



CITY OF GARY

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

SEPTEMBER 2025



CITY OF GARY
GREATER GARY STARTS HERE

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CONTENTS

01	Introduction	p. 4
	About the Plan	p. 8
	Previous Plans	p. 14
	Engagement Summary	p. 16

02	Land Use	p. 20
	Existing Land Use	p. 24
	Missing Middle Housing	p. 26
	Future Land Use	p. 30

03	Redevelopment	p. 36
	Blight Elimination	p. 39
	Redevelopment Opportunities	p. 40
	Redevelopment Area Profiles	p. 46
	School Sites	p. 54
	Industrial Development	p. 82

04	Nature	p. 84
	Gary Parks	p. 88
	Existing Conservation Land and Restoration Efforts	p. 91
	Watersheds	p. 95
	Water Infrastructure	p. 97

05	Transportation	p. 98
	Vehicular Transportation	p. 100
	Multi-Modal Transportation	p. 102
	Public Transportation	p. 104
	Port & Airport Transportation	p. 106
	City of Gary Safety Action Plan (Safe Streets for All)	p. 108

05	Implementation	p. 112
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01

INTRODUCTION





LETTER FROM THE MAYOR





Welcome, Gary!

I'm incredibly proud to present the 2025 Comprehensive Plan Update. This flexible roadmap for Gary's future is a dynamic tool designed to guide the long-term transformation of our city. This plan is designed to rebuild Gary by growing our population, increasing our business opportunities, and building generational wealth for our community.

The 2025 plan builds on the foundation laid by the 2019 plan while integrating new guiding principles. My focus is on four key areas: stabilizing our neighborhoods, supporting growth, improving quality of life, and planning for our long-term success.

Gary is at a pivotal moment, and our potential is limitless. We are leveraging our proximity to Chicago, our modern infrastructure, and Indiana's pro-growth tax environment to attract investment and create high-quality jobs for our residents. We are already seeing significant momentum with new investments from companies like FedEx, the continued strength of our steel manufacturing industry, and new infrastructure, including the modernized South Shore Line with new stations in Miller and Downtown Gary.

This plan is a strategic framework that will guide new development, public investment, and policy decisions. It provides clear direction for land use, infrastructure, housing, development, nature/climate, and transportation, all while aligning our city's history with its current priorities. I encourage you to read the full plan and participate in our planning and zoning meetings. Together, we will move forward with purpose and coordination to create a self-sustaining economy for all of Gary.

Sincerely,

Eddie D. Melton
Mayor, City of Gary

ABOUT THIS PLAN

This Comprehensive Plan guides the long-term transformation of the City of Gary. It presents a flexible roadmap for the city's future that reflects Gary's unique opportunities, challenges, and realities. The plan seeks to grow the population over time, increase the tax base, and build generational wealth. It serves as a dynamic tool to share information, articulate a vision, encourage collective action, and rebuild Gary for the future.

The 2025 Plan Update integrates key elements from the 2019 plan with updated guiding principles—particularly Mayor Eddie Melton's focus on stabilizing neighborhoods, supporting growth, improving quality of life, and planning for the city's long-term success. This updated plan serves as a strategic framework to guide new development, public investment, and policy decisions.

The goal of this Comprehensive Plan is to provide the City of Gary with an essential, community-driven tool that offers clear direction for land use, infrastructure, housing, and economic development. By aligning historical insights with current priorities, the plan positions Gary to move forward with purpose and coordination.

This is a 10-year plan that considers how and where land use and development can occur, based on the city's economic conditions, transportation infrastructure, and natural resources. It does not attempt to predict or isolate future demographic trends, but instead provides a practical framework for guiding development within the city's existing context and capacity.

Statutory Authority

Indiana Code Title 36 Local Government & 36-7-4-502 requires that a comprehensive plan must contain at least the following elements:

- A statement of objectives for the future development of the jurisdiction.
- A statement of policy for the land development of the jurisdiction.
- A statement of policy for the development of public ways, public places, public lands, public structures, and public utilities.

This plan exceeds these minimum requirements.

MANIFESTING THE VISION

MELTON ADMINISTRATION KEY PRIORITIES:

Stabilization

- Strengthen City Finances
- Retain Current Population
- Improve Neighborhood Infrastructure (Stabilization)
- Eliminate Blight



Growth

- Our Population & Tax Base
- Small Businesses
- Quality Housing Stock
- Job/Training Opportunities Build Tourism, Arts, & Culture



Quality of Life

- Improve Public Safety
- Support Youth, Families, & Seniors
- Support for the Homeless
- Address Food Insecurities
- Enhance Animal Control

Planning for the Future

- Improve Environmental Practices
- Comprehensive Citywide Plan
- Revise Zoning Code
- Major Infrastructure Improvements

FUTURE FOCUSED

A City of Opportunity and Inclusive Growth

Gary is at a pivotal moment—positioned to become a regional hub of opportunity, particularly for women- and minority-owned businesses, entrepreneurs, and innovators. With a strong foundation already in place, the city is poised to capitalize on new economic investments, catalytic infrastructure improvements, and its legacy of resilience to build a more inclusive, equitable, and self-sustaining economy.

