

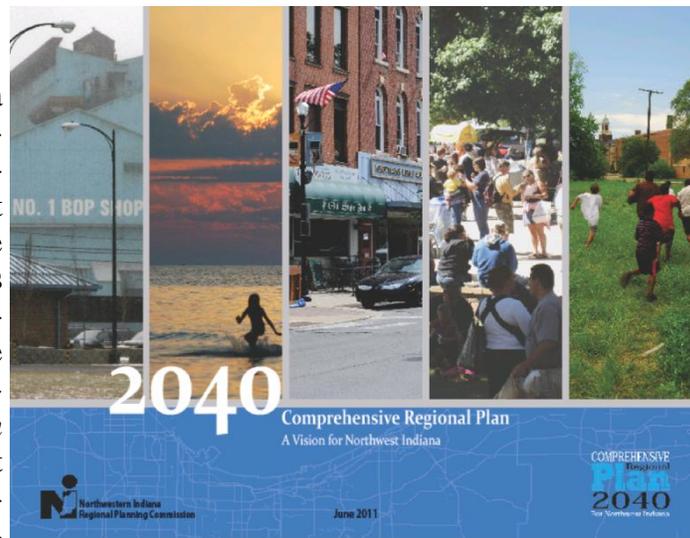
## 2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan Adopted Implementation Next Step Forward

By: *Steve Strains*

On June 23, 2011 the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission took a historic action by adopting the first comprehensive plan for the three-county region. It was the culmination of a three-year effort to develop the plan. The *2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan* (CRP) offers Northwest Indiana a road map towards accomplishing a unified and prosperous vision for the future. The CRP represents the first broad planning initiative covering Lake, Porter and LaPorte Counties.

The focus of the CRP includes: Growth and Conservation; Transportation; Environment and Green Infrastructure; Human and Economic Resources; Stewardship and Governance; Implementation. Taken together, these are very broad issues that require complex decision making on a large, regional scale. While some aspects of the CRP are based on local plans and near-term improvements, the plan's long-term horizon pushes us to think well beyond these needs. Thus, the CRP exists as a blueprint of our collective desires to remake Northwest Indiana as a vibrant, revitalized, accessible and united region - and help all see and enhance the beauty of where we live and work.

The Comprehensive Regional Plan offers Northwest Indiana an exciting vision of what an equitable, vibrant and truly forward-thinking region can achieve. We are uniquely positioned to take full ad-



vantage of a host of geographic and human resources practically unmatched in the United States. From strengthening our neighborhoods to offering more transportation choices, the vision presented in the CRP presents us with a clear opportunity to reach higher as a unified region - and dream big.

While our vision for the future embraces renewal, the fact remains today that our core urban communities, such as Gary, Hammond, East Chicago and Michigan City, continue to lose population and jobs. Shifting the focus of development to established communities represents the foundation of the physical element of the CRP. By adopting strategies and concentrating growth around existing infrastructure, we will be able to use funds efficiently and aid our communities in providing a high quality of life for their residents.

Nearly all modes of transport are present in our three-county region. A critical element to our region's economic success hinges on the ability to move people and goods in an efficient and effective manner. However, transportation is inadequately funded and major infrastructure improvements are needed to attract jobs and rebuild our core cities. The legacy of Northwest Indiana's transportation network plays a central role in supporting and maintaining the region's quality of life.

*Story continued on Page 2*

## **NIRPC Executive Board**

Chairman.....**Thomas M. McDermott, Jr.**  
*Mayor of Hammond*

Vice-Chairman.....**Geof Benson**  
*Beverly Shores Town Council*

Treasurer.....**David Uran**  
*Mayor of Crown Point*

Secretary.....**Ken Layton**  
*LaPorte County Commission*

Executive Board.....**Roosevelt Allen, Jr.**  
*Lake County Commission*

Executive Board.....**Brian Snedecor**  
*Mayor of Hobart*

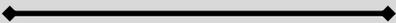
Executive Board.....**Olga Velazquez**  
*Mayor of Portage*

Executive Board.....**James G. Ton**  
*Chesterton Town Council*

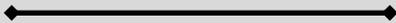
Executive Board.....**Kathleen Chroback**  
*Mayor of LaPorte*

Executive Board.....**Stephen Mockler**  
*Wanatah Town Council*

Executive Board.....**Chester Dobis**  
*Indiana State Representative*



Executive Director.....**John Swanson**  
*NIRPC*



Requests for alternate formats, please contact Stephen Sostaric at NIRPC at (219) 763-6060 extension 155 or at [ssostaric@nirpc.org](mailto:ssostaric@nirpc.org). Individuals with hearing impairments may contact us through the Indiana Relay 711 service by calling 711 or (800) 743-3333.

The Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, marital status, familial status, parental status, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program.

From the Indiana Dunes, to the Kankakee River, the ecological treasures of the region are some of our greatest assets. The prime agricultural land, plentiful waterways, and natural areas support all of our communities, quality of life and economy. However, Northwest Indiana land consumption over the last 20 years from urban uses increased dramatically, whereas population change over the same period increased very little in comparison. Many of the region's agricultural areas, with limited public structures and service capacities for residents, have received this growth. In addition, our water resources play a vital-life-sustaining role in both the Lake Michigan and Kankakee River watersheds. Unconstrained growth will continue to adversely impact the quality of water resources we are dependent on in daily life. Unchecked growth also threatens our air quality by spreading out more vehicle congestion. With these complex challenges facing our region, it is critical that recommendations throughout the CRP act in concert to reverse these trends.

The CRP represents an exceptional course of action for Northwest Indiana. We encourage you, the Northwest Indiana stakeholder, to take an active role in positioning our region towards a vibrant, revitalized, accessible and united future. Whether you have been a consistent participant in regional discussions, or are new to the process, your input is valuable for our dialogue on successful implementation to continue. An important next step is the formation of an Implementation Committee, which will prioritize the plan's recommendations and work with communities and counties to equip them to apply and execute the goals and strategies.

The CRP will function as a "living" document, evolving over time as specific policies and programs are advanced. It will be updated every few years to reflect the region's progress. Continued civic involvement is essential to the success of this plan and this region. Now and in the future, NIRPC welcomes your ideas into this dynamic and vital process.

Please take the time to read through the full CRP either at <http://www.nirpc.org/2040CRP> or by asking for a copy. Here you will be able to digest the entire scope of the CRP's recommendations, list of best practices, and detailed performance measures. A summary is also available. You will also discover how you can play a vital role in iating our tomorrow...today.

*Steve Strains is NIRPC's Deputy Director and Director of Planning. He can be reached at [sstrains@nirpc.org](mailto:sstrains@nirpc.org)*



# Calumet Connections: Linking Our Bi-State Region

By: Mitch Barloga

In October of 2011, the NIRPC Commission unanimously approved a resolution in support of the “Calumet Connections” project. Calumet Connections is a broad, bi-state initiative between Northwest Indiana and the South Chicago suburbs in Illinois seeking to expand safe non-motorized connections, and in turn linking residents to key destinations.

The idea for this project was hatched in 2010 with the proposal of the Active Transportation Act in the U.S. Congress. This act would be a supplement to the reauthorization of SAFETEA-LU, which serves as the omnibus transportation funding mechanism from Congress to the states. The Active Transportation Act calls for the allotment of up to \$75 million to 50 communities and/or regions to aid with non-motorized infrastructure projects. These include off-road trails, new or repaired sidewalks, crosswalks at signals or mid-block and Safe Routes to School.

Seeking to take advantage of this opportunity, Openlands from Chicago was awarded a grant from the Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelley Foundation to undertake the Calumet Connections project. Ders Anderson, Openland’s Greenways Director, met with a number of community leaders on both sides of the Indiana and Illinois state line to identify current initiatives, and flesh out new opportunities. Ders also met with both NIRPC staff and those at the South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association (SSMMA) so both regional agencies could offer their broad support to the project.

Over the course of several months, Openlands staff identified a number of new projects for potential funding. Many of these involve trails that utilize abandoned railway corridors or those along existing river or

utility corridors. Bike lanes were also proposed to be painted on streets that can safely accommodate them. There were also proposals to create new sidewalk connections where none currently exist expand the walking environment. Above all, a focus was paid to connecting to major destinations such as shopping and employment centers. This goes hand-in-hand with the Active Transportation Act’s goal of increasing non-motorized travel as a legitimate and safe option to automobile trips.

