

# Vibrant

COMMUNITIES OF LA PORTE COUNTY

## ACTION AGENDA

**September 11, 2020**

*Process coordinated by:*

**The Unity Foundation of La Porte County  
The La Porte County Convention and Visitors Bureau**





# Acknowledgments

The Vibrant Communities of La Porte County process involved engagement from hundreds of community members and numerous organizations. Their personal experiences, professional knowledge, and passion for the future of the county was crucial to creating the final Action Agenda. The Steering Committee and Leadership Team would like to thank everyone who participated in this process to define a vision for the future of La Porte County.

## PROCESS COORDINATORS



## LEADERSHIP TEAM

Maggi Spartz, Unity Foundation of La Porte County, Co-Chair  
Jack Arnett, La Porte County Convention and Visitors Bureau, Co-Chair  
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Gail Johnson, La Porte County Convention and Visitors Bureau

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## SPONSORS

Unity Foundation of La Porte County	Indiana Michigan Power
La Porte County Convention and Visitors Bureau	Purdue University Northwest
Lilly Endowment Inc.	Walsh & Kelly
Healthcare Foundation of La Porte	39 Conservancy District
La Porte Hospital	Franciscan Alliance
Economic Development Corporation of Michigan City	NiSource
	Horizon Bank
	La Porte Economic Advancement Partnership (LEAP)

## FACILITATOR

planning NEXT

## MEDIA PARTNERS

WIMS AM 1420 Gerard Media  
WEFM 95.9  
The La Porte County Herald-Argus  
The Michigan City News-Dispatch  
The Regional News  
The Westville Indicator  
The New Carlisle Gazette  
Good News Media

## EVENT VENUES

Blue Chip Casino Hotel Spa  
La Porte Civic Auditorium  
Purdue Northwest - James B. Dworkin Student Services and Activities Complex  
The Center of LaCrosse  
New Prairie High School  
Northern Indiana Education Foundation  
Queen of All Saints Church  
St. Joseph Catholic Church  
Wanatah Town Hall  
Keys to Hope Resource Center  
Grace Learning Center

*And to the 900+ participants who helped shape this document!*



## To the communities of La Porte County ...

In 2019, we began an amazing opportunity to define a strategic plan for the future of our county and its communities. This vision won't be achieved overnight and will take cooperation from everyone who lives, works, and visits our communities. Our people are important to the success of this movement and through the 900 people engaged so far, we've made many critical decisions. We want to thank everyone who participated in the initial Vibrant Communities process and welcome all to join in building our movement.

**A time for deliberate action.** Our county has seen significant change since our last strategic plan over thirty years ago. We've experienced success in many areas but have left ourselves vulnerable. New growth was occurring in surrounding counties with La Porte County beginning to fall behind. Leaders from across the county realized that without a unified vision for our future we may miss opportunities to enhance our communities. Building off the dozens of planning efforts since the "Take Charge" plan, partners pooled their resources to engage the communities of La Porte County in a big discussion. The Vibrant Communities of La Porte County movement represents our collaborative spirit.

**Organizing for success.** Representation of our diverse communities and people was essential to the success of this movement. Our steering committee worked diligently to ensure participation was an option available to all residents, workers, and visitors to the county. Through numerous in-person events and online activities, over 900 people provided their thoughts and ideas for making the communities of La Porte County more vibrant. It was these dedicated individuals who helped define our vision statement for improving the three areas that influence all our communities – our people, our prosperity, and our places.

**Launching a movement.** This process was about more than creating a plan, it was about launching a movement for action. Our communities were ready to advance but we needed to ensure everyone was included in our determining our pathway forward. The Action Agenda containing 67 action recommendations represent exciting opportunities for everyone to get involved in achieving our vision. From supporting housing for all to training our workforce to enhancing our downtowns, all communities have a place within the movement – and it doesn't end here. The Vibrant Communities movement will continue to improve our quality of life. We welcome new ideas and encourage everyone to find their place within the Action Agenda.

Please take the time to review the Action Agenda and consider getting involved in one or more of the actions. We welcome you to champion efforts, provide support, or define new opportunities to pursue. This movement is for all our communities and everyone has a place here!

Sincerely,

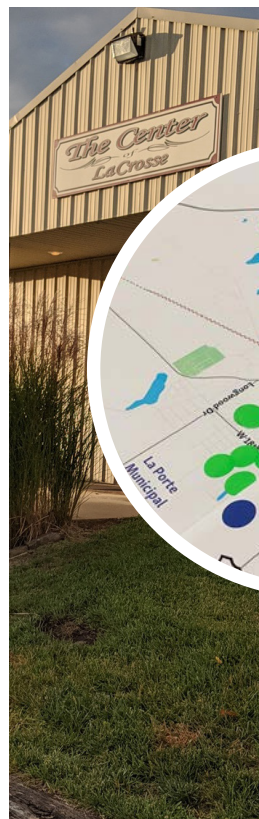
A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Maggi Spartz".

Maggi Spartz, Co-Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jack Arnett".

Jack Arnett, Co-Chair



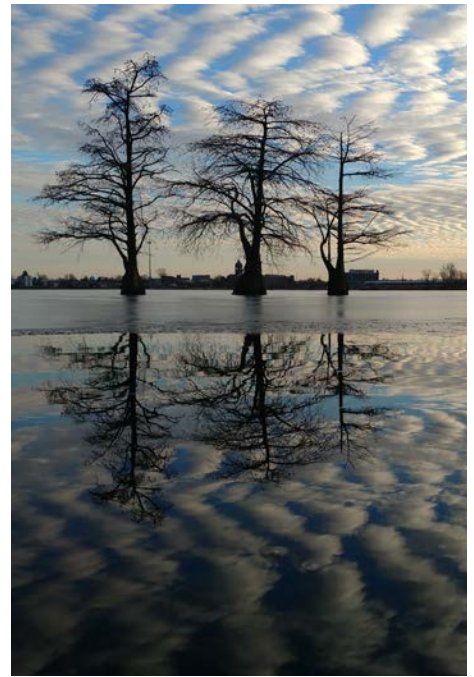




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# 1. INTRODUCTION



*The Vibrant Communities of La Porte County Movement is a community-wide effort to develop a unified vision to guide investment and decision-making in the coming decades.*

## Background

In the fall of 2019, the communities of La Porte County joined together to embark on a momentous effort to develop a new county-wide Action Agenda. Having been thirty years since the county's last plan, and witnessing growth in surrounding counties, a coalition of leaders decided it was time to join together to define a pathway forward. The Vibrant Communities of La Porte County Movement is a community-wide effort to develop a unified vision. Over a six-month process, over 900 people were engaged in a discussion about the future of their community, generating over 4,000 unique comments, thoughts, and ideas. The Vibrant Communities Action Agenda is the result of this input serving as a roadmap towards making the communities of La Porte County more vibrant and prosperous.

## MOTIVATION FOR THE MOVEMENT

Before pursuing new investment opportunities, certain steps must be taken to understand community priorities. Everyone benefits when a united vision is defined to guide investment strategies. The Action Agenda represents the potential methods for all the communities to enhance, preserve, and revitalize the greater La Porte County community. The coalition of leaders understood the need for positioning themselves for the future, leveraging the collaborative spirit that exists within the county to begin a movement for change.

## ALL ARE WELCOME

The Vibrant Communities movement is open to everyone who is passionate about the future of the county and its communities. Implementing the Action Agenda will require partnerships and collaboration between everyone who influences the county. Whether through providing feedback or championing action items, all are welcome and have a place within the action agenda - ensuring the long-term success of the movement.



# What is an Action Agenda?

The Vibrant Communities Action Agenda is the first expression of community programs, policies and projects to enhance the greater La Porte County community. These action items emerged from public engagement to identify priority areas affecting all communities and prepare for future investment. The Action Agenda will evolve over time as items are implemented, making each community in La Porte County more vibrant and prosperous.

## **BUILDING THE FOUNDATION**

The Action Agenda is intended to serve as a living document to promote innovative change in the county. The actions identified align with community priorities and strive to improve the quality of life and quality of place in La Porte County. Some of the actions may be easier to implement for communities while others will take time to define, design, and realize. Achieving the vision will require the collective efforts of everyone in the community. The Action Agenda represents the foundation for the movement, encouraging and welcoming all to participate in its implementation.

### **WHAT IS AN ACTION?**

An Action, simply stated, is a program, policy, or project. The actions are organized by three themes which influence all of the communities of La Porte County - People, Prosperity, and Place. Each theme contains a series of strategies which the action items seek to address, all while supporting the united vision. All actions contained within the agenda are intended to:

- » advance the vision and goals;
- » enhance core services and programs;
- » provide economic opportunities;
- » connect to community input directly or indirectly;
- » preserve the diversity of places;
- » increase community pride; and,
- » enhance the image of the community both internally and externally.

### **THE VISION**

*La Porte County is a vibrant collection of unique communities that invest in their diverse people, grow their economic and health vitality, and promote innovative leadership through talented citizens for a rich quality of life for all.*

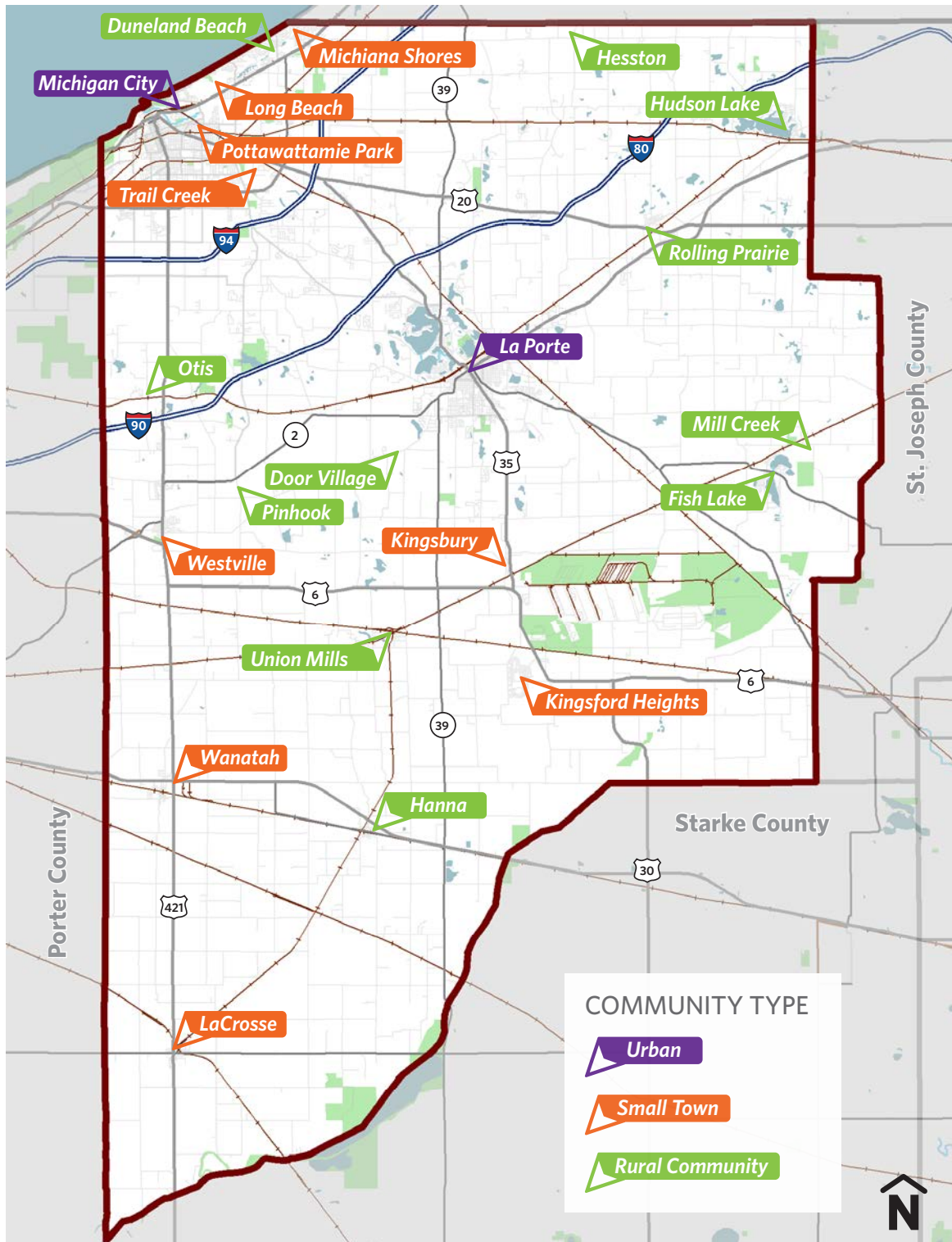
### **ACTION TOPICS**

- » Attractions
- » Civic Engagement
- » Education
- » Employment Sectors
- » Entrepreneurship
- » Housing
- » Main Streets
- » Natural Environment
- » Neighborhoods
- » Public Health
- » Transportation
- » Workforce Development



## Who is La Porte County?

The following map of La Porte County identifies the 15+ communities which represent a diversity of places from urban cities to small towns to rural communities. The range of unique communities is one of many characteristics that sets La Porte County apart from other counties.





# La Porte County Today

*An effective plan for the La Porte community must build off of a solid foundation of research and technical analysis. The county is a strong and diverse place, both in terms of its places and people. The following summary highlights the community's key conditions and trends related to demographics, economics, and place-based phenomena.*

## TAKING A SNAPSHOT

A solid understanding of challenges and assets will help leaders direct resources, inform decision-making and identify future opportunities. This "snapshot" of La Porte County's vital statistics can serve as a benchmark for future progress. This work was initiated through the Focus on the Future process in 2015 and has been updated for the purposes of the Action Agenda, see appendix for original snapshot report. Key highlights have been included.

Measurements were taken across three broad categories



### PEOPLE

Measuring the demographic conditions and trends for indicators like population and diversity



### PROSPERITY

Measuring the economic conditions and trends for people's personal prosperity, workforce and the economy



### PLACE

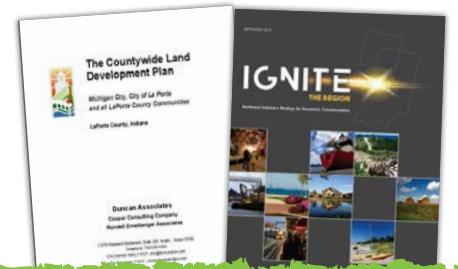
Measuring and describing place-based conditions and trends like transportation and housing

## KEY FINDINGS

**1 Wage growth stalled...** Only 13% growth between 2000 and 2014 (inflation adjusted), currently ranked in the bottom half of Indiana Counties, earnings 93% of state average.

**2 A strong manufacturing base...** Despite seeing a decline since 2002, the county's employment base maintains a strong anchor in manufacturing with small firms (those with fewer than 20 employees) making up the largest share.

**3 Aging housing...** Nearly one in four homes in the county was built before World War II. The share is higher in the county's urban centers as a vast majority of recent (past 20 years) housing permits were issued for areas outside the incorporated cities and towns.



## OTHER PLANS

There are a number of plans and studies completed in the community over the previous two decades. Below is a sample.

- » La Porte County Take Charge, Strategic Plan (1992)
- » The Countywide Land Development Plan (2008)
- » OneRegion Indicators Report (2016)
- » City of La Porte Youth Downtown and Lakes Development Plan (2016)
- » Westville Comprehensive Plan (2017)
- » NIRPC Greenways & Blueways Plan (2018)
- » Momentum: Michigan City 2040 Comprehensive Plan (2018)
- » NWI 2050 Plan (2019)





## PEOPLE

The findings organized around the People section focus on demographic conditions and trends within the County. The data used is the latest available provided by the American Communities Survey, as well as other sources. Facts and figures summarize the population, household makeup, age, diversity, and education.

### POPULATION

**Population stagnation.** Small decline in between 2010 and 2018 of a little more than 1%. Faster regional growth. Overall growth in Northern Indiana region of 4% from 2000.