In 2019, there were approximately 6,500 businesses in Gary; more than 4,100 were women-owned, and over 5,100 were minority-owned. These numbers far exceed national averages: 64% of Gary businesses are women-owned, nearly double the U.S. rate, and 80% are minority-owned, more than three times the national share. This thriving entrepreneurial ecosystem positions Gary as a model for empowering local ownership and building generational wealth.

Recent developments are accelerating Gary's momentum:

- FedEx's new investment in Gary brings high-quality jobs and logistics infrastructure to the city, reinforcing its role as a key industrial and distribution hub.
- The Nippon Steel–U.S. Steel deal secures the future of one of Northwest Indiana's largest employers, supporting long-term economic stability and innovation in steel manufacturing.
- Blight elimination efforts, supported by local partnerships, the Northwest Indiana RDA and State of Indiana, are clearing the way for infill development, business expansion, and neighborhood renewal.
- The opening of the new South Shore Commuter Train Station in Miller, along with the planned replacement of the Gary Metro Station with a modern, accessible multi-modal transit center, will enhance downtown transit-oriented development, improve regional connectivity, and position Gary for continued revitalization.
- Marquette Park and Beach and Miller Woods, the western Gateway to the Indiana Dunes National Park and one of the most scenic lakefronts along Lake Michigan, and one of the closest to the City of Chicago, anchors the city's recreational and tourism potential.

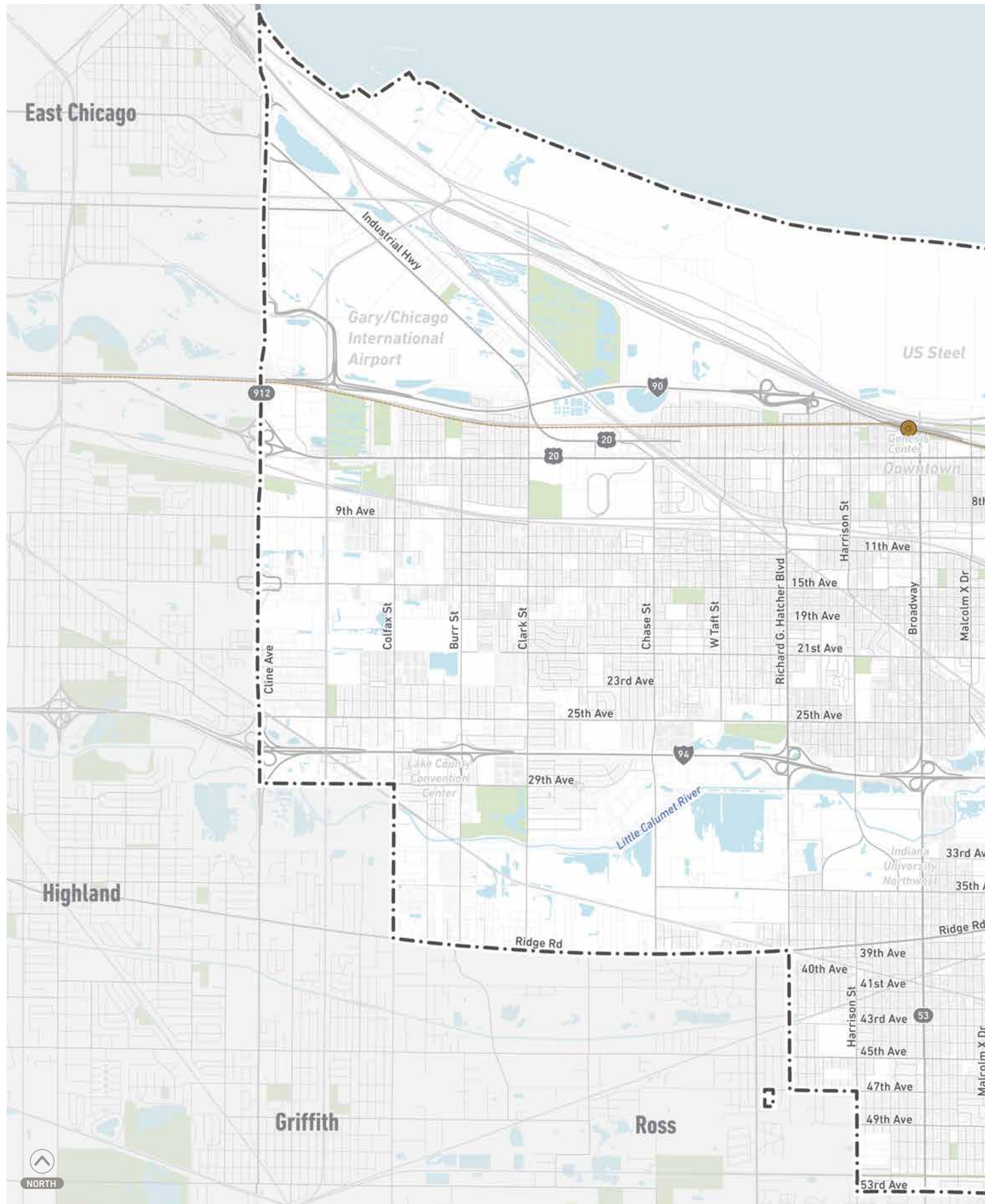
- The Gary/Chicago International Airport continues to expand its capacity for cargo and general aviation, offering untapped opportunities for logistics, aviation services, and adjacent commercial development.
- Partnerships with Ivy Tech Community College and Indiana University Northwest (IUN) are central to Gary's future as a City of Opportunity—serving as anchor institutions that connect aspiring entrepreneurs to training and mentorship, develop industry-aligned programs, host business accelerators and innovation labs, and create inclusive pathways into high-demand fields such as healthcare, technology, logistics, and the trades.
- The City of Gary is partnering with the State of Indiana and Northwest Indiana RDA to build a new Lake County Convention Center, to be located adjacent to the Hard Rock Casino of Northwest Indiana. Once complete, the convention center is expected to catalyze new tourism, hospitality, and mixed-use investment, positioning Gary as a regional destination and driving broader economic revitalization across Northwest Indiana.
- The City of Gary is moving forward with the plan to repurpose the former Genesis Convention Center building, with potential possibilities for adaptive reuse of the existing structure to new mixed-use development opportunities.