In addition to these infrastructure projects, Calumet Connections also recognized and budgeted for ancillary projects and programs that are critical in supporting a non-motorized network. These include bicycle parking through the installation of both bike racks and lockers. Other items include police patrol vehicles, security cameras and lighting, maintenance equipment and traffic calming elements. Funds were also budgeted for trail amenities such as drinking fountains and bathrooms.

Taken together, Calumet Connections proposes \$70 million in projects to be split equally between Northwest Indiana and the South Chicago Suburbs. If awarded, both SMMAA and NIRPC will be the recipients of this funding, and will distribute the funds based on needs outlined through the Calumet Connections planning process. It is hoped Congress will adopt this measure within the next year, along with the reauthorization of SAFETEA-LU, and in turn provide critical funding towards the enhancement of non-motorized travel in our bi-state region.

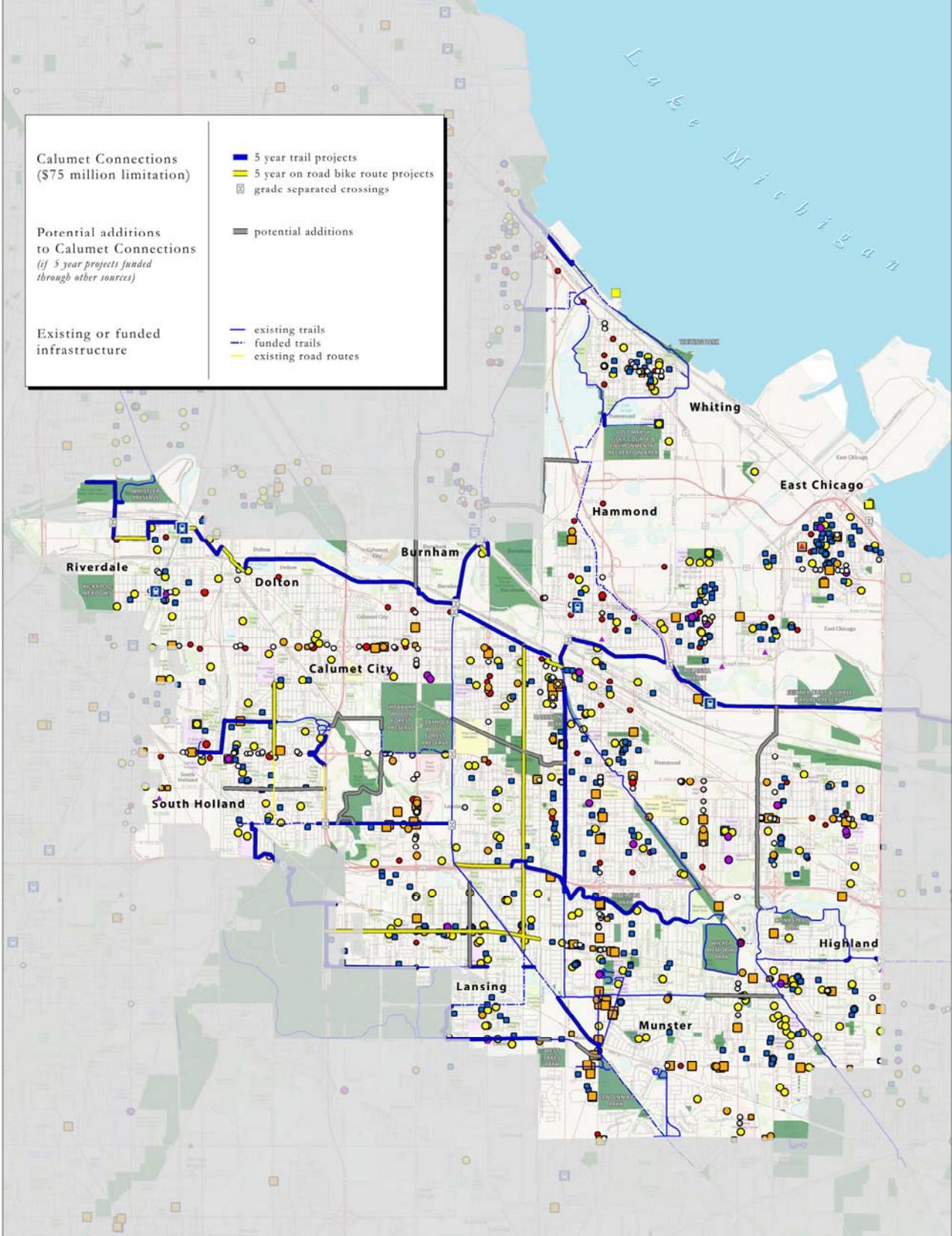
For further information about the Calumet Connections project, please contact me at 219-763-6060 or [mbarloga@nirpc.org](mailto:mbarloga@nirpc.org). 

