

Executive Summary



Rural Reach



Middle Reach



Urban Reach

Sponsored by the City of Valparaiso Redevelopment Commission and Planning Department, this Corridor Plan was developed to address landscape conservation and development-related issues along a portion of State Route 49, extending from U.S. Highway 30 northward to U.S. Highway 6, a distance of approximately six miles. The width of the corridor study area generally extended from Silhavy Road / Calumet Road eastward to County Road 325, encompassing an area of approximately ten square miles.

The principal objective of the SR 49 Corridor Plan is to provide planning guidance and physical design direction for urban growth and development, regional change, and environmental management over the next ten to 20 years. The Corridor Plan encourages suitable development patterns that limit uncoordinated expansion in order to preserve the corridor's natural, cultural and scenic resources and amenities. The Corridor Plan analyzes the SR 49 corridor within its regional context; describes the physical condition of the thoroughfare and its safety; analyzes and describes the corridor's intrinsic (natural) and extrinsic (manmade) resources, qualities, uses and values; and suggests how these resources are to be managed.

Analysis of regional and local programs and plans, meetings and workshops conducted with stakeholders and extensive field reconnaissance revealed several significant issues that will ultimately drive residential and commercial growth trends, economic development initiatives, transportation and utilities infrastructure improvements, within the context of natural resources management and preservation of landscape character within and around the SR 49 corridor. The City of Valparaiso is the largest municipality in Porter County, and provides a significant employment base and services. The Porter County Regional Airport is positioning itself to become a multi-modal transportation hub and will promote industrial development within the district. The development of the Porter County Regional Hospital complex at the intersection of U.S. Highway 6 and SR 49, as well as the Valparaiso Health Center at the junction of SR 49 and CR E 500 N has established a valued health care services-oriented trajectory for the corridor that will draw residents from the three-county region of Northern Indiana, as well as from communities south of the SR 49 corridor. It is anticipated that Valparaiso's steady growth rate of 3,000 persons per decade combined with the significant planned expansion of Valparaiso University will create additional demand for services. While the Vale Park Road interchange improvements provide opportunities to access new lands for additional residential and commercial growth and development,

additional transportation and utilities infrastructure improvements are warranted.

The SR 49 thoroughfare will always remain a critical regional link between the Porter County Regional Airport and its adjacent industrial activity, and the Port of Indiana-Burns Harbor on the shore of Lake Michigan. In 2011, the SR 49 thoroughfare's level of service (LOS) rating was C. In anticipation of increased vehicular traffic the SR 49 thoroughfare must improve its LOS. The presence of a signaled intersection at CO Rd 500 and the complete lack of signalization at the interchange of SR 49 and CR E 600 N contribute to this low LOS rating. Through reductions in the thoroughfare's net use by providing increased connectivity within the network of county roads within the corridor combined with new thoroughfares will increase SR 49's capacity to provide efficient and convenient through access to northern and southern destinations.

While there are several hundred acres of developable land within the SR 49 corridor, few parcels are ready for development. The lack of adequate transportation infrastructure leaves many large parcels inaccessible. Most sites do not have access to utilities or communications infrastructure. To remain competitive within the region and in order to attract businesses and services associated with the biomed/biotech economic sector and develop a Class A office park environment within the SR 49 corridor will require that developable sites and properties be "shovel ready."

It is understood that growth and development will occur within the region, within Porter County, and within the SR 49 corridor. Several provisional goals, strategies, actions and initiatives for the SR 49 corridor were developed to advance the desires of local citizens and community leaders who have a stake in the future of the SR 49 corridor, and want to preserve and manage landscape character of the corridor in the face of potentially rapid residential and commercial growth and development.

A key goal of the Corridor Plan is to consolidate high-quality office / professional development close to the SR 49 thoroughfare in order to preserve agricultural lands and the rural landscape character that Porter County is known for. To provide access to large portions of developable land, and continue the health center campus proposed at the interchange of SR 49 and CR E 500 N an arterial thoroughfare is proposed to run just east of and parallel to SR 49. This thoroughfare, named Memorial Drive Extended, will intersect Vale Park Road and continue southward, where it

will provide access to additional lands for office park development as well as a proposed multi-family housing development, before connecting with the Eastport Centre Technology Park and beyond to the expanding Porter County Regional Airport.

An ambitious plan, the development of Memorial Drive Extended ensures a coherent pattern of contiguous development that prevents sprawl and preserves open space and rural landscape character. The proposed thoroughfare promotes connectivity and access management to existing transportation corridors while providing synergies with adjacent complementary land uses.

Additional landscape preservation and commercial development strategies are organized within four focus areas: residential and commercial growth and development; transportation infrastructure; utilities infrastructure; economic development and corridor promotion.

Corridor Plan Organization

The Corridor Plan is divided into five principal sections, and follows a linear progression from defining the corridor; identifying key regional and local issues that may have an impact on the corridor's character; developing tangible strategies and action steps to achieving a vision for the corridor's future; and culminating in defining a realistic and realizable implementation program.



CHAPTER 1.0, INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1.0 provides an overview of the corridor, how it is defined, the systems and elements that compose the corridor, including thoroughfares and utilities infrastructure.