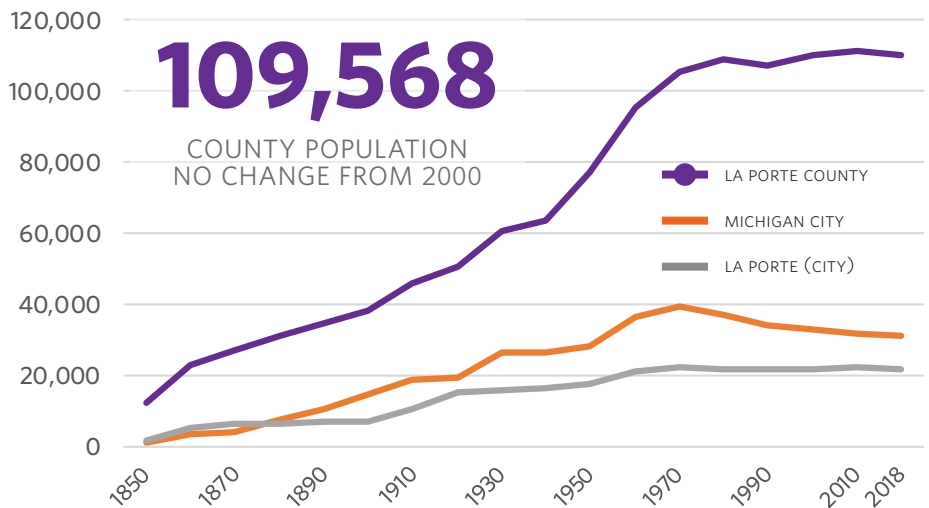
**Domestic out-migration; International in-migration.** Net loss of 951 between 2014 and 2015, third highest in the state (Only Lake and Marion Counties were higher). Net gains in international migrants, +1,200 between 2000 and 2015.

### HOUSEHOLDS

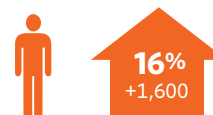
**Fewer families with children.** 20% decrease in families with children under 18 (~3,000 fewer).

**More people living alone.** Net increase of 1,600 new single person households, 16% increase. More single-parent households. 36% of all households (34% Indiana).

### POPULATION OVER TIME



Households with Children



Single Person Households



increase in adults with a college degree

### AGE

**Over 50 population increasing.** 37% increase from 2000 to 2014, more than 40,000 now over 50 with under-50 population declining during the same period.

### DIVERSITY

**Growing Hispanic population.** Increase of 92% between 2000 and 2014 which changes the share of the Hispanic population from 3% to 6% or an increase of more than 3,000 individuals. (9th largest Hispanic population out of all Indiana counties).

### EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

**General increases in post-secondary educational attainment.** Adults 25 and over with a college degree increased from 20 to 25% between 2000 and 2013, but still trail neighboring communities and the state.

## \$ PROSPERITY

The findings organized around the Prosperity section focus on statistics related to personal prosperity, economic vitality, and health. The data has been assembled from a number of sources including the American Community Survey, Bureau of Labor Statistics and local sources.

### PERSONAL PROSPERITY

**Wage growth stalled.** Only 13% growth between 2000 and 2014 (inflation adjusted), currently ranked in the bottom half of Indiana Counties, earnings 93% of state average.

**One in ten children in poverty.** 10% of families with children are below the poverty line, slightly more than the state, 8.5%.

**Overall levels of family poverty increasing.** The instances of people in poverty increased from 9.5% to 10.5% (2000 to 2018).

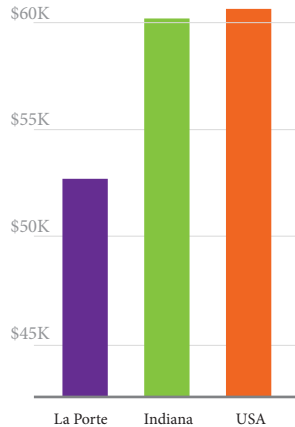


## MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

# \$53,255

Below the state median, \$60,060

### INCOME COMPARISON



## TOTAL PRIVATE PRIMARY JOBS

# 31,761

Down 20 percent from 2002

## COUNTY GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT

# \$3.94B

Down two percent from 2002

## UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

# 7.2%

Recovered five points from a high point of 12 percent during the National Recession

## ECONOMY & EMPLOYMENT

**Decline in manufacturing.** 32% decline from 2002, roughly 3,400 fewer primary jobs. Sector dominated by small establishments with firms employing fewer than 20 employees making up 95% of the total.

**Healthcare the second largest employer.** Roughly 7,400 jobs in 2019, or a share of 16%.

## WORKFORCE

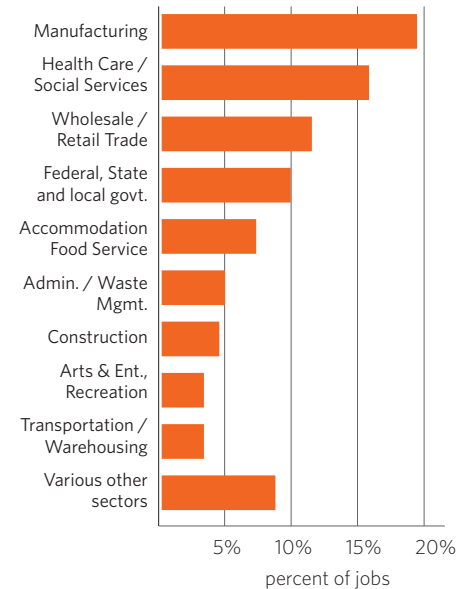
**Aging laborforce.** 52% decrease in labor force under the age of 55, 37% increase workers over 55, or 2,400 more than 2002.

**Unemployment leveling, higher than state.** Peak in 2009 at 11.9% down to 7.2% in January 2019 (Indiana 5.5%).

**Decreasing employment share among large firms.** 8% decrease in employment among firms with 100 or more employees. Small firms, 1 to 9 employees, maintain the largest share with 70% of all workers.

**Agriculture is major part of the economy.** There are 731 operating farms in La Porte County that bring in \$200 million in market value annually.

## EMPLOYMENT BY SECTOR



## PLACE

The findings organized around the Place section focus on the statistics and characteristics of place-based information. Housing and transportation highlights have been included, along with a more qualitative assessment of place.

## MOBILITY

**Regionally connected.** 15 major highways including the Indiana Toll Road (I-80 / I-90), and I-94.

**High share of households with no access to a car.** 12% of homes have no vehicle available (7% Indiana).

### Increasing Transit Options.

Urban systems (La Porte's TransPorte, Michigan City's MCT), County Connections through the Transit Triangle, and regional connections NICTD (South Shore Commuter Train, Baron's Bus, Coach USA, etc.).

## HOUSING

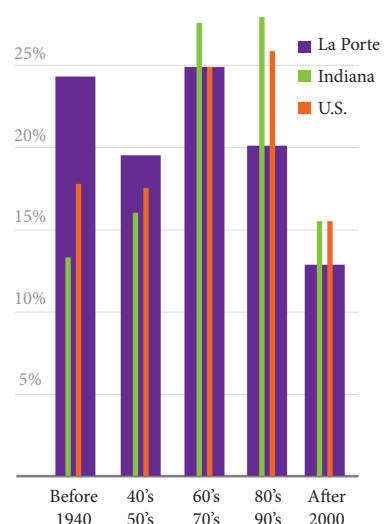
**Older housing stock.** 42% of homes built before 1960 (33% Indiana), 24% built before 1940. Majority single-family, detached housing. 74% of residential units detached.

**Majority of housing permits outside incorporated cities.** 71% between 1996 and 2004.

## CHARACTER

**A variety of places and environments.** A diversity of settings from urban town centers to working agricultural lands. Urban centers maintain a dense and walkable grid, giving way to more recent auto-oriented development. More than 731 active farms in the county, collectively producing more than \$200M in annual market value.

## HOUSING YEAR-BUILT DATE





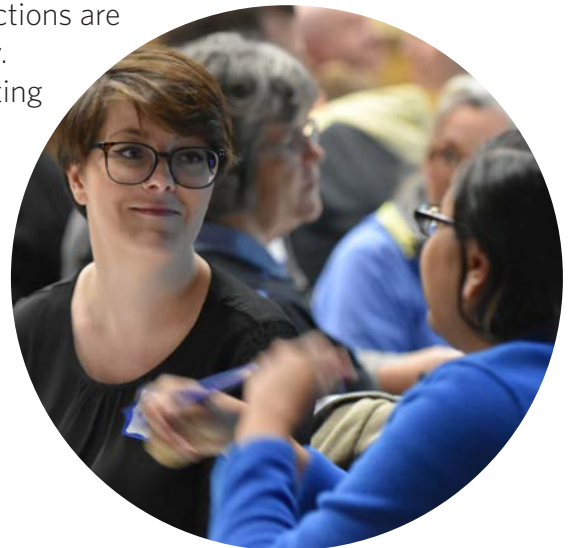
## Using the Action Agenda

The Action Agenda is a collection of specific recommendations based on community discussions around the future of the county. These action items include a wide variety of opportunities from establishing new programs to refining existing initiatives. The recommendations have been organized based on three themes that influence all the communities of La Porte County - People, Prosperity, and Place.

### WHO IMPLEMENTS?

The Action Agenda has a role for everyone in the community from supporting initiatives to championing actions. Within the last chapter, Implementation, each action item has been assigned potential leaders or partner organizations to support implementation. Here are a few suggestions on how various community representatives, organizations, and leaders can use and support the Action Agenda.

- » **Adopt the Vision Statement** - Organizations can officially adopt the vision statement, showing their dedication for enhancing the communities, supporting their people, and improving their prosperity.
- » **Identify potential roles in action implementation** - Everyone has a role in supporting the Vibrant Communities Movement. From individual people to private businesses to large organizations, all of the action items will require support to implement or may already be underway. Identifying opportunities to get involved in the movement will ensure that all of La Porte County's communities become more vibrant in the future.
- » **Promote immediate action** - The Action Agenda contains a variety of recommendations which allow for realization. By supporting the movement, these actions can receive the resources, funding, or support necessary to ensure their implementation.
- » **Monitor the movement** - This Action Agenda represents the first expression of the movement. New recommendations will emerge as actions are implemented and partnerships form throughout the county. Continue to monitor progress of the Action Agenda by visiting the website: **VIBRANTLPCOUNTY.ORG** to identify new opportunities to get involved.





*"Thank you! Makes me  
proud of La Porte County!"  
- Community Conversation Participant*





## 2. PROCESS

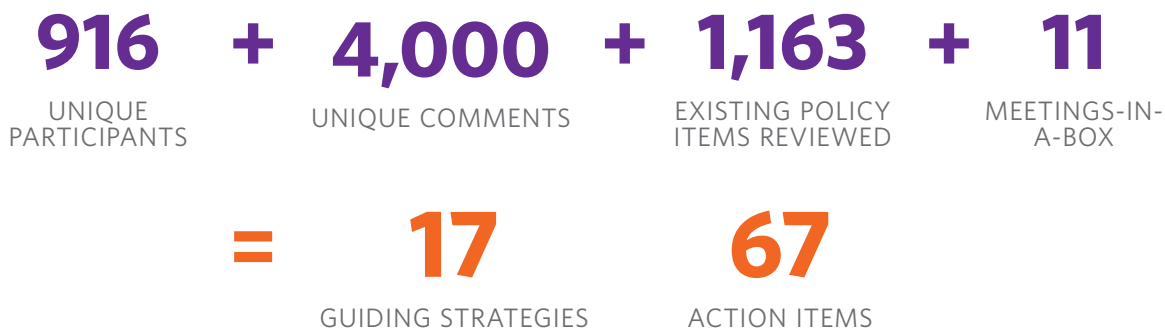
*The Vibrant Communities Movement engaged more than 900 people from across the communities of La Porte County. This involvement was inclusive of the diverse people who live, work, and enjoy the county. The hundreds of participants provided thousands of comments, thoughts, and ideas which directly shaped the Action Agenda.*

### Overview

Developing a countywide vision and strategic plan requires the active participation of a broad cross section of the communities including residents, key stakeholders, elected officials, and business owners. To support the process, the leadership team selected a diverse 24-member steering committee to guide the communities through the process. The group met several times during the duration of the planning process to discuss communication strategies, review ideas generated through the public process, identify potential actions and provide feedback on the initial draft of the Action Agenda.

The Vibrant Communities Movement process included two rounds of public engagement opportunities: 1) the Community Conversation Workshops, 2) the Summit on the Future. Anyone passionate about the future of the communities of La Porte County was invited and encouraged to attend the events. Participants were also able to provide their comments through small meetings-in-a-box or online engagement.

### BY THE NUMBERS





# Community Conversations

The Community Conversation Workshops were conducted in various locations throughout La Porte County and included large, in-person events. These conversations were focused on obtaining feedback and input from as many residents, influencer's and stakeholders from among the communities of La Porte County as possible.



Over the course of several weeks, the planning team collected thousands of unique comments from people across the county. These comments, thoughts and ideas focused on the experience of participants including the built environment as well as community programming and policy. The results provide a comprehensive understanding of the community viewpoint from firsthand perspectives.

## PURPOSE

The Community Conversations were intended to begin the conversation of the future of the communities of La Porte County. The events were designed to inspire participation throughout the process and stimulate discussion on how everyone can achieve a more vibrant and prosperous county. The agenda included a brief introduction from the Leadership Team, an overview of the process, and a series of individual and group activities to generate ideas.



## MAJOR OUTCOMES

The six, two-hour events yielded participation from more than 750 participants and generated thousands of unique comments. Discussion topics included pride in the diverse communities, innovative people, parks and environmental assets, improving amenities, and providing services to all residents. Some of the major outcomes included the following:

- » Over 750 people participated in the Community Conversations, generating more than 4,000 individual comments, thoughts, or ideas.
- » Representatives from all the 15+ communities participated in the events ensuring the entire county was represented in the conversation.
- » Participants were proud of their unique communities and diverse people, identifying both of those topics as assets to the county and opportunities to enhance.





## Summit on the Future

The second round of public engagement culminated in a single event referred to as the Summit on the Future event which took place on December 4, 2019. The Summit was designed to reveal the key findings of the first round of engagement and test the direction for the action agenda. The Action Agenda framework was organized by an overarching theme, three specific goal statements, and a series of strategies supporting each goal. Over 160 people participated in the Summit on the Future identifying their priorities for the future and sharing comments on the vision statement, goal statements, and strategies.

### PURPOSE

The Summit on the Future was designed to reveal the key findings from the Community Conversations and begin discussing the direction for the Action Agenda. The event unveiled the draft vision statement, goal statements, and tested potential strategies to make the communities more vibrant. The agenda included a brief introduction, a trivia activity on La Porte County's unique assets, and a group discussion activity to provide thoughts and recommendations.

### MAJOR OUTCOMES

The one night event drew more than 160 people to the historic La Porte Civic Auditorium to help define the Action Agenda. During the program, participants were asked to prioritize strategies, vote on the vision and goal statements, and provide potential action recommendations to include in the agenda. Major outcomes from the Summit included:

- » 22 distinct table conversations were held to refine the vision statement, goal statements, and strategies to achieve a more vibrant county.
- » Almost half the participants did not attend a Community Conversation representing the growing awareness of the movement.
- » Priority strategies were identified around supporting healthy lifestyles, training a skilled workforce, diversifying housing options, and strengthening Main Streets, among several others.



# 160<sup>+</sup>

PARTICIPANTS

# 480<sup>+</sup>

VOTES CAST

# 24

STRATEGIES  
REVIEWED



## Additional Outreach

Giving everyone in the county the opportunity to participate was a main goal of the steering committee. After reviewing exit questionnaires from the Community Conversations, the steering committee identified several groups of the population who were underrepresented. Additional engagement opportunities were pursued to specifically target these groups and ensure everyone was represented in the Action Agenda.

### MEETINGS-IN-A-BOX

Meeting materials were packaged to allow for small groups to meet and discuss their ideas about the county's assets and opportunities. These meetings-in-a-box were facilitated by the Leadership Team with specific groups who were underrepresented at the Community Conversations. Hundreds of additional ideas were generated from these meetings providing priority focus areas to guide the Action Agenda.

### GROUPS ENGAGED

- » Hispanic / Latinx Community (two meetings held)
- » African American Community
- » LGBTQ Community
- » South County Coalition
- » La Porte Ministerial Association
- » Union Mills Lions Club
- » Middle & High School Students
- » Trail Creek Watershed Partnership
- » Grace Learning Center
- » La Porte County Public Library

### ONLINE ENGAGEMENT

For those unable to attend one of the in-person meetings, the process website allowed participants to share their thoughts online. Online activities mimicked the in-person meetings encouraging people to participate in defining the future of the county. The online activities collected hundreds of unique comments from people around La Porte County.