*The Calumet Connections map can be found on Page 4. Mitch Barloga is NIRPC’s Non-Motorized Transportation Planner.*

# Calumet Connections

Bicycle Facilities Across State Boundaries

<p>Calumet Connections (\$75 million limitation)</p> <p>Potential additions to Calumet Connections <i>(if 5 year projects funded through other sources)</i></p> <p>Existing or funded infrastructure</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="color: blue;">■</span> 5 year trail projects</li> <li><span style="color: yellow;">■</span> 5 year on road bike route projects</li> <li><span style="border: 1px solid gray; display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px;"></span> grade separated crossings</li> <li><span style="border-bottom: 1px solid gray; width: 20px; display: inline-block;"></span> potential additions</li> <li><span style="color: blue;">—</span> existing trails</li> <li><span style="color: purple;">—</span> funded trails</li> <li><span style="color: yellow;">—</span> existing road routes</li> </ul>
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<span style="color: blue;">■</span> commuter rail stations	<span style="color: blue;">■</span> place of worship	<span style="color: red;">●</span> large grocery	<span style="color: orange;">■</span> medical facility	<span style="color: yellow;">■</span> casino
<span style="color: yellow;">●</span> school	<span style="color: purple;">●</span> library	<span style="color: red;">●</span> small grocery	<span style="color: orange;">■</span> pharmacy	<span style="color: purple;">▲</span> industry
<span style="color: cyan;">■</span> college/university	<span style="color: gray;">○</span> bank/atm	<span style="color: gray;">○</span> fast food	<span style="color: orange;">●</span> convenience/retail	<span style="color: green;">■</span> park/forest preserve



# NIRPC Officials Elected to Key Positions of National Group

By: John Swanson

Commissioner Dave Shafer of the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC) and Clerk – Treasurer for the Town of Munster was chosen to serve as the President-Elect of the National Association of Regional Councils (NARC) at its 45<sup>th</sup> annual conference in San Diego on June 15. In this capacity, Shafer is expected to move up to the presidency of the organization at its next annual conference in June 2012. NARC is a membership organization representing the interests of regional councils, councils of governments, and metropolitan planning organizations in the United States.

Commissioner Shafer has represented the Town of Munster on the NIRPC governing board since 1992 and has served in the capacity of Chair of the Commission and various standing and special committees. He was first elected to the Board of Directors of the National Association of Regional Councils in January 2004 as the region representative for the states of Illinois, Indiana, Minnesota and Wisconsin, and he was subsequently re-elected to two more terms on the Board.

In seeking the office of President-Elect, Shafer spoke of the critical role which regional councils play in fostering intergovernmental cooperation and collaboration. “In addition to the planning expertise

which regional planning agencies provide to their member communities, they also serve as a unique forum for bringing together elected and appointed local government officials to identify and resolve issues of common concern,” he said. “NARC must be an effective voice in Washington, D.C. to assure that regional and local interests are being addressed, especially when the federal government is considering the reauthorization of programs in the areas of transportation, economic development, and the environment.”