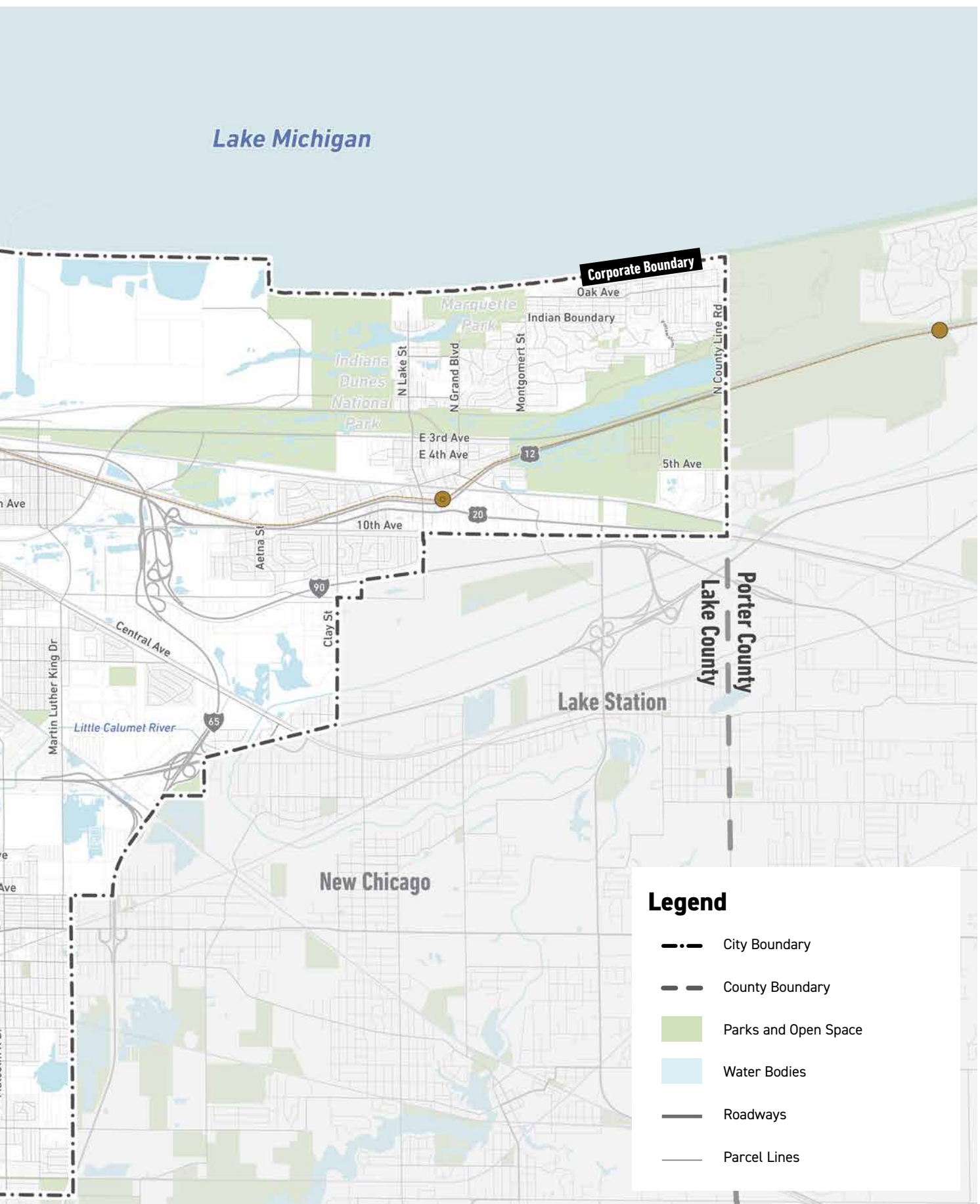
Gary is positioned for a resurgence—leveraging its proximity to Chicago, modern infrastructure, and Indiana's pro-growth tax climate to attract investment, grow its tax base, and connect residents to high-quality jobs. With the newly modernized South Shore Line and new stations in Miller and Downtown Gary, the city offers fast, reliable access to the ninth-largest economy in the world, while maintaining significantly lower costs for both businesses and families. Supported by new investments from FedEx, continued strength in steel manufacturing, and strong workforce partnerships with Ivy Tech and IUN, Gary is advancing infrastructure, encouraging private-sector growth, and building a more self-reliant and competitive local economy.