# Inclusion Strengthens our Communities

The Vibrant Communities central goal is to be transparent and inclusive of all people connected to La Porte County. From the selection of a diverse Steering Committee and the first public meeting onward, the process was open to everyone who was curious to learn more about their community and lend their voice shaping the future. During the process, world events made it clear that racial and social equity must be woven into the La Porte VC movement

During community outreach, the leadership team and Steering Committee made sure that all groups were included in the conversation to help define the county's future. Listening sessions were spread geographically around the county. Everyone was encouraged to attend one or all. To encourage diverse voices, identical sessions were held with groups who rarely get asked. Discussions with African-American leaders identified challenges facing their community and pathways to support new opportunities. Small group conversations in churches with the Hispanic community revealed the impact of improving local governance and connecting people to career advancement resources. Further discussions with youth, homeless, disabled, and LGBTQ members complete the VC vision to represent and improve the quality of life for all.

From planning through implementation, Vibrant Communities will apply the lens of racial and social equity and provide safe spaces for conversation. Many action items identified in the initial agenda reduce barriers and increase opportunities for all La Porte County residents. Ongoing discussions across the many La Porte County communities helped us reach the collective vision and will help to reach our goals.





## Vision Statement

*We envision La Porte County to be a vibrant collection of unique communities that invest in their diverse people, grow their economic and health vitality, and promote innovative leadership through talented citizens for a rich quality of life for all.*



## 3. ACTION AGENDA

*The Vibrant Communities Action Agenda is the first expression of a movement to enhance, preserve, and revitalize the communities of La Porte County. The action items emerged through a six-month process with the greater La Porte County community to identify opportunities, leverage assets, and define a pathway for the future.*

### One Vision

The communities of La Porte County joined together to define a vision for their future. This vision represents the collective input from over 900+ participants and the guidance of the Steering Committee which was revealed and refined at the Summit on the Future. The vision statement is presented on the previous page.

### THE ACTION ITEMS

The action recommendations include a variety of opportunities from specific, physical investments to establishing new programming to support the communities. They include perfecting existing programs and outline new policies to enhance the innovative, diverse people and places in La Porte County. The 67 action items surfaced from the various Community Conversation workshops and meetings-in-a-box held with residents across the county.

### ILLUSTRATING THE COMMUNITIES

La Porte County is home to 15+ unique communities, complete with diverse residents seeking to strengthen the county. During the conversations, these distinct communities engaged in discussion around specific assets and opportunities to support the greater La Porte County community. The Action Agenda has been organized into three thematic sub-chapters to reflect the priorities identified by the communities that influence their quality of life in La Porte County.





# Structuring the Agenda

The Action Agenda recommends a wide variety of projects, policies, and programs to support the vision. The diversity of these actions reflects the three major themes characterizing the communities of La Porte County - People, Prosperity, and Place. During the engagement process, public input from the hundreds of participants defined a set of goals and series of strategies to support the unified vision. Seventeen guiding strategies emerged to focus the action items while achieving the three thematic goals. This structure organizes the 67 action items within the Action Agenda to develop multifaceted methods for enhancing all of the communities.

## AGENDA RELATIONSHIP

The graphic below depicts the relationship between the elements of the Action Agenda from the guiding vision statement to specific action recommendations. This structure is consistent for all three chapters; People, Prosperity, and Place.

### Agenda Element

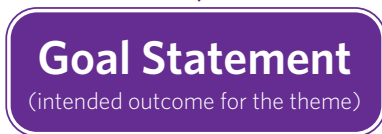
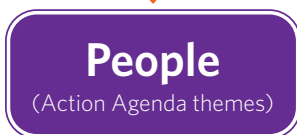
### Plan Reference



*We envision La Porte County to be a vibrant collection of unique communities...*



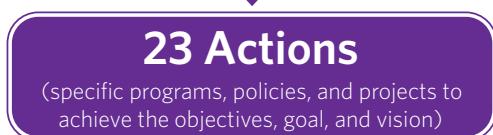
Northwest Regional Cities Initiative



*Welcoming, inspiring, and community focused. We care about all our people...*



Diversify our available housing options, prioritize healthy lifestyles for all people...

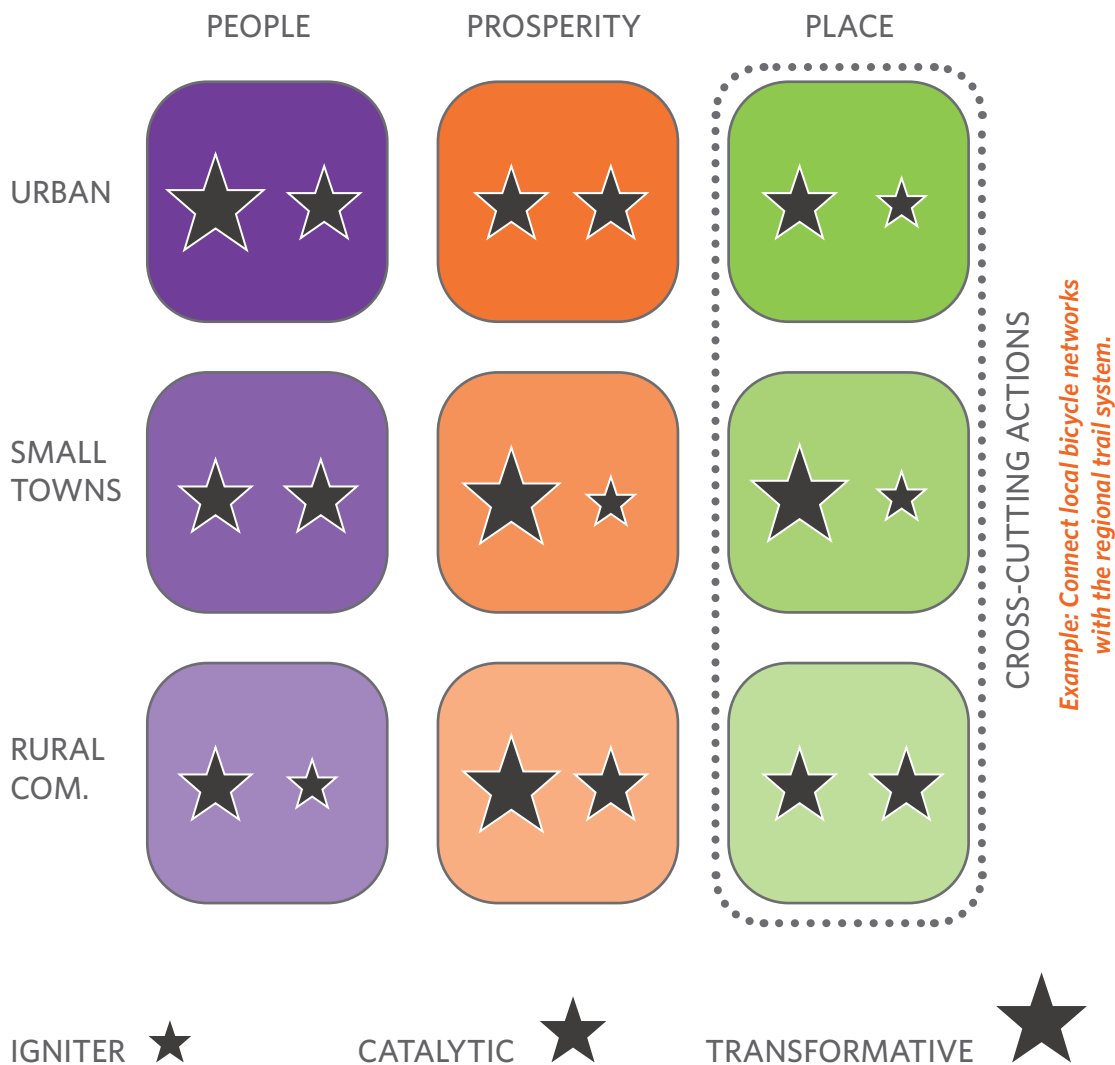


*Conduct a countywide housing inventory and market study.*



## Action Relationship

The Action Agenda balances recommendations that will enhance all of La Porte County's communities. Each community is distinct with unique needs for supporting its diverse people, overall prosperity, and special places. The Action Agenda sought to ensure that all the communities across the county were represented in the initial list of action recommendations. In some instances, actions are capable of influencing all of the community types representing cross-cutting actions that will reshape the county. The graphic below portrays the distribution of recommended actions among the three community types that exist in La Porte County.







## Igniter Actions

The Igniter or priority actions represent programs, policies, or projects that serve as the first implementable actions for the Vibrant Communities movement. These actions promote the launch of the movement through immediate, visible expression based on a set of evaluation criteria. These were identified through the Community Conversations and refined by the Steering Committee as the priority actions for Vibrant Communities.

### PEOPLE

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- 1.1** *Conduct a countywide housing inventory and market study.*
- 1.9** *Support available drug / recovery services and resources.*
- 1.10** *Leverage health and wellness data for strategic investment.*
- 1.17** *Cultivate and support innovative civic leadership.*

### PROSPERITY

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- 2.8** *Expand broadband services throughout the county.*
- 2.10** *Build the Entrepreneurial Ecosystem.*
- 2.13** *Establish a Certified Tourism Ambassador Program.*

### PLACE

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- 3.7** *Establish a targeted redevelopment program for Main Streets.*
- 3.9** *Create a neighborhood garden plot program.*
- 3.16** *Complete local bicycle and pedestrian networks and pursue connections to the regional trail system.*
- 3.18** *Initiate a community branding program.*

*\*The Action Agenda includes additional item recommendations that fall within the "Igniter" category, however the items listed above represent the most prominent actions for launching the movement. Look for the tag throughout the Action Agenda for priority actions!*



## Umbrella Action: Northwest Regional Cities Initiative

*The Northwest Regional Cities Initiative is a four county regional development plan focused on the long-term investment around the South Shore Commuter Line. This strategic plan includes the future extension of the double-track from Gary to Michigan City, greatly improving commuter efficiency from Northwestern Indiana to Chicago. This initiative influences all three themes of the Action Agenda - People, Prosperity, and Place - making this a unique opportunity for the communities of La Porte County.*

### A SIGNIFICANT ACTION

The South Shore double-track project presents a unique opportunity for La Porte County's communities. The implementation of this plan will serve as a substantial economic catalyst for the region providing the foundation for public and private investment that will redefine these connected communities. Encouragement of Transit-Oriented Development (TOD), mixed-use developments surrounding transit stops, will provide diverse housing options, modern office spaces, and walkable activity centers for recreation and entertainment. Connecting these development nodes to neighboring communities offers the ability to live in diverse, unique places while having access to extensive opportunities. Through embracing the potential to influence the county's people, prosperity, and places, supporting the implementation of the double-tracking project is vital to the future growth of La Porte County.

### ALIGNING FOR GROWTH

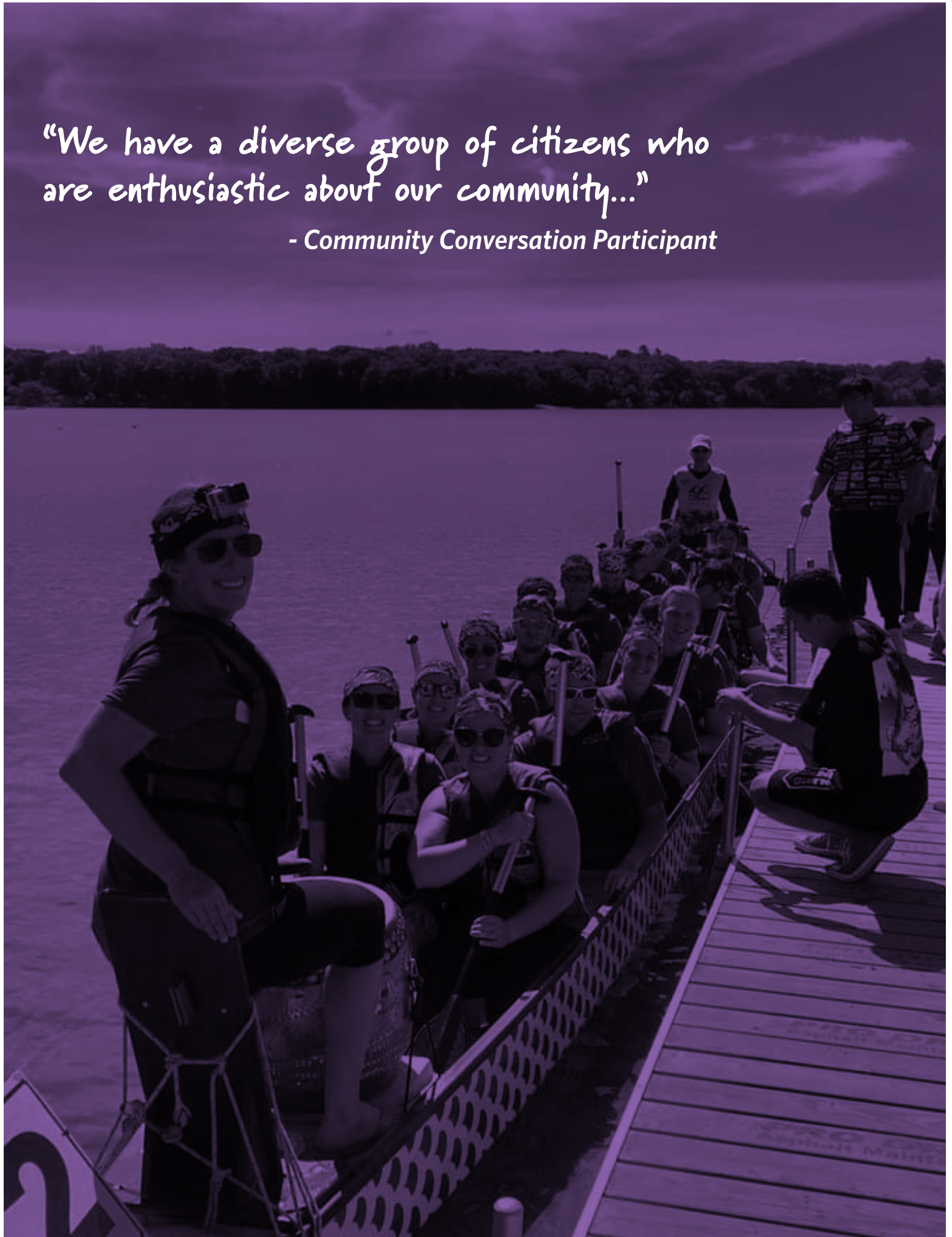
The communities should continue to provide their support in implementing the South Shore double-track project. Connection between the 11th Street Station in Michigan City and neighboring communities will ensure all residents, workers, and visitors are efficiently linked to housing and employment opportunities. Through public transit and the regional trail system, various amenities and attractions will have direct connection to the commuter line. Preparing for transit-oriented development through the implemented zoning regulations and identifying economic incentives will stimulate private investment alongside the project. Further economic growth can be fueled by continuing to improve the Michigan City and La Porte airports. Recognizing missing housing types in the county will support focused investment in workforce and market rate options to provide a diverse range of living affordability.





*"We have a diverse group of citizens who  
are enthusiastic about our community..."*

*- Community Conversation Participant*





# PEOPLE

*The People Chapter of the Action Agenda focuses on topics that benefit the unique individuals who define the communities of La Porte County. The people of La Porte County represent diverse backgrounds full of rich culture that is celebrated through many existing programs across the county. They have a passion for working together to define innovative pathways forward. They see potential in supporting each other by focusing on topics pertaining to health, human services and resources, housing, education, civic engagement, and culture.*

## Goal Statement

*In the communities of La Porte County, we are...*

***Welcoming, inspiring, and community focused. We care about all our people and their future as demonstrated through our investments in education, human services, housing, health and civic engagement.***

## STRATEGY STATEMENTS

To support the goal statement, the greater La Porte County community identified strategies to focus the initial expression of the Action Agenda. These strategies were selected as priority areas to enhance the community and serve to organize the action items for the People Chapter. The six strategies identified are:

- » Diversify our available housing options
- » Prioritize healthy lifestyles for all people
- » Support a culture of lifelong learning
- » Broaden access to essential human services
- » Inspire greater civic engagement and involvement
- » Enliven the presence of our community culture







## 1.1 Conduct a countywide housing inventory and market study.

Housing is a critical factor in the quality of life for a community. Diverse housing types, range of affordability, age of housing stock, and quality are just a few aspects that influence the overall housing market. To position the county for future growth, a two-part approach should be taken to evaluate the existing conditions and analyze potential housing demand. The first step would be the completion of a countywide housing inventory to determine the types of housing and quantity available in the county today. Many of the aspects listed above such as age and quality would be evaluated with the inventory to identify potential missing housing types. The second step would be a market study for the county to identify housing demand based on available inventory including existing stock and planned. Analysis of net unit growth will further monitor the shift in housing units throughout the county to support incentivizing strategic housing construction. The two-part analysis will identify the immediate housing demand to cultivate discussion on funding strategies that will support appropriate development.



