

Economy & Place Committee

NIRPC Lake Michigan Room

YouTube Recording:

<https://www.youtube.com/live/ISCFdUfKqWM?si=Aq1t4kFepxUoNWT9>

October 9, 2024

Minutes

George Topoll called the meeting to order at 10:01 a.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance.

In attendance were George Topoll (Union Township), Anthony Sindone (IUN), Andy Vasquez (Porter County), Annie Cruz-Porter (Purdue), Randy Palmeteer (NWIBTCT), Juan Moreno (Hammond), Lois Whittaker (BCCNWI), Joe Wozolek (NIRA), Jen Trowbridge (NWICAC), James Burge (Porter), Judith Cardenas (NWISBDC), Gary Johnson, and Spencer Summers (Forum).

Staff present were Denarie Kane, Eman Ibrahim, Tom VanderWoude, Flor Baum, Meredith Stilwell, and Grace Benninger.

Tom VanderWoude spoke on the Economy & Place Committee (EPC). The Economy & Place Committee focuses on Land Use and Local Government Assistance. In 2019, NIRPC was designated by the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) as the Economic Development District (EDD) for Lake, Porter, and La Porte counties. NIRPC maintains and works with partners to implement the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), a five-year strategy-driven plan for regional economic development. The role of the Economy & Place Committee (EPC) is to serve as the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Committee. It is responsible for developing, implementing, revising, or replacing the CEDS for the Planning Organization (NIRPC Full Commission/Executive Board). It is responsible for reviewing and providing recommendations to the Full Commission/Executive Board regarding adopting and adding amendments to the CEDS. The CEDS committee is also responsible for evaluating EDA funding applications directly or through a designee to ensure consistency with CEDS and provide letters of support. The EPC also serves as a Land Use and Community Planning Topical Committee. The EPC will educate members on topics, policies, programs, and regulations relevant to land use, smart growth, economic development, and transit-oriented development (TOD). The role of the EPC is to advise NIRPC on policies and programs related to land use, smart growth, economic development, and transit-oriented development (TOD). The committee will oversee the development of and provide recommendations to the Transportation Committee regarding adoption of and amendments to the Land Use element of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan; oversee the development of plans, programs, and policies related to land use, smart growth, economic development, and transit-oriented development (TOD) as initiated by staff, the committee, or at the direction of the Transportation Committee; oversee the development and implementation of an annual LPA Planning Assistance program and recommend a program of projects to the Transportation Committee. The EPC will also provide training to local government officials, economic development officials, developers, and affiliated industry representatives on best practices for sustainable development, smart growth, land use, livable communities, and related topics. Membership of the EPC will consist of 12 Commissioners (4/County, including Chair). The commissioner may appoint a qualified staff representative, who must have direct influence over planning, redevelopment, or economic development, as a proxy. One NWI Forum representative, one Workforce Development representative, one Higher Education representative, two Minority Group representatives, at least one of which represents a minority business enterprise, one Labor Group representative, one Realtors Association representative, one private individual representative, and two other representatives who can contribute to and benefit from improved economic development in the region. Three voting committee members constitute a quorum and are required to pass motions. The meeting schedule is quarterly for the second Wednesday of the month. However,

more frequent meetings may be needed. For more information, contact Tom Vander Woude at tvanderwoude@nirpc.org.

Annie Cruz-Porter and Denarie Kane spoke on the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). An Economic Development District (EDD) consists of having an EDA approved CEDS. The EDD must meet the EDA's regional distress criteria for the following:

- Low per capita income—The area's per capita income is 80% or less of the national average.
- Unemployment rate above national average—The area's unemployment rate is at least 1% greater than the national average.
- Special need – The area has experienced or is about to experience a special need arising from actual or threatened severe unemployment or economic adjustment problems resulting from severe short-term or long-term changes in economic conditions, such as a military base closure.

A map identified Lake and LaPorte counties as distressed by unemployment and low income. Components of a good CEDS demonstrate significant public engagement, outline industry clusters to support, and include resiliency aspects. A good CEDS includes workforce development topics of concern, an evaluation framework, and a SWOT analysis of the Region. The SWOT analysis examines strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats related to resiliency, infrastructure, industry clusters, and workforce issues. NIRPC and PCRD are working on scheduling the public engagement needed for the SWOT analysis with several in-person and virtual meetings planned. The Economy & Place Committee is slated to have a policy formation session as well as hold two working group meetings focused on regional industry cluster data and the SWOT analysis. The project timeline was presented, and the CEDS is scheduled to be finalized and sent to the EDA for their approval by the end of March 2025. Contact Denarie Kane at dkane@nirpc.org for more information or questions.

Eman Ibrahim gave an overview of NIRPC's Regional Land Use, an update on Land Use and Housing, and NIRPC's NOFA applications. The Land Use and Housing element focuses on existing land use patterns, population trends, and community planning efforts. They also look at NWI's future population and the overall development that helps the region attain an equitable and environmentally sustainable future. Goals were identified.

- A plan for the needed infrastructure to support walking, bicycling, and transit of historic downtowns and older retail corridors with non-motorized patterns.
- Identify regional approaches that address shared economic and social resilience and preparedness challenges, environmental protection and restoration, workforce development, and housing markets.
- Identify key arterial roadways, including state highways and other arterials, that can be reimagined to enhance the livability of NWI communities.
- Plan for the 15-minute city. It envisions a developed city of districts where people can perform six essential functions (living, working, commerce, health, education, and entertainment) within a 15-minute walk or bike ride from their homes.
- Identify key places and corridors that need to be examined in more detail to focus resources on.

Population changes were presented from 1980 to 2020 which showed overall growth in the three county areas to be very slow. A scenario comparison for land consumption was discussed. The

desired scenario is 4-5 housing units per acre, meaning smaller lot housing is the most likely direction of the housing market. There is less dependence on multi-family or very high-density solutions as a result. Additionally, there is less conversion of new lands to urban uses and more open space preserved in a 4-5 housing units per acre scenario.

Six overall development frameworks were identified.

- Traditional development, which is older and established around an urban grid. Infill supports development, revitalization, and reinvestment.
- Suburban development with city services focuses on areas that generally grew from 1960 – present. Subdivisions, single-family residential, older subdivisions requiring conservation strategies, and infill of subdivisions and higher-density development are typically included in this development.
- Future urban development includes areas around existing development that permit incremental extensions of urban services.
- Community edge/large lot development areas concentrate on a strongly established large lot or rural residential pattern. New, low-density developments should be focused on available infill sites rather than expanding into predominantly rural counties.
- The areas of conservation development are more rural and have some topographic constraints, so conservation techniques should be used, such as clustering large lots to preserve environmentally sensitive areas as open spaces.
- The development/agriculture interface refers to the establishment of a border between developed areas of the region and the agricultural areas. The areas beyond that border line are maintained for primary agricultural use, except in areas contiguous to rural towns and centers.

The NOFA application deadline is next Friday, October 19. A list of projects will be presented at the January meeting. For more information or questions, contact Eman at eibrahim@nirpc.org.

Hearing no further business, the meeting adjourned at 12:00 p.m. The next Economy & Place meeting is slated for January 8, 2024, at 10:00 a.m.