Residents and business owners participated in a public workshop designed to share information and gather input on the future of former school sites in Gary.

Figure 01: City of Gary Corporate Boundary Map





PREVIOUS PLANS

Summary

For this Comprehensive Plan, all City and Regional plans from the past 10 years were reviewed including, but not limited to the following plans.

Plans referenced, but not incorporated into this document are intended to be referenced in the appendix.

The Gary Comprehensive Plan and Appendices (2019):

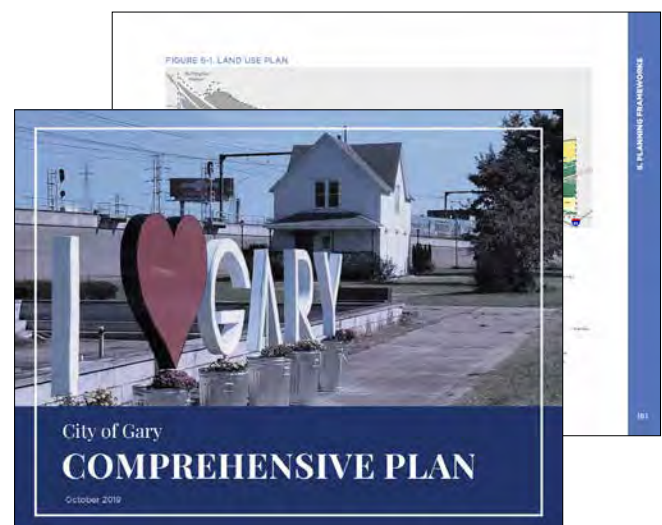
This foundational document outlines the city's long-term vision for land use, housing, infrastructure, and economic development. It emphasizes revitalizing Gary through reinvestment in key corridors, neighborhoods, and employment centers, while prioritizing equity, sustainability, and community resilience. The plan identifies strategies to address population loss, disinvestment, and aging infrastructure, and it promotes infill development, mixed-use zoning, expanded transit access, and the redevelopment of brownfield and vacant sites. Special attention is given to enhancing public spaces, strengthening educational and civic institutions, and improving the city's connectivity through multimodal transportation and regional partnerships.