## 1.2 Establish a county housing trust fund.

Providing a diverse housing stock takes careful and substantial funding to complete. Private investment can endure a significant portion but the housing types may be limited across types and affordability. Establishing a housing trust fund for the county is one method to provide financial support towards producing more affordable and diverse housing. This fund would allow the county to invest in the construction of affordable and workforce housing options throughout the communities of La Porte County. The investment could take many forms such as direct contributions, property acquisition and resale, or rehabilitation of existing homes or units. Allocating money to a housing trust fund could be done through various programs from development impact fees to tax dollars, allowing flexibility for supporting the long-term success of the program. Partnerships with local agencies and nonprofits would further support the sustainability of the fund through collaboration on information, resources, and additional funding opportunities.

## 1.3 Develop homeownership education programs.

Providing education on key factors of homeownership can improve the personal prosperity of residents investing in their community. A diverse range of covered topics is critical to supporting residents' knowledge of homeownership, whether first time homebuyers or long-time owners. The program should include topics such as one-on-one training for first time homebuyers, foreclosure assistance, mortgage basics, non-traditional home buying, and general maintenance regulations. The communities should leverage existing programs through Housing

### HOPE OF EVANSVILLE

Hope of Evansville is a non-profit organization located in Evansville, IN that provides education, financial assistance, and advocacy for affordable housing within the community. With the help of local partners, this organization provides assistance to over 400 families on an annual basis, striving to ensure everyone has access to resources and services around homeownership. Hope of Evansville has a wide variety of programs from first time homebuyer assistance to foreclosure counseling services to management of affordable housing units. This multi-layered programming provides an essential service on homeownership, supporting all residents to obtain and maintain housing options.

Link: [www.hopeofevansville.org](http://www.hopeofevansville.org)

Opportunities, a local non-profit serving Porter and La Porte Counties, while identifying potential needs within the community to establish new programs. Making these programs readily available to the public is also essential and should be offered through convenient and centrally located places such as schools, community centers, or municipal buildings. Providing education on all forms of homeownership will provide a support structure capable of assisting all residents of La Porte County.

**1.4 Identify and pursue housing incentives across the county.** There are numerous ways to support the construction of strategic housing units for a community including affordable and workforce housing. These incentives can range in regulation and complexity including minimum percentage of units, zoning bonuses (density, heights, etc.), tax abatements and many others. The South Shore Double Tracking project presents a unique opportunity to provide targeted housing options using incentive options through the transit development district. Supporting a diverse portfolio of incentives for housing depends on the community and should respond to the demand without restricting other services. A task force should identify potential incentives to stimulate housing, determining potential influence and impacts the incentives will have on the local economy. Once identified, the communities should implement or support priority incentives that will encourage diversification of housing stock across the county and address blight in established neighborhoods.

**1.5 Strengthen the coordination of early childhood education programs across the county.** Early childhood education builds the educational foundation for youth and leads to lifelong opportunities for success. Many organizations are involved in the development of early childhood programs allowing for collaborative pooling of resources. A community partnership would ensure that all available resources are aligned to provide the highest quality of education. This partnership would include county services, school districts, childcare facilities, and other early childhood organizations to discuss early learning programming and identify potential gaps in education. The partnership would serve as a continuous effort to monitor the outcomes of the county's early learning programming and coordinate funding for a comprehensive system.



#### **DAKOTA COUNTY, MN**

Dakota County, MN understood that early childhood education is a critical community service that requires collaboration from several partners. Understanding a need for coordination, the county established a partnership between the school districts, county services, and non-profit organizations to combine programming resources. The Dakota County Collaborative is the result of that coordination, providing opportunities to ensure all children are prepared and supported for their educational journey. Through the collaborative, families are provided a system of care tailored to the needs of the county's children, providing access to resources and programming for everyone.





**1.6 Implement Safe Routes to School programs.** The Safe Routes to School program encourages youth activity while defining safe and efficient ways for children to get from their neighborhood to school. Establishing this program will promote an active lifestyle through collaborative efforts to identify routes throughout every community. Designated safe routes can also lead to strategic investment in updating pedestrian amenities such as crosswalks, benches, etc, to enhance the streetscape. Communities should coordinate with the National Safe Routes to School Program on best practices and implementation strategies.

**1.7 Create a “Close-the-gap” sidewalk program.** Providing sidewalk connections within neighborhoods with connections throughout the community will support a healthy and active lifestyle. Sidewalks define a safe area for pedestrians to utilize and enhance the streetscape of the community. However, missing sidewalk links can negatively influence activity and can limit accessibility to essential services. Establishing a “Close-the-gap” sidewalk program will identify missing connections, prioritize missing links, and provide funding to install the sidewalks. This program will ensure necessary infrastructure is in place to encourage an active lifestyle and provide linkages between service areas and residential neighborhoods.

**1.8 Coordinate shared-use agreements between communities and schools.** School facilities represent unique opportunities for providing residents with direct access to recreational amenities as they are typically located in central, residential neighborhoods. Establishing shared-use agreements with school districts would open these facilities to public use for the benefit of recreation, expanding upon existing parks facilities, and encouraging year-round active lifestyles. These agreements also present a long-term economic benefit to both cities and school districts by utilizing existing facilities to their potential instead of investing in new construction. The school districts should discuss the terms of the agreement between the county or individual communities taking into consideration maintenance, safety, liability, and other factors. The emphasis of the agreement should encourage the collaboration between the schools and communities on maximizing use of these facilities, especially for year-round opportunities.



#### **SHARED-USE IN INDIANA**

In 2013, the State of Indiana enacted a bill allowing public and nonpublic schools to open their property to community activity. This provides unique opportunities for the community to increase accessibility to recreational amenities. School facilities including playgrounds, gymnasiums, fitness centers, and sports courts provide a variety of recreational amenities within residential neighborhoods. By allowing the community to access these facilities through shared-use agreements, residents will be opened to year-round recreational opportunities promoting a healthier lifestyle for all.

**1.9 Support available drug / recovery services and resources.** Ensuring effective coverage of human services is essential to safeguarding the health of the community especially when it comes to drug / recovery services. Many resources provide guidance on critical service gaps or health challenges facing La Porte County residents. Communication of available services may also pose a challenge to the community accessing assistance. Local organizations such as the Healthcare Foundation of La Porte County have developed programs for consolidating and analyzing drug / recovery challenges and resources within the county. The communities should support existing programs through local health agencies and organizations like the Healthcare Foundation in addressing drug related concerns of residents. New initiatives or funding opportunities will encourage these organizations to expand their services benefiting the overall health of each community and it's people.



**1.10 Leverage health and wellness data for strategic investment.** Providing direct access to human services leads to a greater overall quality of life in a community. These services can vary greatly by place requiring different methods for investing to reduce gaps in services or improve health indicators. Striving to address these services, the Healthcare Foundation of La Porte County and the 2-1-1 program have established consolidated resources on health and wellness services. The foundation has developed a health and wellness database through their Ten 2030 portal providing up-to-date information for La Porte County. The 2-1-1 program serves as a state-wide resource for identifying human service locations and resources anywhere in Indiana. The communities should leverage these resources to develop strategic investment strategies to improve health indicators and human service accessibility. This database should be analyzed to identify the critical needs of each community to support investing in health initiatives and made available to all residents. A unique community profile with wellness goals should be created to align with funding opportunities that improve the overall quality of life.





### **1.11 Establish a county child care payment assistance program.**

Supporting child care services is necessary for working families but can come with significant financial burdens. To deter the financial costs, the communities should establish a child care payment assistance program to provide the community with an option for affording child care services. The program would define criteria for potential applicants including factors such as income level, family size, residency, and others, while providing financial support to offset some of the overall cost. The design of the payment assistance program should supplement the state Child Care and Development Fund vouchers, providing a wider range of coverage for all residents. The program would provide residents accessibility to more affordable child care allowing to sustain employment, pursue educational opportunities, and allocate their finances to other expenses.

**1.12 Strengthen youth summer programming.** Youth summer programs can provide additional educational opportunities, physical activities, and community engagement to youth outside of the academic year. Existing programs such as “City Kids Day Camp” in Michigan City or La Porte’s “Playground Program” and others offer chances for children to remain involved outside the academic school year. However, many of these programs operate in select communities with little coordination across the county. The communities should expand these programs to include a diverse range of opportunities available to all children focusing on providing programming in underserved areas. An inventory of existing programs and their service areas establishes a baseline to develop new or scale successful programming into other communities. Within the inventory, the communities should identify potential barriers for accessing summer programming including transportation, cost, scheduling, etc. Once identified, these programs should be marketed to the greater community, striving to ensure everyone in La Porte County is aware and has access to summer opportunities.

**1.13 Encourage municipalities to become members of the Shared Ethics Advisory Commission (SEAC).** The Shared Ethics Advisory Commission is comprised of community and county governments in Northwestern Indiana who support and promote ethical behavior in the workplace. SEAC provides training on ethical practices and demonstrates a commitment to communities leading by example through their elected officials. Each community should be encouraged to join the commission, with elected officials pledging their commitment to ethical local government. An annual membership goal can focus on increasing commitments from the current standing of ethic officials pledged for the entire county to monitor progress.





**1.14 Pursue additional adult education programming.** Adult education provides numerous opportunities for personal and professional development. Whether it's out of curiosity, for professional development, or for life-skills enhancement, adult education serves a major role for residents of all ages. The communities should support organizations expanding adult education programming to foster a community dedicated to lifelong learning. Compiling an inventory of existing opportunities will provide further insight into deficiencies in adult education and help to identify future program demand. These programs could include soft-skills development (time management, creative thinking, conflict resolution, etc), culinary skills, language education, technology development, and other similar topics outside of specific workforce development. Programming opportunities should expand on current courses and seek to develop a comprehensive portfolio that provides training for various stages of adulthood. Partnerships should be sought with local organizations on tailoring educational programs that support community needs and improve access to educational opportunities. Collaborative efforts should strive to reduce potential barriers for accessing adult programs such as program cost, child-care needs, scheduling, and others.

**1.15 Create a "Safety Town" Education Course.** The "Safety Town" program is a collaborative effort to provide young children with the proper knowledge on neighborhood safety from street crossing to biking to police and fire services. This course will utilize partnerships with public safety services to begin teaching children essential health and safety information by having them interact with a small-scale neighborhood. Volunteer groups from high school students to YMCA members could assist in facilitating the course alongside public safety representatives. Courses can cover a wide variety of topics while building trust between children and public safety service agencies and organizations. This program could be established at a countywide or community level but should be easily accessible to all residents. This could be done through a tour through the county or in central locations such as schools or community centers. The course could also be offered during festivals, fairs, or other large community events as a method for ensuring access to the entire community.





**1.16 Host an annual non-profit summit.** Non-profit organizations influence the community on a variety of levels through direct services, funding opportunities, and advocacy efforts. Hosting an annual summit will encourage continued collaboration between organizations both inside the county and within the region, while providing a venue for direct information sharing. The summit can also celebrate the opportunities nonprofits have supported in the county through their service and collaborative efforts including progress made as part of the Vibrant Communities movement. Nonprofits can discuss aligning resources to further support priorities that are outlined at a local, county, or regional level. The summit should be held in a central location that represents the diversity of community groups to encourage participation from all nonprofit organizations.



**1.17 Cultivate and support innovative civic leadership.** With the Vibrant Communities vision statement comes a call to expand and support opportunities for leadership training, mentoring, diversity, and a transfer of knowledge. Leadership traits from across the communities will improve the overall success of the movement. Training and engagement comes in many forms from the adult and youth programs of Leadership La Porte County, to non-profit management program via the Healthcare Foundation of La Porte, to 4-H & County Extension programs to various leadership training opportunities for organizations or government entities. An inventory of leadership development programs and resources should be created, gaps identified, and strategies defined to fill priority gaps. Preparing next generation leaders is an important focus for enhancing leadership programs to ensure a proper transfer of leadership for all community organizations. Exposure to innovation and social entrepreneur models could be included, as well as soft skill development, community organizing and personal empowerment. Communities should also find ways to support civic volunteers in their work, such as communication, networking, and other resources.



**1.18 Encourage involvement in community mentoring opportunities.** Several mentoring programs currently operate in the county through organizations like the United Way's La Porte County Mentoring Collaborative. These programs cover a range of opportunities for the community to get involved in youth development with the potential for additional growth. Encouraging adults in the community to participate in these programs will develop a more active and engaged community, benefiting the personal and professional development of the county's youth. Efforts should be pursued to support involvement in one of the county's mentoring programs. Adult mentoring opportunities should be



explored to develop a comprehensive system of networking around various professions. Mentoring groups should identify individuals with experience in the fields of entrepreneurship, local government, professional leaders, non-profits, information technology (IT), farming / agricultural, manufacturing, and many others. These opportunities should respond to the diversity of opportunities available in La Porte County while leveraging local expertise in the communities.

**1.19 Form a Council of Neighborhood Associations (CONA).** Neighborhood associations can influence major changes within the community and provide direct communication between residents and community leadership. The communities should establish a Council of Neighborhood Associations to allow for multiple neighborhood associations to assemble, collaborate, and share information. This association would encourage discussion of countywide or community wide concerns, identification of initiatives to support, or educational opportunities about government operations and primary responsibilities of departments. The association could meet as-needed (quarterly, semi-annually, or annually) to support a consistent communication system across the entire community or at a regional level across the county.

**1.20 Establish a community-university partnership with local institutions.** La Porte County has several higher education institutions that provide opportunities for personal and professional development. These institutions serve an important role in the educational development of the county's residents and workforce. The community should develop partnerships with these institutions, specifically Purdue University Northwest, Indiana University Northwest, Indiana University South Bend and Ivy Tech Community College, to provide direct connections between the public school system, employers, workforce, and the resident community. These partnerships should strive to connect educational opportunities between the institutions and the community. Discussion should focus on aligning strategic plans between the institutions and the community to coordinate resources. Identifying support services between institutions and the community will enhance their individual long-term visions through coordination and collaboration.







**1.21 Initiate a Multicultural Outreach Program.** The county is home to a growing, diverse population from numerous cultural backgrounds making each community even more unique. The diversity of its people will continue to make La Porte County a more desirable place to live and raise a family. Developing a multicultural outreach program would allow the county to engage all of its residents in celebrating their cultural backgrounds while also providing services to assist new residents. Welcoming any resident builds upon the sense of place that people share with their community and will encourage greater involvement in programs and events. A welcome package, translation services and education, information sharing, and neighborhood meetings are just a few examples of how the program could engage and unite all residents. This program could also manifest into a cultural resource center that provides a location which celebrates the cultural heritage of all its residents.

**1.22 Assess and market countywide arts & culture amenities.** The communities of La Porte County contain rich cultural attractions and amenities with a vibrant arts community. Marketing these assets outside of the communities could open new tourism opportunities while showcasing community pride in their cultural destinations. Understanding what exists in the county today establishes a baseline for future investment in the unique culture that exists in each community. A countywide arts & cultural assessment would take stock of existing assets, identifying their significance to the community along with efforts to further highlight their importance.

**1.23 Develop a public arts program for placemaking and branding.** An active arts community presents a chance to support local business growth while promoting the county's unique places and attractions. Providing a public arts program will encourage local artists to feature their work around La Porte County and its communities. The program should focus funding towards art projects that identify destinations like downtowns and parks or serve as markers for trail networks and wayfinding. An annual fund should be created to support the continued growth of the arts community while also identifying other funding opportunities like grant applications for potential use. Arts councils or review committees at the local level can monitor the annual fund or become part of a countywide arts coalition who oversees all the communities.