CHAPTER 2.0, PLANNING CONTEXT

Chapter 2.0 places the SR 49 corridor within its local and regional context and describes the unique natural and cultural resources, land use and development patterns and economic drivers that contribute to the SR 49 corridor's vibrancy. This chapter describes the planning process, beginning with field reconnaissance and data collection, and recognizes the regional, county-wide and municipal programs and plans that illuminate and project current and future growth patterns, guide resource management and decision-making. It also summarizes the drivers that regulate the type and character of growth within the SR 49 corridor. Chapter 2.0 concludes with an analysis of the key issues impacting the SR 49 corridor, that this plan addresses.



CHAPTER 3.0, SCENARIO AND CONCEPT LEVEL PLANNING

Chapter 3.0 formulates the Corridor Plan's four focus areas, Residential and Commercial Growth and Development, Transportation Infrastructure, Utilities Infrastructure, and Economic Development and Corridor Promotion; and identifies a series of goals, the realization of which will help to ensure that the vision for the corridor is realized. Short-term, mid-term and long range strategies as well as tactical actions and initiatives are recommended to accomplish the goals.



CHAPTER 4.0, IMPLEMENTATION

Chapter 4.0, outlines methods for plan implementation, describes how the plan should be administered and amended; the partnerships that need to be formed to ensure plan success; and the timeframe in which strategies can be implemented.



APPENDIX

The Appendix provides technical documentation with regard to thoroughfare condition and plans for proposed utilities capacity and expansion.



In the year 2035...

Over the next **20 years** the lands, resources and amenities within the State Route 49 corridor will be **developed, managed and conserved** to:

- **improve** transportation safety, linkages, access and connectivity;
- **accommodate** and promote opportunities for appropriate economic development, job creation and residential growth;
- **enhance** varieties of landscape experience through the creation of new recreational amenities and opportunities;
- **perpetuate** the scenic qualities of the corridor's unique wilderness, semi-wilderness and agricultural landscapes;
- **improve** the quality of life and economic wellbeing of the citizens of Valparaiso and Porter County, while sustaining their values and sense of place.

Vision

It is the year 2030. From 20,000 feet in elevation northern Porter County appears to have changed little over the last century. The commercial and suburban sprawl that has devoured much of the prime agricultural lands in the country is remarkably absent here. The air is clear, free of the smog that once blanketed this region. The flicker of turbine blades and a flash of the sun's reflection off a distant array of solar panels are just a few examples of how the region has largely embraced the new renewable energy economy. At 5,000 feet in elevation it becomes clear that, while there has been significant growth, most of the lands remain either wooded or in agricultural production. Lakes and wetlands come in to view and suddenly become alive as flocks of waterfowl take to flight. A pack of several dozen cyclists break out of a wooded area and race down one of several new recreational corridors that link Lake Michigan with the City of Valparaiso and beyond to the Kankakee River. These lands, resources and people compose the State Route 49 corridor and provide identity, place and meaning.

The SR 49 remains a limited access thoroughfare, and continues to provide the clean office and industrial parks of the Porter County Regional Airport, the City of Valparaiso and the communities of Porter County with important transportation connections to the north, including Interstates 90 and 94, the Port of Indiana – Burns Harbor and other economic destinations in the region. To the east, a new north-south arterial thoroughfare provides access to the lands along SR 49, which have been developed into a medical services, high technology and knowledge-sharing business campus. The arterial thoroughfare also provides access to key county roads, including Vale Park Road (CR E 400 N) and Burlington Beach Road (CR E 500 N), which have become celebrated gateways into Valparaiso; the latter of which features a new half-diamond interchange. The knowledge-based business sector has drawn new ethnic groups to the region, increasing its multicultural diversity. To accommodate this new workforce, further east of SR 49, new residential developments have been clustered among preserved forest and agricultural lands in order to maintain the landscape's rural and scenic character. To increase habitat and biodiversity, wetlands and riparian areas have been preserved to create community parks and wildlife corridors that connect patches of forested land.

The City of Valparaiso's V-Line has continued to expand into new geographic areas while utilizing the SR 49 corridor to provide enhanced local public transportation linkages to the ChicaGo Dash, with connections to the Chicago metropolitan areas. On-street bike lanes and off-street recreational trails provide Valparaiso University students with access to recreational and commercial areas in and around the city as well as to the dunes and beaches along Lake Michigan by way of a safe and scenic segment of the Dunes to Kankakee Trail. Improved multi-modal connections to Valparaiso's vibrant Downtown has enhanced the City's competitive edge within the region, enabling retail diversity and economic growth of a scale that is consistent with the community's small town character. An increased tax base enables municipal matching of philanthropic donations to the City's arts and theatrical programs. A blossoming arts community has fostered an aesthetic regional style that has gained national recognition. The City of Valparaiso has become the stage for significant arts and music festivals.

The lands around the Moraine Nature Preserve have been preserved from development to further buffer the headwaters of the Coffee Creek watershed and provide wildlife corridors to other managed lands. Vehicular access has been improved within the park, including parking at its trailheads. Combined with the Valparaiso Lakes Conservancy District, these natural areas have been successful in halting encroaching sprawl from the north and preserving the City of Valparaiso's unique identity as a free-standing community.

With a fully engaged and informed citizenry that is active in the stewardship and governance of its lands, resources and people, the City of Valparaiso and Porter County have become a shining example of how to effectively manage sustainable growth and accommodate appropriate economic development while preserving the landscapes, rural character and sense of place for which northwestern Indiana is known and cherished.

View North from Vale Park Road (CR E 400 N)