The 2019 Gary Comprehensive Plan laid out a strategic vision focused on stabilizing the city, reversing disinvestment, and positioning Gary for long-term, equitable growth. Key recommendations included:

- **Revitalize Key Corridors and Downtown:** Prioritize investment along major corridors—especially Broadway, Lake Street, and 5th Avenue—as well as Downtown Gary, through infill development, infrastructure upgrades, and corridor beautification.
- **Focus on Strategic Redevelopment:** Target vacant, underutilized, and blighted properties for redevelopment, with an emphasis on catalytic sites near transit, employment centers, and anchor institutions.
- **Promote Mixed-Use and Transit-Oriented Development (TOD):** Encourage land use patterns that support walkability, public transit, and mixed-income housing near South Shore Line stations and along key bus routes.
- **Strengthen Neighborhoods:** Support reinvestment in core neighborhoods through housing stabilization, code enforcement, and the reactivation of vacant lots with new housing, parks, or community amenities.

- **Modernize Infrastructure:** Upgrade aging water, sewer, and transportation infrastructure to support redevelopment and improve quality of life.
- **Leverage Institutional and Industrial Assets:** Support job creation by strengthening connections between industrial zones, logistics infrastructure, and workforce training institutions like IU Northwest and the Gary Career Center.
- **Preserve and Enhance Natural Resources:** Protect critical ecosystems, expand park access, and better integrate open space and trails into neighborhood redevelopment strategies.
- **Build Capacity and Regional Partnerships:** Encourage alignment between city government, local stakeholders, and regional agencies (such as the Northwest Indiana RDA) to pursue funding, implement projects, and coordinate land use and infrastructure planning.

The 2019 Gary Comprehensive Plan provided a detailed overview of existing land use patterns across the city, shaped by a legacy of industrial growth, mid-century residential development, and decades of population and economic decline. This plan builds upon the 2019 plan with an emphasis on incorporating a redevelopment chapter and integrating recommendations from plans and initiatives introduced since that plan's adoption.



Safe Streets for All (2025)

The 2025 Gary Safety Action Plan is a data-driven strategy to cut roadway fatalities and serious injuries by 40% by 2042. Its High-Injury Network analysis and targeted safety strategies directly support the Comprehensive Plan's transportation, equity, and implementation goals.

Downtown Gary Vision & Action Plan (2025)

This plan was a collaborative effort between the city and the University of Notre Dame Housing and Community Regeneration Initiative. Notre Dame led a charrette and community engagement along with the city to produce a vision for downtown Gary.

Climate Ready Gary Plan (2024)

This plan was a collaborative effort between the city and Indiana University Environmental Resilience Institute. This plan focuses on analysis around climate change and equity as well as strategies to prepare for change. This plan builds off of other plans including the 2023 Climate Trends Primer, 2021 Gary Climate Action Plan, and the 2021 Urban Forest Management Plan.

Gary Metro TOD Strategic Implementation Plan (2023)

Provides strategies for transit-oriented development around the Gary Metro Station and Downtown TDD area to promote density, mixed-use development, and infrastructure upgrades.

Gary Miller TOD Strategic Implementation Plan (2023)

Provides strategies for transit-oriented development around the Gary Miller Station and Lake Street TDD area to promote density, mixed-use development, and infrastructure upgrades.

Gary Regional Intermodal Study (2023)

Focuses on repositioning Buffington Harbor and other industrial resources for economic development opportunities - commissioned by the Indiana Economic Development Commission.

Parks Master Plan (2023)

Sets a vision for the development and improvement of parks, recreation facilities, and green spaces throughout Gary.

NIRPC "NWI 2050+" Regional Plan (2023)

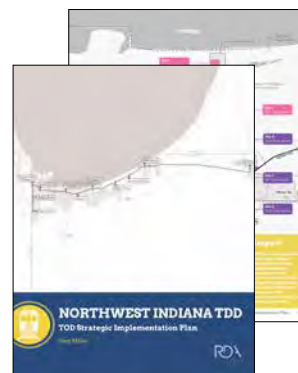
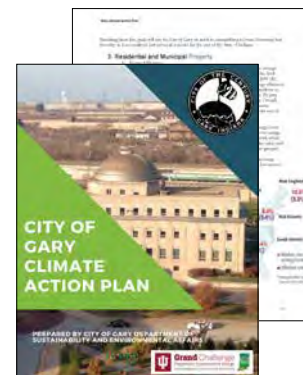
This long-range plan addresses transportation, land use, environment, and economic development across Northwest Indiana through 2050 and beyond.

Gary Airport Master Plan (2022)

This master plan and layout plan update was completed by the Gary Airport Authority to identify future investments and growth opportunities at the airport.

Gary Green Infrastructure Plan (2018)

Completed in 2018, this plan identifies nature-based solutions to manage stormwater and improve environmental quality in Gary.



ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

On Thursday May 15th, 2025, the Gary community came together at the Gary Public Library & Cultural Center to discuss the efforts of the 2025 Comprehensive Plan Update. We had over 100 participants who provided feedback on where the community would like to see certain efforts be focused on vacant schools within the community. The information below is a high-level summary of what was discussed during the workshop.

