Indiana boasts around 50 thousand acres of nature preserves, conservation areas, municipal parks and golf courses. This amounts to a little less than one acre of total open space for every 15 residents. As the region continues to grow, it is important that we continue to expand our open space network and create linkages between green spaces. Recommendations for additional open space areas and water trails may be found in NIRPC's Greenways & Blueways Plan.



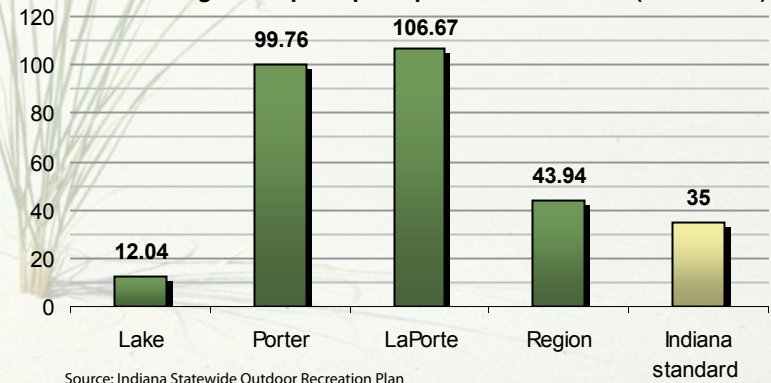
Source: Openlands

Acres of local open space per 1000 residents (as of 2005)



Source: Indiana Statewide Outdoor Recreation Plan

Acres of regional open space per 1000 residents (as of 2005)



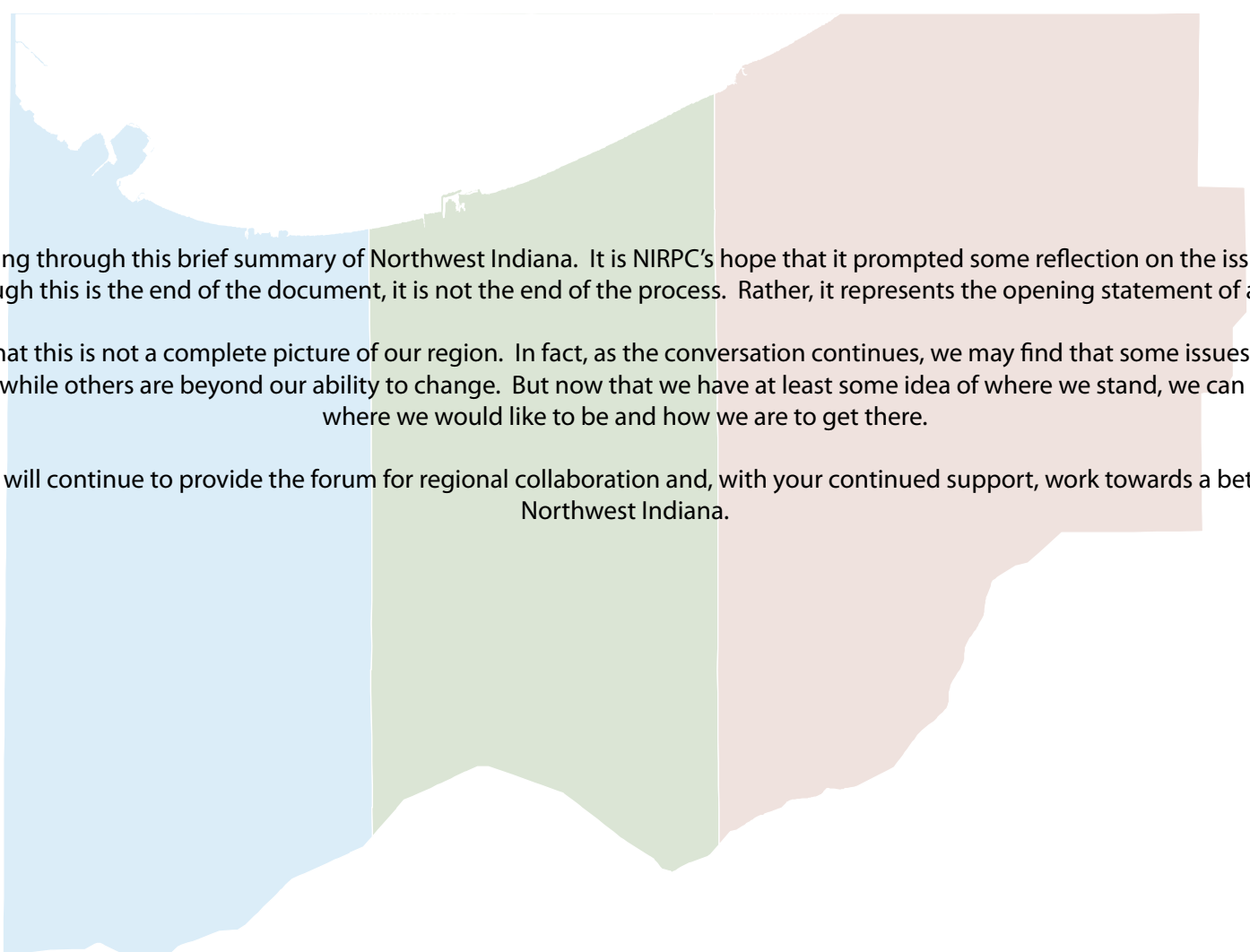
Source: Indiana Statewide Outdoor Recreation Plan

Credit: National Park Service

*Thank you*

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Thank you for reading through this brief summary of Northwest Indiana. It is NIRPC's hope that it prompted some reflection on the issues from a regional perspective. Although this is the end of the document, it is not the end of the process. Rather, it represents the opening statement of a new conversation.

We acknowledge that this is not a complete picture of our region. In fact, as the conversation continues, we may find that some issues will require further study and debate, while others are beyond our ability to change. But now that we have at least some idea of where we stand, we can start talking about where we would like to be and how we are to get there.

At NIRPC, we will continue to provide the forum for regional collaboration and, with your continued support, work towards a better future for Northwest Indiana.

*Where We Stand* is available electronically as a PDF download on NIRPC's website: [www.nirpc.org](http://www.nirpc.org)  
Requests for alternate formats of this document may be directed to Thomas Vander Woude at  
[tvanderwoude@nirpc.org](mailto:tvanderwoude@nirpc.org) or tel: 219.763.6060 x.154  
TTY users may dial 711 for Relay Indiana