### **MULTICULTURAL OUTREACH**

In Southwest Wisconsin, ensuring everyone has a voice in their community is the mission of the Multicultural Outreach Program. This program serves residents of a five-county region, providing services and workshops to benefit their diverse population. Leveraging local partnerships and the hard work of volunteers, this program serves a vital role in the community. Offering a wide variety of services including transportation, language education, health insurance & financial assistance, and school communications, residents are welcomed and supported through the region's opportunities.

*Link: [www.mcopwi.org](http://www.mcopwi.org)*

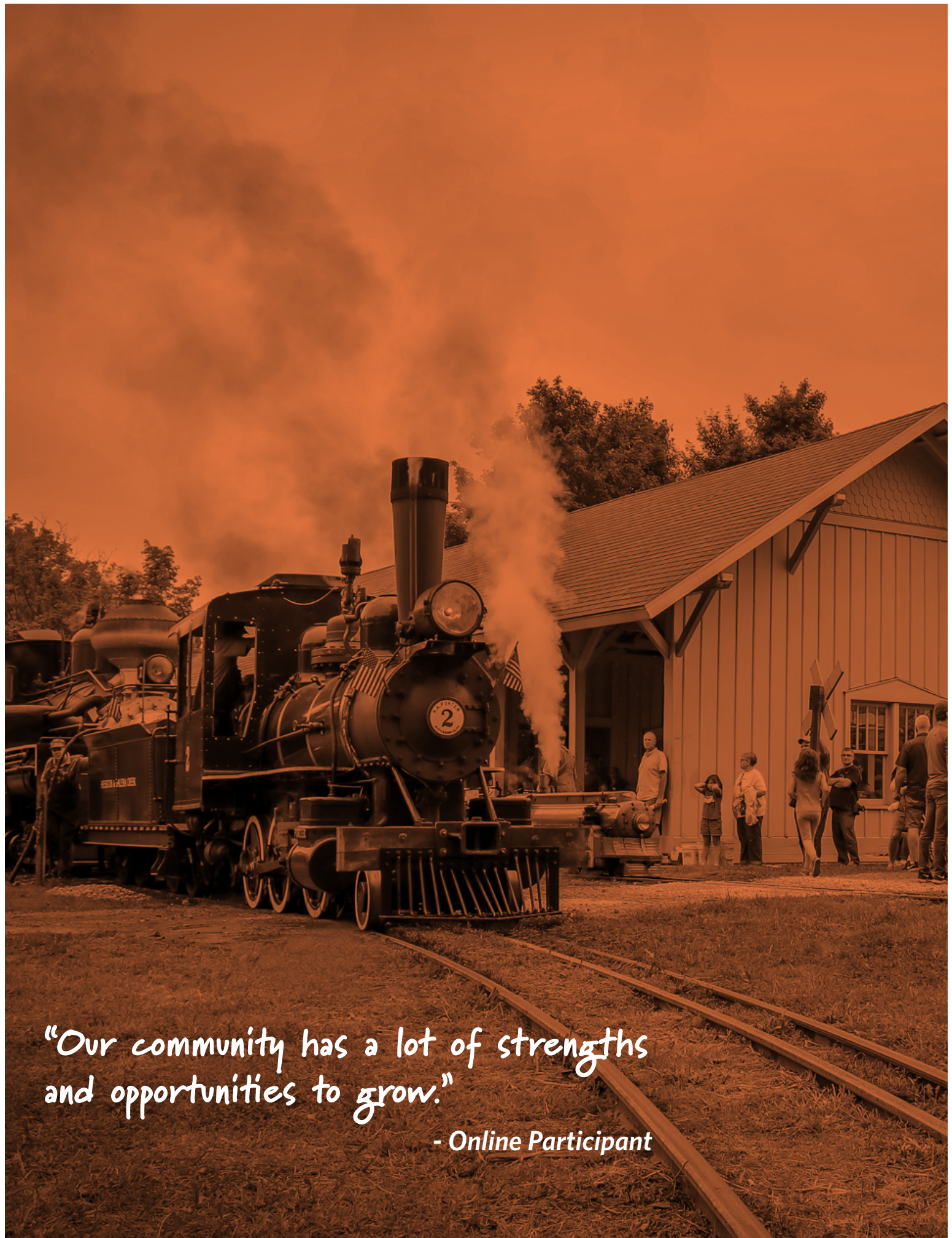
## OTHER ACTIONS TO CONSIDER

The following list includes additional action recommendations that were identified through public engagement and technical research but did not represent priorities for the Vibrant Communities movement. These recommendations offer future opportunities to pursue as actions included in this Action Agenda are completed.

- » Explore adopting proactive rental inspection ordinances.
- » Establish county community centers.
- » Form a Youth Advisory Committee.







*"Our community has a lot of strengths  
and opportunities to grow."*

*- Online Participant*





# PROSPERITY

*The Prosperity Chapter of the Action Agenda focuses on topics around the economic health of the community. From personal prosperity to the regional economy, the communities of La Porte County seek to build roadmaps to success for all residents, workers, and local businesses. Many existing programs and resources are readily available in the county with the potential to benefit all communities through additional promotion. Continued support is shown by investment in topics pertaining to workforce development, infrastructure, local business and entrepreneurship, tourism and attractions, and employment sectors.*

## Goal Statement

*In the communities of La Porte County, we are...*

***Growing a strong and resilient economy for all. In our communities, entrepreneurs find resources, workers find engaging opportunities, and visitors find world-class attractions.***

## STRATEGY STATEMENTS

To support the goal statement, the greater La Porte County community identified strategies to focus the initial expression of the Action Agenda. These strategies were selected as priority areas to enhance the community and serve to organize the action items for the Prosperity Chapter. The five strategies identified are:

- » Train a highly competitive and skillful workforce
- » Modernize and maintain enabling infrastructure
- » Stimulate local business growth and entrepreneurship
- » Promote and strengthen our attractions
- » Grow and maintain our employment sectors





**2.1 Establish a public Inno-Visit program.** Innovative opportunities can serve as best practice examples for implementing new programs in an organization or community. Inno-Visits are sponsored trips designed for people to learn directly from innovative organizations on how they developed and refined their methods for success. Currently, this program is offered through private partnerships within the region and made available to select individuals. The communities should establish a public Inno-Visit program that is made available to elected officials, leaders, and residents of La Porte County to learn about innovative approaches on a variety of subjects. Housing, transit-oriented development, agricultural practices, Main Street development, and community attractions represent a few of the subjects that the community could benefit from pursuing. This program would strive to support the potential implementation or refinement of those best management practices within the local context of La Porte County. The communities should also consider partnerships with local organizations to support Inno-Visit and encourage diverse participation.

**2.2 Support the continued operation of the L.C.Skill UP Network.** The Indiana Department of Workforce Development has developed and initiated the Skill UP Innovation program that supports aligning community resources with the future needs of Indiana's workforce. La Porte County has been selected as one of the recipients for funding to enhance its local talent within the manufacturing industry. The communities should continue to support the Skill UP network and their partners in enhancing local talent development through the implementation of the grant. Opportunities should be explored for connecting the network to permanent funding sources through partnerships with local organizations. Additional grant opportunities can assist the short-term operation while discussion occurs regarding the partnership. Once additional funding is secured, the program should identify potential growth industries outside of manufacturing to develop a more robust workforce initiative.



**2.3 Support the expansion of high school career development partnerships.** Career partnerships can connect high school students with local technical training in a professional workplace. This partnership exposes students to career opportunities and provides on-the-job training prior to their graduation. The success of these partnerships also encourages students to remain in their community by providing a direct connection to local job opportunities. Supporting the continued operation of programs like the Compressed Air Academy and the creation of new partnerships will provide a direct connection between students and employers. These opportunities also enhance the educational environment by balancing traditional coursework with technical development which supports the local economy and broadens student growth.

**2.4 Continue to assist the Ready NWI Partnership.** The Ready NWI Partnership operates under the Center for Workforce Innovations (CWI) to ensure the local labor pool has the skills, knowledge, and credentials to meet employers specific needs. The partnership seeks to collaborate across the region on talent development, connecting students to high school and post-secondary education in Northwestern Indiana. Several programs have been developed through Ready NWI seeing significant growth in the talent pool across the seven county region. The communities should continue to assist with the implementation of initiatives as part of the Ready NWI partnership, focusing investment within La Porte County. Opportunities to collaborate on regional initiatives and identification of local strategies for supporting the partnership should be explored to reinforce their mission.

**2.5 Increase programming for the La Porte County Career and Technical Education Center.** Training opportunities can come from various partnerships with local institutions, government departments, and independent facilities. The La Porte County Career and Technical Education Center is one local asset that provides technical training to adults and high school students. Programming includes welding, career skills, adult education, culinary arts, health and EMT services, and visual & digital communications to name a few. Expanding programming will provide the county with training courses that support the needs of the local workforce. Investment opportunities should provide access from the various communities and school districts to the education center, allowing all residents to pursue educational programs.





## 2.6 Monitor and update the county capital improvements plan.

County infrastructure requires careful monitoring and investment to support the business community and residents. Those investments should align with other initiatives and strategies to promote the long-term prosperity of all communities. The county has established a capital improvements plan identifying priority investments but does not currently have a maintenance cycle to ensure the plan is accurate and up-to-date. The communities should encourage and support the county in continuously monitoring and updating the capital improvements plan on a regular basis. The plan should strive to align investment with other local and regional agencies to support economic growth in La Porte County, such as supporting improvements at our two airports. The plan should strive to align investment with other local and regional agencies to support economic growth in La Porte County. The document should be made available to the public, specifically to leadership in each community to reinforce the relationship between community and county investments.

## 2.7 Host a countywide discussion on water and sewer service.

Countywide sewer and water access has a major impact on the quality of life and economic prosperity for rural communities. Within the county, there are several areas with limited or no access to public sanitary sewer and / or water service. This is a critical factor in determining the growth potential for these communities and ongoing health indicators for residents but requires considerable investment. Planning for the future expansion of water and sewer systems will take time and resources to complete. The communities should begin by hosting a series of discussions regarding utility service in La Porte County. The discussions should serve to initiate the conversation between local leadership and the community on major issues and implications. This should inform residents on the existing status of the infrastructure and an understanding of the immediate and long-term concerns for the county.



## 2.8 Expand broadband services throughout the county.

Personal and professional economic growth relies on access to modern technology such as broadband service. However, in rural communities providing this connection poses challenges and can require significant investment to complete. As this is a major factor in residential services and economic growth, supporting the expansion of broadband services to all communities is essential. The county has established a Rural Broadband Task Force to facilitate discussions around the expansion of broadband services into small and rural communities. The communities should continue to support the efforts of the task force striving to ensure every small town and rural community engages in the conversation. As progress continues, the communities should align recommendations and strategies around broadband expansion to stimulate economic development throughout the county.

## 2.9 Assist homeowners with upgrading utility systems.

Upgrading utility systems is essential for protecting the health and safety of residents but can come at a great personal investment. As these systems age, health risks become more prevalent for the community and can negatively impact property values. The communities of La Porte County should strive to monitor homes with aging infrastructure and support homeowners with upgrading those facilities. Support should be provided with regard to addressing health factors such as lead contamination and accessibility to modern utilities such as water and sanitary sewer service. The communities should identify major issues affecting aging infrastructure and pursue methods for providing financial support in upgrading infrastructure. As systems receive modern upgrades, the focus of the assistance program can shift towards promoting energy efficient utilities in each community.

**2.10 Build the Entrepreneurial Ecosystem.** Ignite the Region; NWI's Strategy to Transform the Region, identified the need to build the entrepreneurial and innovation ecosystem. The creation of a culture of innovation, entrepreneurship and intrapreneurship in La Porte County can be transformational. Besides encouraging co-working and incubation facilities, groups should create and maintain an asset map of local and regional resources that new and existing entrepreneurs can tap into. Any gaps identified should be prioritized and addressed. Helping people connect with information, mentors, research, training and more can increase the number and success of for-profit and non-profit enterprises. Special attention should be paid to increasing access to support for diverse seekers; i.e. women, minorities, and those wanting to start local service businesses as a way of increasing prosperity and solving local problems.



**IGNITE THE REGION**  
Northwest Indiana's Strategy for Economic Transformation

**IGNITE THE REGION**  
The Ignite the Region Initiative represents the first economic development strategy for the seven-county region in Northwestern Indiana. Through an eight-month process, the counties developed a set of five pillars to focus investment and stimulate economic development in the region. Entrepreneurship & Innovation, Business Development & Marketing, Infrastructure, Placemaking, and Talent outline a collection of actions to pursue that will address existing challenges and position the region for successful growth in the coming years.

**Link:** [www.nwiforum.org/economic-initiative](http://www.nwiforum.org/economic-initiative)



**2.11 Encourage youth entrepreneurship and education programs.** Developing youth entrepreneurship and education can develop a variety of professional skill sets while providing unique business opportunities. La Porte County has two partnerships that support programming for young children: the 4-H program through Purdue Extension and the Junior Achievement program. These offer a wide range of topics focused around areas such as agriculture, community, environment, entrepreneurship, and many others. Many of these programs supplement school programs or after school activities, becoming an essential part of the curriculum. Support should be provided to promote these programs while leveraging assets such as Purdue University Northwest and NWI's Ignite the Region strategy around entrepreneurship. This comprehensive approach ensures access to a variety of educational opportunities that can serve as a catalyst for economic growth through young entrepreneurs. The communities should assist in the expansion of programming to provide additional courses or extensions of existing programs. Distinct events could be outlined to support potential funding opportunities and train young entrepreneurs on refining their concept for marketing to investors in the community.

**2.12 Support the completion of the Marquette Plan.** The Marquette Plan represents a major, mega-regional investment in tourism, economic development, natural preservation, and connectivity through the construction of the Marquette Trail. A significant portion of the plan has already been funded or constructed with a few specific connections left to complete the network. The completion of the Marquette Plan will serve as an economic driver for the region, allowing the county and smaller communities to benefit through careful planning and investment. The communities should continue to support the Marquette Plan and strive to align local strategies with the plan recommendations. Supplemental strategies around leveraging Lake Michigan and other blueways should complement the Marquette Plan, providing additional connectivity to communities. Potential investment areas include trail connections, transit-oriented development, community branding / marketing, land use planning, and development incentives.





## 2.13 Establish a Certified Tourism Ambassador Program.



La Porte County is home to many unique communities and natural destinations. Tourism has been a major component in the local economy and will continue to grow with the designation of the national park. Establishing a Certified Tourism Ambassador (CTA) program through the CTA national network is a method to leverage the tourism industry through training residents on the location and background of local destinations. This program would encourage residents, business owners, and community leaders to serve as liaisons between tourists and the local community context. Programming would be led through the La Porte County Convention and Visitors Bureau with support from the national network of tourism ambassadors.

## 2.14 Expand year-round attraction programming.

La Porte County is accessible to numerous attractions both within and outside the county including the Indiana Dunes National Park, Lake Michigan, regional trail network, and others. However, the majority of these attractions are conducive to warmer seasons being primarily targeted at spring, summer or fall months. During winter months, some of these attractions become inaccessible providing less opportunities for activities that serve residents and visitors alike. The communities should strive to expand year-round programming that focuses on a balanced set of activities and amenities. Summer amenities already utilize natural resources to support boating, kayaking, and other water sports. Opportunities for instituting winter programming or developing new facilities / infrastructure for colder weather should be discussed and analyzed. Winter activities such as snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, ice skating, or hiking would provide recreational opportunities from existing community assets. Pilot programs could be pursued to test the viability of identified activities before large-scale implementation throughout the county.

### SONOMA COUNTY, CA

Sonoma County, CA has a bustling tourism industry that plays an integral role in its local economy. Ensuring that visitors have knowledge of and can discover attractions within the community is a primary component of its marketing strategy. Through the Certified Tourism Ambassador program, more than 2,500 residents, hospitality managers, and business owners serve as experts to the visiting community. These members provide tours and support programs that highlight the unique attractions the county offers. As representatives of the community, they ensure that all visitors are provided with a welcoming atmosphere which enhances their community character.