An additional meeting was also held July 24th, 2025 to show the land use and redevelopment recommendations to the community and get feedback on the recommendations laid out for the plan update.

Smaller meetings were also held with city leadership and multiple stakeholders. In addition, city staff also hosted neighborhood pop up meetings to receive community feedback and thoughts. Those were hosted during Food Truck Friday (July 25th), Miller Farmers Market (August 3rd), Downtown Gary Marketplace (August 9th) as well as several designated Comprehensive Plan discussion hours at City Hall, and a Plan Commission meeting at Marquette Pavilion (August 21st).

Feedback Summary

Many community members emphasized the importance of expanding diverse, affordable, and walkable housing in Gary, with a focus on transit-oriented, infill, and environmentally sustainable development. There was strong support for mixed-use spaces that integrate housing with parks and green areas, along with essential services such as preschools, senior centers, health clinics, and dedicated spaces for youth and community engagement. Residents also highlighted the need for recreational amenities and a community center to foster connection and well-being. Economic revitalization emerged as a key priority, with requests for more small businesses, retail shops, and grocery stores. Participants understand the need to increase our business opportunities within the community and balance it with land uses complementary to the neighborhoods. Sustainability efforts were reflected. Participants also noted that analyzing local demographic data is essential to guiding investments that truly meet the needs of the community.

Community Engagement Themes

Based on the public input from the public workshop, the project team developed the following major themes. The themes and community input from the workshop helped to shape the recommendations of the plan.



Expand Diverse and Affordable Housing



Support Mixed-Use and Green Space Integration



Enhance Access to Essential Services



Invest in Youth and Community Spaces



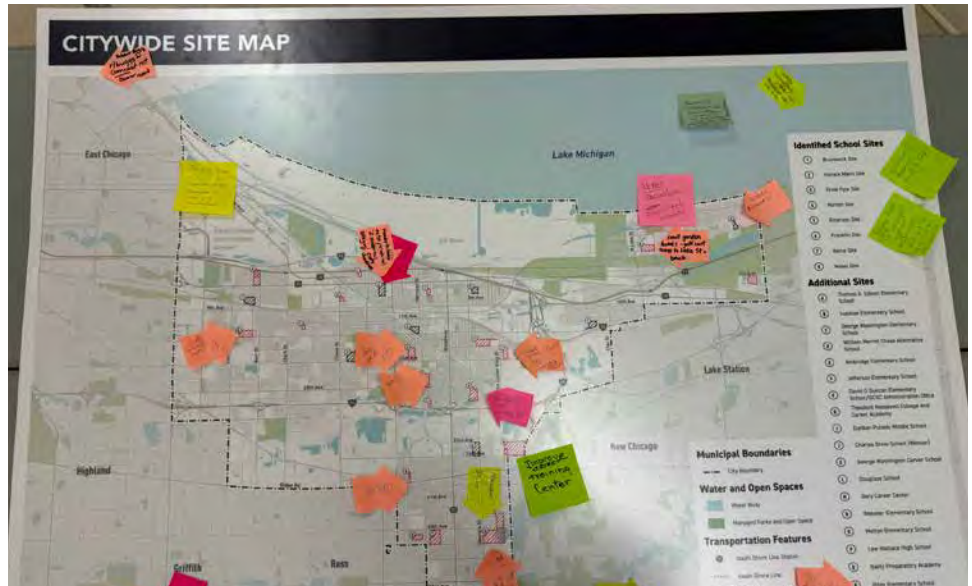
Revitalize Local Economies



Promote Environmental Sustainability



Ground Policy in Data



Residents and business owners participated in a public workshop designed to share information and gather input on the future of former school sites in Gary. Neighborhood pop up events were also held to show the recommendations within the plan and engage with residents.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement is a central aspect of a charrette. The residents of a community will be the ones who experience any new development firsthand, who walk through the study area as a part of their daily lives, and whose safety and stability are directly affected by any changes near their home. For these reasons, citizens also have the most insight towards the challenges, opportunities, needs, and barriers that accompany city life.

The design team held two listening sessions in the week before the formal charrette took place, on Monday, August 5 and Friday, August 9. During the course of the charrette, there were three more public presentations: Monday the 12th, Wednesday the 14th, and the final presentation on Friday the 16th. All of these events were held at the same time and in the same place: 3pm in the lobby of 504 Broadway, the former Gary National Bank. Many citizens came to multiple events, and some to every one, continuing to contribute ideas as the project evolved. Each event included the opportunity to share thoughts, ask questions, and voice concerns. All feedback was immediately applied to the next round of design work, and the results shown for further feedback at the next presentation.