At the same general membership meeting of NARC, NIRPC Commissioner and City of La Porte Mayor Kathy Chroback was elected to fill the regional seat vacated by Shafer. Commissioner Chroback is the immediate past chair of NIRPC and currently serves as the Chair of the Northwest Indiana Economic Development District. “It is unusual to have two representatives of the same regional council serving on NARC’s Board of Directors at the same time, but I am pleased that the membership recognizes the outstanding qualifications that both Dave and Kathy bring to their positions,” said NIRPC Chair and Hammond Mayor Tom McDermott.

During the course of the conference, I was also elected to serve a third term on NARC’s Executive Directors Council. 

*John Swanson is NIRPC’s Executive Director and can be reached at [jswanson@nirpc.org](mailto:jswanson@nirpc.org)*

## NIRPC Recognized with Award at NARC National Conference

The National Association of Regional Councils (NARC) recognized NIRPC and its work on The Marquette Plan: A Vision for Lakeshore Reinvestment, Phase II with their Outstanding Achievement Award at their national conference in San Diego, California. 

*Pictured l-r: Commissioners Dave Shafer & NIRPC Chairman Tom McDermott, NARC President Ron Morrison, and NIRPC Executive Director John Swanson accepting the NARC award.*



## Meet the Commissioner. . .



Mayor Tom McDermott, Jr. is the 20<sup>th</sup> Mayor of Hammond (a position he has held since 2004) as well as Chair of the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission.

He served as a nuclear submariner in the U.S. Navy for six years, receiving an honorable discharge. Following his service, he studied finance at Purdue University-Calumet and law at the University of Notre Dame.

Mayor McDermott was named a Sagamore of the Wabash in 2005, the same year he was named the Deputy Chairman of the Indiana Democratic Party.

The Mayor and his wife Marissa have four children, and Mayor McDermott is a coach with their Optimist League baseball teams.

Mayor McDermott has proven to be an active member of the NIRPC Board, actively advocating for the reconstruction of the Cline Avenue Bridge and the placement of cable barriers along I-65 in Lake County. 

## Meet the NIRPC Staff. . .



Terrell Waddell, NIRPC's Transportation Data Collector, has been with the agency for over twenty years. In this role, Terrell plays a vital part in NIRPC's transportation planning and programming activities. Additionally, the traffic data that Terrell gathers is used not only by NIRPC, but communities and businesses in the region as well. This means his role is important in both the construction of infrastructure and the creation and/or retention of jobs for the region's residents.

Before coming to NIRPC, Terrell worked for Fitz Simmons Surgical Supply Company, repairing and delivering equipment and maintaining their stock. He attended school at Indiana State College.

Originally from Gary, Terrell has been married to his wife Valerie for 25 years and has three children: Kayla Lauren, 20, Christopher Bryan, 16, and Chelsea Marie, 15. While he laments the loss of hair with each one, he considers each a blessing. 

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## New Branding for Northwest Indiana Partnership for Clean Water

By: Kathy Luther

For several years the NIRPC Environmental Department has provided public education materials, outreach, media, and community involvement services for Lake and Porter counties as well as an additional twenty cities, towns, and conservancy districts collectively known as the MS4 Community Partnership. The goal is to help residents to understand their impacts on local waters and inspire them to help keep them clean.

During the past six years we have produced and distributed pens, brochures, radio commercials, calendars, and newspaper inserts. We have provided booths at fairs and festivals, household hazardous waste days, and other community events. We have invented Splash, our clean wa-

ter mascot. Amanda Pollard, our Environmental Educator, has provided programming at schools, parks, and day camps throughout the region. However, our surveys showed that significant strides still needed to be made to increase awareness.

We had to try something new.

Griffin Marketing was hired to help the Partnership with our brand and our message. It became apparent that we needed a better name that could clearly show at a glance what everything

was about. Look for our new name and brand to start making a splash in the region over the coming months! 

Kathy Luther is NIRPC's Director of Environmental Programs and can be reached at [kluther@nirpc.org](mailto:kluther@nirpc.org)



By: Hubert Morgan

*I will be interviewing residents for each issue of the NIRPC newsletter to share the vision, goals, and strategies adopted by the 41 cities, towns, and counties of Northwest Indiana in the 2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan (2040 CRP). Please “Like” us on Facebook to see how we’re getting everyone involved.*

Sandra Rodriguez, a resident of Miller in Gary, is the subject of the first installment of INvolve Northwest Indiana Interviews. Sandra worked at Indiana University Northwest’s School of Public & Environmental Affairs. She has been a huge champion and supporter of the 2040 CRP. She now serves on the NIRPC Implementation Committee and the NIRPC Food Policy Committee.