*Link: [www.sonomacounty.com/partners/sonoma-county-cta-program](http://www.sonomacounty.com/partners/sonoma-county-cta-program)*



## 2.15 **Develop an agritourism strategy for the county.**

Agritourism highlights the connection between our communities and the local agricultural industry. These programs help support local farmers by promoting the services available and offering unique interaction experiences such as farmers markets, you-picks, etc. La Porte County is home to numerous farms providing a variety of year-round products that service the local and mega-regional contexts. The county should define an agritourism strategy that identifies and markets local opportunities to engage with the agricultural community. Agricultural groups such as La Porte County Row Crop should be engaged as key partners in developing the strategy and identifying county assets. Marketing could involve the creation of annual festivals or defining trails around specific products grown in the county. Identification of year-round opportunities local farmers can pursue will further enhance agritourism opportunities in the county.

## 2.16 **Explore funding talent retention and attraction incentives.**

Talent retention and attraction of the workforce is a vital piece of the local economy and ensures companies are provided with skilled employees. There are many incentives available that would attract professionals to opportunities in a new community such as La Porte County. NWI's Ignite the Region strategy outlines several strategies focused on talent retention and attraction within Northwestern Indiana. The communities should support the strategies identified within Ignite the Region, leveraging those which are most applicable to La Porte County. This should build off the foundation provided by the Northwest Indiana Forum to highlight strong factors the county offers compared to other communities. Access to healthcare, overall cost of living, educational opportunities, and variety of communities are prevalent in Northwestern Indiana and more locally within La Porte County.



**2.17 Preserve agricultural infrastructure.** La Porte County contains a robust agricultural community that influences the local economy and community character. The agricultural community has been a consistent industry developing new and innovative methods for improving technology and methodology while growing essential products for the nation. Agriculture will continue to remain an important piece of La Porte County requiring sensitive protection of active farmland. The communities should support its agricultural infrastructure through preservation efforts such as a conservation map or identification or prime agricultural land. This can be achieved through leveraging the USDA's Agricultural Land Easements program to establish conservation easements on eligible land that will ensure the long-term preservation of farm tracts. Identified land should balance projected development growth outlined in the county land use plan with agricultural uses to maintain a balance of agricultural and non-agricultural uses throughout the county. The communities should collaborate with state agencies on connecting farmers to conservation easements resources and promoting the benefits of permanently preserving agricultural land.

### OTHER ACTIONS TO CONSIDER

The following list includes additional action recommendations that were identified through public engagement and technical research but did not represent priorities for the Vibrant Communities movement. These recommendations offer future opportunities to pursue as actions included in this Action Agenda are completed.

- » Develop a Countywide Relocation Guide.
- » Launch a County Wayfinding Program.
- » Explore the coordination of library services across the county.



### CONSERVATION EASEMENTS

A conservation easement is a voluntary, legal agreement that limits the use of the land to retain its agricultural value. The USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service has operated a conservation easement program since 2014 that assists local governments, organizations, and private property owners with protecting working agricultural land. Through several easement types, prime farmland or environmental areas can establish legal protection to prevent specific development from occurring. In states such as Indiana, agriculture represents a significant component of its economy and through supporting conservation easements can ensure this remains an active, growing industry.



A green-tinted photograph of a river flowing over rocks, with trees in the background. The text is overlaid on the top left of the image.

*"Exciting to see people so passionate  
about their communities!"*

*- Community Conversation Participant*





# PLACE

*The Place Chapter of the Action Agenda focuses on topics that influence the natural and built environments within La Porte County. Comprised of 15+ communities, the county has a variety of community types that are further enhanced by the natural features surrounding them. By focusing on topics pertaining to development growth, downtown revitalization, neighborhood reinvestment, transportation, community character, and the natural environment, the communities can ensure their variety of places is preserved and enhanced appropriately.*

## Goal Statement

*In the communities of La Porte County, we are...*

***Maintaining vibrant places that celebrate our histories, protect our unique character and preserve our environment. Our investments support connecting our diverse communities through thoughtful growth and revitalization.***

## STRATEGY STATEMENTS

To support the goal statement, the greater La Porte County community identified strategies to focus the initial expression of the Action Agenda. These strategies were selected as priority areas to enhance the community and serve to organize the action items for the Place Chapter. The six strategies identified are:

- » Direct growth and development through thoughtful planning
- » Strengthen our communities Main Streets
- » Reinvest in our established neighborhoods
- » Preserve our natural amenities
- » Improve multi-modal connectivity and efficiency
- » Celebrate our unique community character





**3.1 Support rural communities in adopting the county joint zoning ordinance.** In 2016, La Porte County adopted a joint zoning ordinance for the entire county and incorporated communities. Many small towns and rural communities have adopted this zoning ordinance to guide the land use decisions of their communities based on the countywide Land Development Plan. Aligning all communities with the county zoning ordinance results in a comprehensive vision for land management and streamlines the regulations for private development. Support should be given to remaining communities for adopting the zoning ordinance, emphasizing the benefit of uniform regulations for revitalizing communities and allowing for future growth.

**3.2 Support the creation of a county Grant Facilitator position.** Communities can often face limited resources to provide specific services or support new initiatives and infrastructure. This is even more prevalent in small towns and rural communities with less access to income generation. However, grant funding opportunities are ways in which many of these communities can seek the funding necessary to provide services, enhance communities, and upgrade infrastructure. To assist La Porte County communities, support should be given towards the creation of a County Grant Facilitator position whose primary responsibility is to identify and submit for grant funding for the county. The position would handle the preparation and filing of grant applications along with administering the funds to selected projects in the county. The grant facilitator could assist small towns and rural communities with available funding to support their operations while also seeking investments for larger, regional efforts throughout La Porte County.

**3.3 Establish multi-purpose community attractions in the county.** Community gathering places serve as an intersection between recreational activities, public events, and leisure activities. These places can provide communities with activities for all ages and lifestyles making them valuable to supporting a good quality of life. Establishing several multi-purpose attractions within La Porte County would provide local amenities encompassing year-round activities for residents and visitors. These attractions should include elements such as passive and active park space, restaurant facilities, gathering spaces, educational opportunities, and other similar components. Existing communal attractions like the La Porte County Fairgrounds provide opportunity to expand indoor activities year-round, especially during winter. Discussion should begin on the types of elements the county desires in attractions along with elements that are currently missing today. Once determined, investment strategies can define how these community attractions will be developed with potential locations identified throughout the county.





**3.4 Form an advisory committee to identify priority development corridors.** Development growth requires a careful balance between preserving natural features, maintaining infrastructure, and revitalizing downtowns. Focusing future development will ensure that communities maintain their existing character while maximizing investment from public and private entities. Development focus should take the form of priority development corridors where the communities of La Porte County align interests to guide future development. This process should begin through the creation of an advisory committee comprised of economic development and community organizations to identify priority corridors primed for development. The committee should review recommendations from the county land use plan to identify changes in expected development growth and future potential. These corridors should cover a wide range of employment sectors and development types such as industrial, office, research and development, and others. Particular emphasis should be given to protecting natural features such as streams, lakes, forested areas, and other similar environmental places from development growth.

**3.5 Establish a streamlined permitting process.** Permitting processes for new development can vary significantly from community to community. Developers will take this variation into consideration before pursuing development proposals as the timing and cost associated can reduce the return on investment. As the county has adopted a joint zoning ordinance, a similar streamlined permitting process should be pursued based on the development applications outlined. The communities should collaborate on developing a streamlined process that is user-friendly and easily accessible by the development community. Streamlining the process, while assisting developer's in investing, will also encourage development across all the communities of La Porte County. This ensures that each community has investment opportunities to strengthen their main streets and community character.

**3.6 Create a Main Street Planning Toolkit.** The main street of a community represents the center providing a unique character that emphasizes its history. Revitalizing main streets is important to preserving a community's character, especially in rural communities, and should be done with careful direction and planning. Developing a main street plan is the first step to aligning the community's interests with development potential and can be completed through robust civic engagement. The county should develop a main street planning toolkit that provides the essential information, process, and topics for rural communities to establish planning guidelines. The toolkit would include a step-by-step guide of engaging the community, defining a vision, outlining major concerns, and developing strategies to guide future investment in their main street. The toolkit should include available resources that allows the community to take an active role in defining the future vision for their main street. Upon completion of individual main street plans, communities should advocate for the county to formally adopt these plans to encourage development aligned with key recommendations.





### 3.7 Establish a targeted redevelopment program for Main Streets.

Supporting the redevelopment of main streets is a major endeavor that will require private and public funding. As this balance is critical to the success of redevelopment initiatives, the county should establish a uniform program comprised of supported incentives that focus development in main streets. This targeted redevelopment program would include various levels of incentives such as expedited review, small business facade programs, infrastructure assistance, catalyst project programs, and other similar incentives. This multi-layered program encourages private investment in specific areas by providing various incentives to large and small companies for redeveloping main streets. Concurrent opportunities should be sought to assist in revitalizing communities such as the Main Streets programs through the Office of Community & Rural Affairs (OCRA). The redevelopment program should serve all of La Porte County requiring significant funding to support but would enhance the unique and diverse character of each community allowing appropriate growth and development.



#### **POP-UP JACKSON HILL**

Pop-up Jackson Hill represents an innovative method for providing micro-entrepreneurial space for new business owners. Having served as a vacant lot, the partnership of the Jackson Hill Main Street Management Corporation, the City of Jersey City, the Municipal Utilities Authority, and the Jersey City Redevelopment Agency decided it was time to revitalize the area through local entrepreneurship. Pop-up Jackson Hill provides four converted shipping containers as small-scale, leasable space with free utilities to businesses for a one-year term. This incubation space also serves as a community asset showcasing local art and sustainable practices in the sites design.

**Link:** [www.innovatejc.org/pop-up-jackson-hill](http://www.innovatejc.org/pop-up-jackson-hill)

### 3.8 Initiate downtown “Pop-up Shops” for new businesses.

Vacant downtown spaces can lead to inactivity along the streetscape and detract from the community character. One method to reinvigorate downtown spaces is the creation of a “Pop-up Shop” program in existing vacant space. This program would allow small businesses to lease tenant space in downtowns supporting their start-ups while activating storefronts. These spaces would serve to promote local business growth and opportunity through short-term leases while reducing underutilized buildings. Encouraging a wide variety of tenants will further assist with activating these spaces and should include retail, restaurants, artists, offices, non-profits, or other more specialized businesses. Multiple spaces could be consolidated to allow for transition from initial start-ups to long-term tenants within the central core of the community.

**3.9 Create a neighborhood garden plot program.** Neighborhood aesthetics are an important part of preserving the integrity of a community. Underutilized or vacant land can detract from the overall character and serves as a continuous maintenance concern for residents. Establishing a neighborhood garden plot program allows for the potential reuse and enhancement of underutilized land to the benefit of the community. Neighborhood garden plots provide opportunities for public gathering while providing direct access to healthy food options in any community. The two-fold approach of improving community aesthetics while supplying healthy food is a critical component of neighborhood revitalization. This program would provide the funding and resources necessary to establish neighborhood gardens making it an easy option for neighbors or associations to pursue. Existing programs such as the State Street Church in La Porte could provide educational opportunities on gardening practices for new plots. Neighborhood residents or an association could monitor the garden plot long-term to ensure its maintained properly and accessible to the entire community. Initial investments should focus in neighborhoods or communities who have less accessibility to healthy food options, specifically food deserts in the county.



**3.10 Upgrade park facilities with modern and universal design elements.** Park accessibility has many health and recreational benefits to neighborhoods and communities overall. These facilities should encourage use by all residents of the community allowing for a variety of opportunities and activities through modern amenities. Ensuring parks are equipped with universal design in mind allows for an inclusive parks system to support the entire community. The initiative should assist in upgrading existing parks facilities to incorporate universal design when it comes to accessibility and equipment design along with modern design features and amenities. Upgrading facilities should strive to provide a diverse mix of facilities that represents or exhibits the unique characteristics of the community in which its located. Partnerships and funding opportunities at the local, county, or state level should be sought to assist with critical areas, specifically older parks with deteriorating facilities or minimal facilities.

**3.11 Establish a volunteer code enforcement program.** Vacant and neglected properties create numerous concerns for a community deteriorating the character or causing safety issues. However, pursuing corrective action on these properties can be challenging based on the capacity of available code enforcement officers. Establishing a volunteer code enforcement program is an efficient and cost-effective option to reducing neighborhood blight and neglect. Residents would volunteer to conduct drive-by inspections of properties around the community, identifying potential violations. These residents would be trained and report back to the code enforcement officers of violations allowing the officer to issue citations. This opportunity allows residents to engage in supporting their community while providing additional capacity to the code enforcement team without incurring additional costs.







**3.12 Explore incentives to stimulate neighborhood and community revitalization.** Neighborhood revitalization can be encouraged through the use of several incentive opportunities to residents and the development community. Appropriate incentives should be reviewed in detail to ensure protection of the financial status of the community. The communities should explore the various types of revitalization incentives for neighborhood development to support the diverse characteristics of the community. Incentives should encourage both new construction and rehabilitation of existing homes in unique or historic neighborhoods. The county should leverage the four Opportunity Zones, designated census-tracts to stimulate private investment, to encourage neighborhood revitalization in urban communities. Three opportunity zones are located within Michigan City with the fourth zone in the City of La Porte. Special areas outside of these zones could be designated for incentive types to further encourage focused redevelopment and investment in urban context or in small towns and rural communities.

**3.13 Update county zoning regulations pertaining to open spaces.** Accessibility to public open spaces and protection of natural features is vital to the quality of life for communities. Natural features have a variety of regulations to ensure preservation and incorporation into the community but neighborhood open spaces aren't always outlined. The county should pursue updates to the joint zoning ordinance to require the dedication of neighborhood open space with new development. This regulation would require minimum open spaces based on residential units or commercial development to encourage the expansion and connection of the parks system. Additional requirements for park amenities or design could be incorporated to encourage appropriate use of passive and active open spaces.

**3.14 Pursue strategic open space acquisition.** To support the expansion of the open space network, the communities of La Porte County should pursue strategic acquisition of property. Open space corridors, greenway networks, and natural features should be identified for current ownership status and missing connections. A strategy should be developed for pursuing targeted acquisition of property based on various factors including regional or mega-regional investments, walkability from neighborhoods to parks, and qualities of natural areas like unique flora and fauna. Coordination with organizations like the Shirley Heinze Land Trust are encouraged to protect distinct environmental areas with connections to the larger open space network. The strategy should strive to provide each community with direct access to local parks and trail systems with major connections to other county or community assets.



### **NEIGHBORHOODS IN BLOOM**

The Neighborhoods in Bloom Initiative has served the City of Richmond, VA for over 20 years in revitalizing neighborhoods. Through a set of evaluation criteria, the city identified the conditions and needs of each neighborhood to develop specific investment strategies. Collecting data, inspecting conditions, and engaging with residents provided a detailed understanding of neighborhood limitations to focus revitalization. Once identified, the city and non-profit partners pursued strategic intervention to address blight and increase homeownership throughout the community. Methods included purchase of blighted homes, rehabilitation and resale, homeownership education programs, down payment assistance, and renovation or repair assistance.

Link: [www.richmondgov.com/neighborhoods/index.aspx](http://www.richmondgov.com/neighborhoods/index.aspx)



### 3.15 Monitor and refine the countywide public transportation study.

Public transportation in a county setting is critical to ensuring access to essential services and employment opportunities. Many small towns and rural communities have limited access to available services which can pose a challenge to residents. Understanding the current limitations in the public transportation system will allow for communities to invest in appropriate options that will support their residents. Northwestern Indiana pursued a comprehensive study of public transportation services in La Porte, Porter, and Lake Counties developing recommendations for improving and enhancing service. The communities should monitor the strategies identified in the study and pursue strategic investment in appropriate opportunities. As recommendations are funded, the communities should update strategies to build momentum around the public transit system and provide further multi-modal options in the county. First-mile, last-mile options will ensure the public transit system has efficient connections throughout the county. Bike connectivity and accessibility will serve as a critical transportation option for La Porte County and should ensure direct connections with the regional transit system through completed network or bike sharing opportunities.



### 3.16 Complete local bicycle and pedestrian networks and pursue connections to the regional trail system.

The regional trail system provides direct connections to communities across Northwestern Indiana and serves as a recreational amenity to residents. However, these trail networks are not always integrated into the local bicycle and pedestrian network. The communities of La Porte County should provide connections between local sidewalk and bike trail systems and the regional trail system. Each community should identify missing connections between existing or planned regional trails and the local network. Connections should be prioritized to link major institutions or service areas with residential neighborhoods. Once identified, the communities can support the completion of local connections to allow for a comprehensive bicycle and pedestrian system serving all of Northwestern Indiana.