The two pre-charrette listening sessions and three public charrette presentations fostered conversations between the team and Gary locals, among attendees, and between citizens and city staff. Building trust at all of these levels of interaction is critical to the ongoing success of this emerging project.

KEY FINDINGS

- 1 Gary has a long history of unrealized plans**
Over the last few decades, there have been numerous plans proposing the revitalization of downtown Gary; none of these have come to fruition, and citizens have no reason to expect this project to be any different.
- 2 Citizens of Gary are passionate, but wary**
After numerous broken promises, the Gary community simultaneously wants change and is unlikely to trust the next group that offers it; in spite of this reasonable hesitation, citizens exemplify a strong enthusiasm for progress.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 Foster a strong, enduring relationship with the city**
In order to generate an achievable plan, the city must not only listen consistently to Gary citizens during the charrette process, but establish lasting trust by maintaining a consistent relationship with the community in the future.
- 2 Prioritize the voices and needs of the community**
Community stories, needs, and lived experiences must remain central to the regeneration process. Additionally, new development must include opportunities for existing residents to increase rates of homeownership and become business owners.

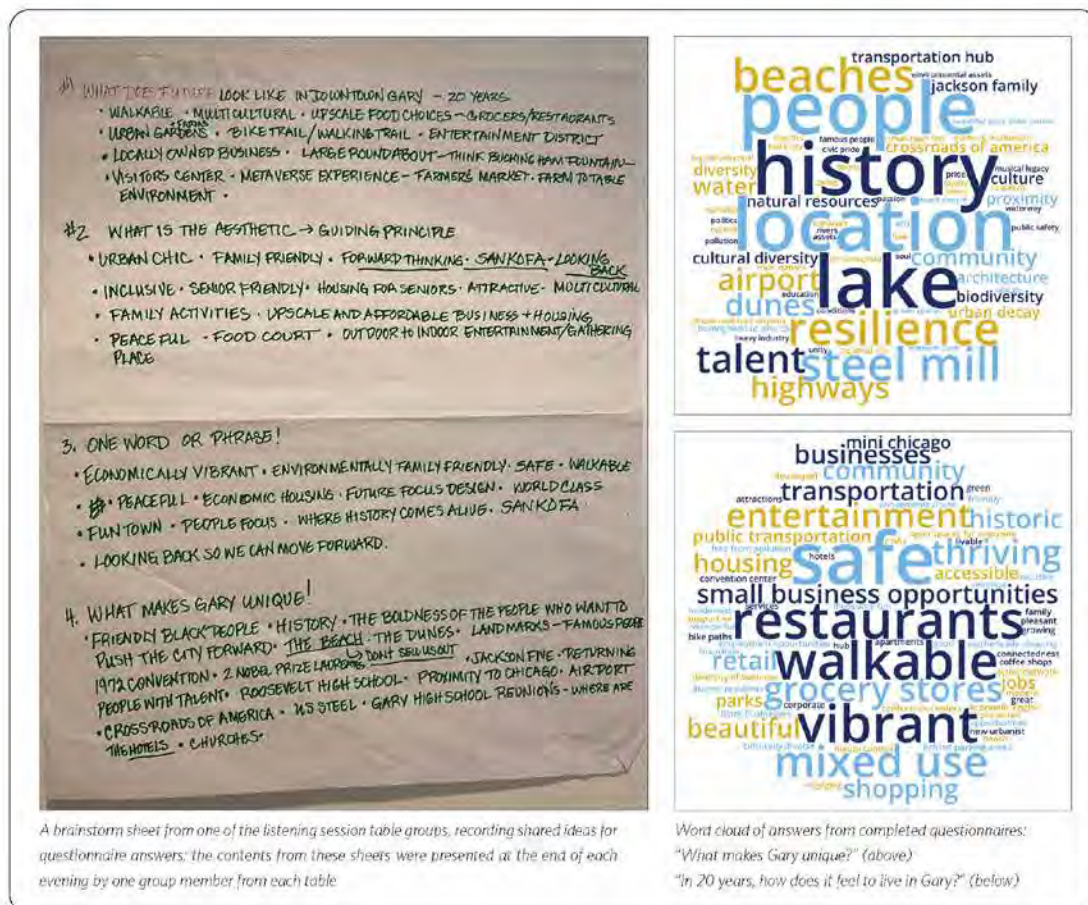


FIGURE 4: Listening Session Takeaways

The two pre-charrette listening sessions and three public charrette presentations fostered conversations between the team and Gary locals, among attendees, and between citizens and city staff.