**HM:** Sandra thanks for being the first person to be interviewed for the newsletter.

**SR:** Thanks for having me.

**HM:** You participated in the 2040 planning process, you’re on the 2040 Implementation Committee, and now you’re implementing a project of your own at the local level. Tell us about your experience during the 2040 CRP process.

**SR:** It was long, but I hung in there. All the work that has gone into the 2040 Plan, I hope that local officials support it and its regional vision. It’s provided me with a regional appreciation about long-term strategic thinking around traditional planning issues and the need to think about social equity issues in the region. One of those issues is fresh food; too many communities don’t have access to fresh food. The food system community brings poor and minority populations to the food table. We also need to bring these same populations to the environmental table. With so many issues to be resolved, I have great hope for the Implementation Committee.

**HM:** Let’s talk about fresh food and the work you’re doing in Gary.

**SR:** I’m the Project Manager of Stewart House Urban Farm and Gardens. The mission is to establish a sustainable food source that will provide fruits, vegetables and poultry for Midtown neighbors and Greater

Gary. I’m working with Rev. Katurah Johnson, pastor at Christ United Methodist Church, to develop the Stewart House property it owns at 1501 Massachusetts St. in Gary into an urban farm and learning center. The Stewart House site has a deep-rooted legacy in the settlement movement. There was a working urban farm as part of the Settlement House. We also hope to create some new models for economic development and partnerships related to food production and processing.

**HM:** You’re also managing a Farmers Market tell us about that.

**SR:** I’m the Market Manager of the Miller Beach Farmers Market. Our mission is to offer the community fresh, healthy foods from farmers and local businesses, to invite individuals and businesses promoting gardening, health and wellness, fitness and healing, alternative energy and sustainability and to invite artists and craftspeople to sell handmade goods.

**HM:** Kevin Garcia, NIRPC staff member, and I attended the Equity Summit 2011 in Detroit. That Saturday we visited the Eastern Market on the outskirts of downtown Detroit. We thought about you because of your farmers market.

**SR:** I’m jealous that we were not able to send a delegation from NW Indiana. I visited the weekend before the conference and went down to the market. It was fantastic, fresh food from local farmers from Michigan and Ohio and Ontario, Canada.

**HM:** What can NIRPC do to help, considering the constraints of its mission?

**SR:** I think reaching out and facilitating an environment of support for organizations that are interested, but need access to resources. Helping them to write grants. Helping organizations see the opportunities to connect their entrepreneurship and the people that need the goods and services.

**HM:** Sandra, Thanks for joining us...you have our full support, definitely mine. 

*Hubert Morgan is NIRPC’s Public Involvement Coordinator. His email is [hmorgan@nirpc.org](mailto:hmorgan@nirpc.org). Search INvolve Northwest Indiana to connect on Facebook.*

## NIRPC Meetings, January, 2012

All meetings are at NIRPC unless otherwise noted.

01/05	9:00 am	Environmental Mgmt. Policy Committee	K. Luther
01/06	1:00 pm	Local Food Study Meeting	K. Garcia
01/10	9:00 am	Transportation Policy Committee	B. Brown
01/11	9:00 am	Land Use Committee	E. Ibrahim
01/11 - 01/12	8:00 am - 5:00 pm	Intelligent Transportation System Architecture Workshop (at the INDOT Borman Traffic Management Center, Gary)	FHWA
01/18	9:00 am	2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan Implementation Committee	G. Biciunas
01/19	9:00 am	Full Commission/Executive Board	J. Swanson
01/25	9:00 am	Local Government Assistance Advisory Committee (location TBD)	J. Swanson
01/26	1:30 pm	Ped, Pedal, and Paddle Committee	M. Barloga



**DON'T FORGET!**  
 NIRPC will be closed for  
 the Christmas holiday on  
 Monday, Dec. 26, 2011

*This is a quarterly publication of the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission. Please feel free to contact us at the following:*

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