**3.17 Analyze and refine the Transit Triangle service.** The Transit Triangle is a pilot transportation partnership to provide connections between Michigan City, the City of La Porte, and Purdue Extension Northwest in Westville. The triangle provides two potential routes that operate on a fixed schedule at specific locations throughout each of the three communities. As the Transit Triangle has been in operation for several years, an analysis should be completed on the operation of the system to identify potential alterations to the service. This analysis should identify key recommendations for enhancing ridership with the Transit Triangle and maximizing connections between the communities. Strategic plans for Purdue University Northwest and Land Use Plans for Michigan City and La Porte should be reviewed to support transportation recommendations. Additional upgrades should be reviewed such as designated bus stop signage and rider amenities.

**3.18 Initiate a community branding program.** The communities of La Porte County vary in many characteristics from rural communities to urban cities. Each community has developed a unique sense of place that identifies the character of its history and culture. Branding each community for its individual characteristics is a way to celebrate the diversity of places that define La Porte County. To support this effort, the county should develop a community branding program that outlines a process for engaging residents in discussing and defining what makes each community unique. The program could lead to an umbrella brand for the county that identifies each designation and promotes the features that comprise each unique community. The county boundary should also serve to promote the quality of place La Porte County offers through welcoming visitors and residents to the communities. Major highways, county roads, and the toll road could utilize gateway designs to define the boundaries of communities and indicate amenities or attractions in La Porte County.



### **TRU TRANSIT MINNESOTA**

Tru Transit is a dial-a-ride transportation service that serves a three-county region in southern Minnesota. Standing for “Town, Rural, Urban Express”, the service strives to connect unserved areas with transportation options for residents of all ages. Transportation operates through an on-demand basis, picking up and dropping off residents at locations of their choice for a set fare each way. Operating a set of buses, Tru Transit provides an essential service to rural communities through connecting communities to essential services within the region.

*Link: [www.truetransit.org](http://www.truetransit.org)*



**3.19 Update the existing historic inventory.** Historic properties and sites play a vital role in defining the community character. These locations require careful monitoring to ensure they are preserved and protected for future generations. Maintaining a proper inventory of historic structures and sites can assist with preservation efforts through local development regulations or funding opportunities for revitalization. The last countywide inventory was conducted in 2002, almost 20 years ago. The county should pursue an update to the historic inventory focusing on updating information pertaining to previously designated properties while identifying new sites and structures throughout the county that should be protected. Collaboration should occur between the county historical society and local community historical organizations to ensure a comprehensive update of the inventory.



**3.20 Form a regional gateways community partnership.** The designation of the Indiana Dunes National Park positions the communities of Northwestern Indiana for new growth opportunities. These gateway communities, located adjacent to a national attraction, serve as tourist hubs for visitors of the national parks system and can provide a variety of services to support the tourism industry. Aligning resources around the national park will be critical to leveraging economic and development opportunities for the region. The communities should form a regional partnership with other gateway communities to coordinate efforts around leveraging the national park. This partnership could include Michigan City, City of La Porte, City of Valparaiso, Town of Chesterton, Town of Porter, and others in the region. Once established, the partnership should seek to develop a strategic plan around best management practices for positioning available resources towards supporting the Indiana Dunes National Park.

### OTHER ACTIONS TO CONSIDER

The following list includes additional action recommendations that were identified through public engagement and technical research but did not represent priorities for the Vibrant Communities movement. These recommendations offer future opportunities to pursue as actions included in this Action Agenda are completed.

- » Develop a “Community of All Ages” Plan.
- » Initiate a Neighborhood Capital Fund to support neighborhood revitalization.
- » Create a Neighborhood Association / Homeowners Association toolkit to form neighborhood organizations.





## 5. IMPLEMENTATION

*The Implementation Chapter of the Action Agenda outlines the implementation strategies for achieving the identified action items and building the Vibrant Communities Movement movement. This Action Agenda represents the first expression of the movement, with the intent to adapt and evolve as items are implemented. This “living” movement will experience endless opportunities to strengthen, revitalize, and advance the communities of La Porte County.*



### Implementing the Action Agenda

The Action Agenda for La Porte County presents the road map for realizing the community’s shared vision for the future of the county. The success of the movement will be determined through the commitment to ongoing implementation of the action items referenced in this plan and future actions identified by the community. The nature of the Action Agenda is to serve as the foundation for the growing collaborative movement, promoting change through the dedicated efforts of each community. These individuals, organizations, and groups will each serve an instrumental role in the implementation of the action items.

Many individuals and organizations have begun working together during the planning process to develop the Action Agenda. Over 900 unique individuals representing a wide range of backgrounds and interests served on the committee, volunteered, or attended meetings to provide insight on La Porte County’s future. There is growing awareness of the Action Agenda at a local and regional level. Now is the time to harness community engagement to begin implementing the shared vision for La Porte County.





# Who can get involved in implementation?

The Action Agenda is intended to be used often by public, private and non-profit organizations for guiding decisions that impact the future of La Porte County's communities. Everyone has the opportunity to assist in implementing the action recommendations. The following list includes a summary of how decisions and processes could align with the vision, goals, and strategies of the Action Agenda.

## EVERYONE

All are welcome in the Vibrant Communities movement and have a role in the implementation of action items. There will be countless opportunities to lead or support efforts which promote change in La Porte County. Reach out to the implementation committee to share your thoughts on how you'd like to get involved.

## PRIVATE BUSINESS

The business community in La Porte County is defined by an innovative spirit. Building the prosperity of the county will have direct results for private business owners by enhancing return on their investments. These owners or developers should be cognizant of and complement the recommendations of the agenda.

## INSTITUTIONS

Local and regional institutions serve an important role in providing resources to the community. Their support in managing services or supporting the launch will have lasting impacts on the implementation efforts of the Action Agenda. Aligning strategic visions and planning with the recommendations strengthens the partnerships that will achieve the unified vision for the future.

## ELECTED OFFICIALS

Serving as decision-makers for local policy brings with it the power to shape community resources. Developing a unified vision for all the communities of La Porte County ensures the implementation of identified actions align with community priorities. Incorporating this vision and the recommendations into local work programs and community planning aligns local priorities with the county.

## ORGANIZATIONS

Local organizations have developed lasting partnerships within the county and region. Many of these organizations will serve vital roles in the implementation efforts of the Action Agenda. As new partnerships are formed, opportunities will arise to further develop the action items while supporting the mission and values of each organization.

## ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMS AND BUDGETS

Organizations should be cognizant of the recommended action items outlined in the agenda when preparing annual work programs and budgets. This also includes considering the Action Agenda when making important policy and financial decisions that impact the communities of La Porte County.

## COMMUNITY PLANNING

Community planning efforts, at a local, county or regional level, should align with the vision, goals, and strategies of the Action Agenda. Several of the Place action items directly influence community planning initiatives that will guide future growth in the county.

## CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS PLAN

The county and local city capital improvement plans (CIP) should align investment to complement the recommendations of the Action Agenda. This investment leads to supporting the visible completion of action items such as park enhancement, trail development, or neighborhood revitalization.

## Implementation Actions

The Action Agenda includes several direct recommendations to support the implementation of the plan. These actions emerged through discussion with Steering Committee and Leadership Team to outline methods for supporting the long-term success of the movement.

**4.1 Develop an outreach toolkit.** Communication is critical to expanding the Vibrant Communities movement. Developing a communication and outreach strategy along with promotional material will guide the movement into implementation. This strategy should include the development of an outreach toolkit comprised of presentation material, on-going communication strategies, and outreach goals for the movement. This strategy should utilize a variety of print and visual media to convey the message of the Vibrant Communities Movement to potential stakeholders with supplemental material for promoting milestones and major updates to the community. Outreach messaging should remain consistent during the initial engagement to ensure consistent messaging of first steps and priority action items.



**4.2 Facilitate a socialization tour.** Vibrant Communities is a living movement to pursue change across the communities of La Porte County. Many of the action items outlined in the agenda will require partnership and support from organizations around the county. The socialization tour should serve as an introduction to the Action Agenda with an emphasis on how various communities and organizations can get involved in implementing the movement. The tour should include one-on-one meetings and group discussions on building the movement around the initial Action Agenda. Developing a speakers bureau will train ambassadors on the key messages to engage groups in the movement. Key partners should be sought to champion action items aligned with their strategic plans and oversight responsibilities with opportunity to further refine the actions outlined in the initial expression.

**4.3 Outline a coordination structure for implementing the Action Agenda.** As the Vibrant Communities Movement is an on-going effort, coordination will play a vital role in the implementation of the movement. A coordination structure will be necessary to monitor the development of the action items and manage the coordinated implementation strategies. This structure should determine leadership either through a designated Vibrant Communities Coordinator position or Leadership Team comprised of select community leaders. Consistent meeting schedules should be outlined to periodically review the status of the movement, announce major accomplishments, and discuss next steps or upcoming events.



**4.4 Identify a series of indicators to measure and monitor the movement.** Monitoring the progress of the Action Agenda is essential to guiding the direction of the movement. Determining successful implementation of the action items involves understanding of the measures of success the community will experience. These measures should be based on a series of indicators selected by the leadership structure, outlined in action 4.3, to compare existing conditions with the outcomes of action items. These indicators need to cover a broad spectrum focused around the strategies and goals of the Action Agenda. The movement should identify critical success indicators early in implementation to ensure the all actions are appropriately evaluated.

**4.5 Develop an ambassador program.** Promotion of the movement will lead to the direct support of implementing items in the initial Action Agenda. The movement represents the broad range of communities in La Porte County and should be reflected in the ownership of action items. This reflection of the community should be presented through an ambassador program for the Vibrant Communities Movement. The community ambassadors would encourage participation in the efforts of the initial Action Agenda, serving as liaisons between the movement and community. The program should train volunteer ambassadors on the intent of the movement and communication of on-going efforts being pursued through Vibrant Communities.

**4.6 Pursue additional funding opportunities to maintain the movement.** The Vibrant Communities Movement is intended to evolve over time. As actions are completed, new actions will arise or occur naturally to support continued change. The initial action agenda along with future actions will require funding from various sources to ensure their realization. The leadership structure for the movement should continue to monitor and seek funding opportunities that align with action items. Partnership funding should be sought with local and regional entities supporting community enhancement in Northwestern Indiana. Grant opportunities such as the Stellar Communities Grant or through the National Association of Counties (NACO) can provide specific support opportunities to implement action items.

**4.7 Assess and update the action agenda regularly.** Vibrant Communities is intended to achieve the actions over time. Some actions are ongoing or will take little time to implement while others may take years to design, fund, and pursue. As this movement progresses forward, regular assessments and updates to the Action Agenda are necessary to ensure it represents current priorities. This assessment can take the form of an annual review or be conducted during milestone years such as year-one, five, ten, etc. Conducting this process will allow the implementation committee to evaluate progress made, celebrate accomplishments, and identify new action recommendations to support.







# Action Arrangement

The table beginning on the following page provides a summary of the implementation information for the 67 action recommendations. Each action recommendation includes a series of criteria and resources to support implementation. These include timeframe for completion or initiation, potential partners, funding opportunities, strategy or objective addressed, community impact, level of control and community type the action will impact. A comprehensive list and description of each is included on this spread.

## COMMUNITY IMPACT

**Igniter** actions that allow for quick implementation and immediate results in the community.

**Catalytic** actions that will have greater impact leading to widespread change across the county.

**Transformative** actions that will redefine all of the communities with the potential for regional impact.

## LEVEL OF CONTROL



**Control** actions that are under the control of existing partners in the community to implement.



**Influence** actions that require additional partners to implement or resources to design / fund.



**Highlight** actions that require collaboration of multiple partners or significant funding to implement.

## TIMEFRAME

**Short-term** actions targeted for implementation within 0 - 3 years.

**Mid-term** actions targeted for implementation within 3 - 6 years.

**Long-term** actions targeted for implementation beyond 6 years.

**Ongoing** actions that are currently underway or will require continuous implementation.

## COMMUNITY TYPE

**Urban** communities governed by a city council with a similar character as Michigan City or La Porte.

**Small Town** communities governed by a town council with a similar character as Westville or Kingsford Heights.

**Rural Community** communities governed by the county with a similar character as Hanna or Rolling Prairie.

**Cross-cutting** influences all of the community types listed above, with the potential for regional influence

## COORDINATING PARTNERS

These partners are organizations in the community who are currently working towards implementation of the action item or will have substantial involvement in its implementation. These partnerships can evolve over time, collaborating with additional organizations striving to achieve the action recommendations.

## FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Potential funding sources to assist in implementing the action recommendation. These includes sources at the local, state, and federal level and serve as an initial list of potential funds.



## STRATEGIES

Each action recommendation will respond to one or more strategies, the objectives for achieving the goal of each theme and the community vision. These strategies are organized by People, Prosperity, and Place and are identified by individual icons within the implementation table.

### PEOPLE



DIVERSIFY OUR AVAILABLE HOUSING OPTIONS



BROADEN ACCESS TO ESSENTIAL HUMAN SERVICES



PRIORITIZE HEALTHY LIFESTYLES FOR ALL PEOPLE



INSPIRE GREATER CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND INVOLVEMENT



SUPPORT A CULTURE OF LIFELONG LEARNING



ENLIVEN THE PRESENCE OF OUR COMMUNITY CULTURE

### PROSPERITY



TRAIN A HIGHLY COMPETITIVE AND SKILLFUL WORKFORCE



PROMOTE AND STRENGTHEN OUR ATTRACTIONS



MODERNIZE AND MAINTAIN ENABLING INFRASTRUCTURE



GROW AND MAINTAIN OUR EMPLOYMENT SECTORS



STIMULATE LOCAL BUSINESS GROWTH AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

### PLACE



DIRECT GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT THROUGH THOUGHTFUL PLANNING



PRESERVE OUR NATURAL AMENITIES



STRENGTHEN OUR COMMUNITIES MAIN STREETS



IMPROVE MULTI-MODAL CONNECTIVITY AND EFFICIENCY



REINVEST IN OUR ESTABLISHED NEIGHBORHOODS






































CELEBRATE OUR UNIQUE COMMUNITY CHARACTER





# PEOPLE

ID	ACTION RECOMMENDATION	STRATEGIES	COMMUNITY IMPACT	LEVEL OF CONTROL	TIMEFRAME
 1.1	Conduct a countywide housing inventory and market study.	 	<i>Igniter</i>		Short-term
1.2	Establish a county housing trust fund.	 	<i>Transformative</i>		Long-term
1.3	Develop homeownership education programs.	 	<i>Catalytic</i>		Mid-term
1.4	Identify and pursue housing incentives across the county.	 	<i>Catalytic</i>		Long-term
1.5	Strengthen the coordination of early childhood education programs across the county.	 	<i>Catalytic</i>		Mid-term
1.6	Implement Safe Routes to School programs.	 	<i>Igniter</i>		Short-term
1.7	Create a “Close-the-gap” sidewalk program.	 	<i>Catalytic</i>		Mid-term
1.8	Coordinate shared-use agreements between communities and schools.	 	<i>Igniter</i>		Short-term
 1.9	Support available drug / recovery services and resources.	 	<i>Igniter</i>		Ongoing
 1.10	Leverage health and wellness data for strategic investment.	 	<i>Igniter</i>		Mid-term
1.11	Establish a county child care payment assistance program.	 	<i>Catalytic</i>		Mid-term
1.12	Strengthen youth summer programming.	 	<i>Catalytic</i>		Short-term

## STRATEGIES




The objectives of the Action Agenda that the specific action will address; organized by People, Prosperity, and Place.

FULL LIST ON P.65

## COMMUNITY IMPACT

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## LEVEL OF CONTROL

-  *Control* actions that are under the control of existing partners.
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COMMUNITY TYPE	COORDINATING PARTNERS	FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES
<b>Cross-cutting</b>	La Porte County Office of Economic Development	Indiana Housing & Community Development Authority (IHCDA); Lilly Endowment Inc.
<b>Cross-cutting</b>	County Government; La Porte County Office of Economic Development	Indiana Housing & Community Development Authority (IHCDA); State and Federal Grants
<b>Cross-cutting</b>	United Way of La Porte County; Neighborhood Associations	Indiana Housing & Community Development Authority (IHCDA); State and Federal Grants
<b>Cross-cutting</b>	La Porte County Office of Economic Development; County and Local Governments	N/A
<b>Cross-cutting</b>	United Way of La Porte County; School Districts; Private Businesses	N/A
<b>Cross-cutting</b>	School Districts; Neighborhood Associations	Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT)
<b>Urban / Small Towns</b>	County and Local Governments	Indiana Housing & Community Development Authority (IHCDA); Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT)
<b>Cross-cutting</b>	Local Governments; School Districts	N/A
<b>Cross-cutting</b>	Healthcare Foundation of La Porte; United Way of La Porte County	N/A
<b>Cross-cutting</b>	Healthcare Foundation of La Porte	N/A
<b>Cross-cutting</b>	United Way of La Porte County	Indiana Family and Social Services Administration
<b>Cross-cutting</b>	La Porte County Family YMCA	Lilly Endowment Inc.

## TIMEFRAME

**Short-term** within 0 - 3 years.  
**Mid-term** within 3 - 6 years.  
**Long-term** beyond 6 years.  
**Ongoing** currently underway.

## COMMUNITY TYPE


































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**Cross-cutting** influences all of the community types listed above, with the potential for regional influence

**IGNITER ACTIONS**  
 Priority actions identified by the Steering Committee and Leadership Team.





# PEOPLE

ID	ACTION RECOMMENDATION	STRATEGIES	COMMUNITY IMPACT	LEVEL OF CONTROL	TIMEFRAME
1.13	Encourage municipalities to become members of the Shared Ethics Advisory Commission (SEAC).	 	<i>Igniter</i>		Short-term
1.14	Pursue additional adult education programming.	 	<i>Catalytic</i>		Mid-term
1.15	Create a "Safety Town" Education Course.	 	<i>Igniter</i>		Short-term
1.16	Host an annual non-profit summit.	 	<i>Igniter</i>		Short-term
1.17	Cultivate and support innovative civic leadership.	 	<i>Igniter</i>		Short-term
1.18	Encourage involvement in community mentoring opportunities.	 	<i>Catalytic</i>		Short-term
1.19	Form a Council of Neighborhood Associations (CONA).	 	<i>Catalytic</i>		Short-term
1.20	Establish a community-university partnership with local institutions.	 	<i>Catalytic</i>		Mid-term
1.21	Initiate a Multicultural Outreach Program.	 	<i>Catalytic</i>		Mid-term
1.22	Assess and market countywide arts & culture amenities.	 	<i>Catalytic</i>		Mid-term
1.23	Develop a public arts program for placemaking and branding.	 	<i>Catalytic</i>		Short-term

## STRATEGIES




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FULL LIST ON P.65

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COMMUNITY TYPE	COORDINATING PARTNERS	FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES
<b>Cross-cutting</b>	Unity Foundation of La Porte County	N/A
<b>Cross-cutting</b>	La Porte County Family YMCA	Lilly Endowment Inc.
<b>Cross-cutting</b>	County and Local Governments; La Porte County Family YMCA; Neighborhood Associations	Indiana Afterschool Network
<b>Cross-cutting</b>	Healthcare Foundation of La Porte; Unity Foundation of La Porte County	Healthcare Foundation of La Porte; Leadership La Porte County
<b>Cross-cutting</b>	Healthcare Foundation of La Porte; Leadership La Porte County; United Way of La Porte County; Leadership La Porte County	Healthcare Foundation of La Porte; Leadership La Porte County; United Way of La Porte County
<b>Cross-cutting</b>	United Way of La Porte County; Junior Achievement of Northern Indiana	N/A
<b>Urban / Small Towns</b>	Neighborhood Associations	N/A
<b>Cross-cutting</b>	Purdue University Northwest; Ivy Tech Community College; County and Local Governments	N/A
<b>Cross-cutting</b>	La Porte County Convention and Visitors Bureau; Neighborhood Associations	Indiana Humanities; Lilly Endowment Inc.
<b>Cross-cutting</b>	La Porte Economic Advancement Partnership; Local Arts Council	Indiana Humanities; Indiana Arts Commission; Lilly Endowment Inc.
<b>Cross-cutting</b>	County and Local Governments; Neighborhood Associations; Main Street Associations	Unity Foundation of La Porte County; Indiana Housing & Community Development Authority (IHCD); Lilly Endowment Inc.

#### TIMEFRAME

<b>Short-term</b>	within 0 - 3 years.
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**IGNITER ACTIONS**  
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# PROSPERITY

ID	ACTION RECOMMENDATION	STRATEGIES	COMMUNITY IMPACT	LEVEL OF CONTROL	TIMEFRAME
2.1	Establish a public Inno-Visit program.		<i>Catalytic</i>		Short-term
2.2	Support the continued operation of the L.C. Skill UP Network.		<i>Catalytic</i>		Ongoing
2.3	Support the expansion of high school career development partnerships.		<i>Catalytic</i>		Mid-term
2.4	Continue to assist the Ready NWI Partnership.		<i>Igniter</i>		Ongoing
2.5	Increase programming for the La Porte County Career and Technical Education Center.		<i>Catalytic</i>		Mid-term
2.6	Monitor and update the county capital improvements plan.		<i>Catalytic</i>		Short-term
2.7	Host a countywide discussion on water and sewer service.		<i>Catalytic</i>		Short-term
2.8	Expand broadband services throughout the county.		<i>Igniter</i>		Long-term
2.9	Assist homeowners with upgrading utility systems.		<i>Catalytic</i>		Long-term
2.10	Build the Entrepreneurial Ecosystem.		<i>Igniter</i>		Ongoing
2.11	Encourage youth entrepreneurship and education programs.		<i>Igniter</i>		Mid-term
2.12	Support the completion of the Marquette Plan.		<i>Transformative</i>		Ongoing

## STRATEGIES




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COMMUNITY TYPE	COORDINATING PARTNERS	FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES
<b>Cross-cutting</b>	One Region; Private Businesses; Neighborhood Associations, County and Local Governments	Unity Foundation of La Porte County; Healthcare Foundation of La Porte
<b>Cross-cutting</b>	Center for Workforce Innovations	Private Businesses
<b>Cross-cutting</b>	School Districts; Private Businesses	N/A
<b>Cross-cutting</b>	Center for Workforce Innovations; Northwest Indiana Forum; One Region; Private Businesses; La Porte County Office of Economic Development	N/A
<b>Cross-cutting</b>	La Porte County Career and Technical Education Center	Private Businesses
<b>Cross-cutting</b>	County Government	N/A
<b>Small Towns / Rural Com.</b>	County and Local Governments; Neighborhood Associations	N/A
<b>Small Towns / Rural Com.</b>	County and Local Governments	N/A
<b>Small Towns / Rural Com.</b>	County and Local Governments; Private Businesses	Indiana Office of Energy Development; State and Federal Grants
<b>Cross-cutting</b>	Northwest Indiana Forum; One Region; Private Businesses; La Porte County Office of Economic Development	Private Businesses
<b>Cross-cutting</b>	Leadership La Porte County; United Way of La Porte County; Unity Foundation of La Porte County	Unity Foundation of La Porte County; Indiana Afterschool Network
<b>Urban / Small Towns</b>	One Region	N/A

## TIMEFRAME

<b>Short-term</b>	within 0 - 3 years.
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**IGNITER ACTIONS**  
Priority actions identified by the Steering Committee and Leadership Team.







# PROSPERITY

ID	ACTION RECOMMENDATION	STRATEGIES	COMMUNITY IMPACT	LEVEL OF CONTROL	TIMEFRAME
 2.13	Establish a Certified Tourism Ambassador Program.	 	<i>Igniter</i>		Short-term
2.14	Expand year-round attraction programming.	 	<i>Catalytic</i>		Mid-term
2.15	Develop an agritourism strategy for the county.	 	<i>Catalytic</i>		Mid-term
2.16	Explore funding talent retention and attraction incentives.	 	<i>Catalytic</i>		Short-term
2.17	Preserve agricultural infrastructure.	 	<i>Catalytic</i>		Long-term

## STRATEGIES




The objectives of the Action Agenda that the specific action will address; organized by People, Prosperity, and Place.

FULL  
LIST ON  
P.65

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## LEVEL OF CONTROL

-  *Control* actions that are under the control of existing partners.
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COMMUNITY TYPE	COORDINATING PARTNERS	FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES
<b>Cross-cutting</b>	La Porte County Convention and Visitors Bureau; Private Businesses; Neighborhood Associations	Indiana Office of Tourism Development
<b>Cross-cutting</b>	County and Local Governments: La Porte County Convention and Visitors Bureau; La Porte County Family YMCA	Indiana Housing & Community Development Authority (IHCDA)
<b>Cross-cutting</b>	La Porte County Convention and Visitors Bureau	La Porte County Convention and Visitors Bureau; Indiana Office of Tourism Development
<b>Cross-cutting</b>	Center for Workforce Innovations; One Region; Private Businesses	Private Businesses; Indiana Commission for Higher Education
<b>Cross-cutting</b>	Indiana Office of Community & Rural Affairs	N/A

## TIMEFRAME

- Short-term** within 0 - 3 years.
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- Ongoing** currently underway.

## COMMUNITY TYPE

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## IGNITER ACTIONS

Priority actions identified by the Steering Committee and Leadership Team.





# PLACE

ID	ACTION RECOMMENDATION	STRATEGIES	COMMUNITY IMPACT	LEVEL OF CONTROL	TIMEFRAME
3.1	Support rural communities in adopting the county joint zoning ordinance.		<i>Catalytic</i>		Mid-term
3.2	Support the creation of a county Grant Facilitator position.		<i>Igniter</i>		Short-term
3.3	Establish multi-purpose community attractions in the county.		<i>Transformative</i>		Long-term
3.4	Form an advisory committee to identify priority development corridors.		<i>Igniter</i>		Short-term
3.5	Establish a streamlined permitting process.		<i>Catalytic</i>		Long-term
3.6	Create a Main Street Planning Toolkit.		<i>Igniter</i>		Short-term
 3.7	Establish a targeted redevelopment program for Main Streets.		<i>Igniter</i>		Long-term
3.8	Initiate downtown "Pop-up Shops" for new businesses.		<i>Catalytic</i>		Short-term
 3.9	Create a neighborhood garden plot program.		<i>Igniter</i>		Short-term
3.10	Upgrade park facilities with modern and universal design elements.		<i>Catalytic</i>		Mid-term
3.11	Establish a volunteer code enforcement program.		<i>Igniter</i>		Mid-term
3.12	Explore incentives to stimulate neighborhood and community revitalization.		<i>Catalytic</i>		Mid-term

## STRATEGIES




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FULL LIST ON P.65

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COMMUNITY TYPE	COORDINATING PARTNERS	FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES
<b>Rural Communities</b>	County and Local Governments	N/A
<b>Cross-cutting</b>	County Government	N/A
<b>Cross-cutting</b>	La Porte County Convention and Visitors Bureau; County and Local Governments; Neighborhood Associations	Indiana Office of Tourism Development
<b>Cross-cutting</b>	La Porte County Office of Economic Development	N/A
<b>Cross-cutting</b>	County and Local Governments	N/A
<b>Cross-cutting</b>	Main Street Associations; Neighborhood Associations	Indiana Office of Community & Rural Affairs
<b>Cross-cutting</b>	Indiana Office of Community & Rural Affairs; Main Street Associations	Indiana Office of Community & Rural Affairs
<b>Cross-cutting</b>	Chambers of Commerce; La Porte Economic Advancement Partnership; Main Street Associations	Indiana Housing & Community Development Authority (IHCDA)
<b>Cross-cutting</b>	Neighborhood Associations; Unity Foundation of La Porte County	Unity Foundation of La Porte County
<b>Cross-cutting</b>	County and Local Governments	Indiana Housing & Community Development Authority (IHCDA)
<b>Cross-cutting</b>	County and Local Governments; Neighborhood Associations	N/A
<b>Urban / Small Towns</b>	County and Local Governments; Neighborhood Associations	Indiana Office of Community & Rural Affairs; State and Federal Grants; Lilly Endowment Inc.

## TIMEFRAME

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**IGNITER ACTIONS**  
 Priority actions identified by the Steering Committee and Leadership Team.





# PLACE

ID	ACTION RECOMMENDATION	STRATEGIES	COMMUNITY IMPACT	LEVEL OF CONTROL	TIMEFRAME
3.13	Update county zoning regulations pertaining to open space.	 	<i>Catalytic</i>		Mid-term
3.14	Pursue strategic open space acquisition.	 	<i>Catalytic</i>		Mid-term
3.15	Monitor and refine the countywide public transportation study.	 	<i>Catalytic</i>		Mid-term
 3.16	Complete local bicycle and pedestrian networks and pursue connections to the regional trail system.	 	<i>Igniter</i>		Ongoing
3.17	Analyze and refine the Transit Triangle service.	 	<i>Catalytic</i>		Mid-term
 3.18	Initiate a community branding program.	 	<i>Igniter</i>		Short-term
3.19	Update the existing historic inventory.	 	<i>Igniter</i>		Short-term
3.20	Form a regional gateways community partnership.	 	<i>Catalytic</i>		Mid-term

## STRATEGIES




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COMMUNITY TYPE	COORDINATING PARTNERS	FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES
<b>Cross-cutting</b>	County and Local Governments	N/A
<b>Cross-cutting</b>	Shirley Heinze Land Trust	Indiana Park and Recreation Association; State and Federal Grants
<b>Cross-cutting</b>	Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC); Local Governments	Capital Improvement Plans; Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT); State and Federal Grants
<b>Cross-cutting</b>	County and Local Governments	Capital Improvement Plans; Indiana Housing & Community Development Authority (IHCD)
<b>Urban / Small Towns</b>	Purdue University Northwest; Local Governments; Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC)	Public / Private Partnerships; Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT); State and Federal Grants
<b>Cross-cutting</b>	La Porte County Convention and Visitors Bureau; Neighborhood Associations	Indiana Housing & Community Development Authority (IHCD); Indiana Office of Tourism Development
<b>Cross-cutting</b>	La Porte County Historical Society; Hanna Historical Society; Wanatah Historical Society; Westville Community Historical Society	Indiana Office of Community & Rural Affairs; State and Federal Grants
<b>Cross-cutting</b>	County and Local Governments	N/A

#### TIMEFRAME

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**IGNITER ACTIONS**  
Priority actions identified by the Steering Committee and Leadership Team.







# IMPLEMENTATION

ID	ACTION RECOMMENDATION	TIMEFRAME
4.1	<b>Develop an outreach toolkit.</b>	Short-term
4.2	<b>Facilitate a socialization tour.</b>	Short-term
4.3	<b>Outline a coordination structure for implementing the Action Agenda.</b>	Short-term
4.4	<b>Identify a series of indicators to measure and monitor the Movement.</b>	Short-term
4.5	<b>Develop an ambassador program.</b>	Short-term
4.6	<b>Pursue additional funding opportunities to maintain the movement.</b>	Ongoing
4.7	<b>Assess and update the action agenda regularly.</b>	Ongoing

## STRATEGIES




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## COMMUNITY IMPACT

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COORDINATING PARTNERS	FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES
Unity Foundation of La Porte County; La Porte County Convention and Visitors Bureau	N/A
Unity Foundation of La Porte County; La Porte County Convention and Visitors Bureau	N/A
Unity Foundation of La Porte County; La Porte County Convention and Visitors Bureau	N/A
Unity Foundation of La Porte County; La Porte County Convention and Visitors Bureau	N/A
Unity Foundation of La Porte County; La Porte County Convention and Visitors Bureau	N/A
Unity Foundation of La Porte County; La Porte County Convention and Visitors Bureau	Indiana Office of Community & Rural Affairs; National Association of Counties
Unity Foundation of La Porte County; La Porte County Convention and Visitors Bureau	N/A

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**For questions regarding this plan, contact:**

Unity Foundation of La Porte County  
(219) 879-0327

or

La Porte County Convention and Visitors Bureau  
(219) 872-5055



# APPENDIX

*The Appendix for the Action Agenda includes the work products that led up to and include the major events in the initial Vibrant Communities Movement process. Included in the appendix are the summary reports for the two rounds of engagement, the 2017 Snapshot Report, and the Steering Committee Meeting Agendas.*

## Contents

1. 2017 Snapshot Report
2. Community Conversations Summary Memo
3. Summit on the Future Summary Memo
4. Steering Committee Meeting Agendas