PRE-CHARRETTE LISTENING SESSIONS



Small-group discussions focused on a list of questions



Attendees annotated maps of downtown Gary



Each group shared their views on the future of Gary

The room was arranged as a series of round tables, to sit groups of 6-10 people. Near these tables were several aerial maps on easels, with post-it notes for attendees to mark location-specific comments. A microphone and presentation screen were set up at the center of the room.

The following questionnaire was provided to attendees:

1. In 20 years, what does it feel like to live in downtown Gary?
2. What is the Theme, or Guiding Principles for downtown Gary?
3. If you were to describe a revitalized downtown in one word or phrase, what would it be?
4. What makes Gary unique?
5. What significant structures within downtown Gary aesthetically resonate with you?
6. If you were to fill a travel bag full of items for a trip to downtown Gary what would those items be?
7. Is there anything else you would like to share with us?

Each evening began with an introduction by Gary Redevelopment Commission Executive Director Chris Harris, who explained the nature of the project and the goals of working with the Notre Dame team, followed by a brief presentation of context and scope of work by Housing and Community Regeneration Initiative Director Marianne Cusato, and an opportunity for crowd comments. After this, the table groups discussed the above questions, taking notes on large sheets of paper. To close out the night, a member of each group presented their answers to the room.

CHARRETTE PRESENTATIONS



Mayor Melton shared thoughts on early design work



Public presentations were open to questions and feedback



The final presentation was a direct result of citizen input

The team gave three public presentations during the week of the charrette. The presentations offered a mix of formats – formal presentation with projected images for a large audience, drawings and posters pinned up around the room on boards to allow residents to engage with members of the team, and large group question-and-answer sessions.

The Monday and Wednesday events began with an extended digital presentation by the team, followed by an opportunity for feedback and questions. This question-and-answer session was jointly led by Cusato and Chris Harris, and addressed a number of critical fears and hopes voiced by audience members. Following this group discussion, attendees were invited to tour the boards in the room, and ask specific questions of team members stationed next to their evolving work.

Many important changes to the masterplan emerged from these interactive presentations. Audience members highlighted what the team had correctly diagnosed, what solutions made sense, what situations remained unaddressed, and what proposals were not well suited to the needs of the city.

At Friday's final presentation, Mayor Eddie Melton introduced the event, highlighting the necessity of the team's work as community-oriented and feedback-driven, followed by a summary presentation highlighting the work of the week. At the core of this presentation was the idea of identity in Gary, and the dual task of preserving what is valued of the past while moving towards a strong future, where the built environment truly reflects the culture and energy of its people. After the presentation, the public circulated through the room to look at presentation drawings and engage with members of the team. The evening concluded with a final question-and-answer session.

02

LAND USE





SCHOOL SITE REDEVELOPMENT DIAGRAM

SITE 1: BRUNSWICK



SITE 2: HORACE MANN



SITE 3: ERNIE PYLE



SITE 4: NORTON



SITE 27: EMERSON



SITE 28: DUNBAR-PULASKI



SITE 29: FRANKLIN



SITE 31: AETNA



SITE 37: WILLIAM A. WINT



SITE 38: FORMER ARMORY



SITE 40: NOBEL



WHAT IS A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?

A Comprehensive Plan outlines a community's goals and vision for future development. It guides public policy on issues such as transportation, land use, recreation, and housing to support the City's long-term growth.

Why do we need a plan update?

This update is essential to stabilizing and revitalizing the Gary area within the growing Northwest Indiana region. Now is the time to shape a new, inclusive future one built on equity, strong foundations, and community-driven progress.

What does this update mean for Gary?

This comprehensive plan outlines long-term goals that reflect Mayor Melton's vision for the City of Gary. It serves as the foundation for setting objectives, guiding land use, development, and permitted activities to ensure consistency and cohesion across the city and its neighborhoods.

Mayor Melton's Key Priorities

Stabilization

- Stabilize City Assets
- Revitalize Public Infrastructure
- Improve Public Safety
- Enhance Public Services

Growth

- Our Population & Tax Base
- Small Businesses
- Healthy Housing Stock
- Job Training Opportunities Build
- Tourism, Arts & Culture

Quality of Life

- Access to Public Space
- Support for the Elderly & Youth
- Promote Healthy Living
- Enhance Public Safety

*SEE REDEVELOPMENT SITE MAP FOR SITE LOCATIONS

LAND USE

A City of Neighborhoods

The City of Gary is fundamentally a city of neighborhoods. From the lakefront community of Miller to the historic residential blocks surrounding Broadway and Ridge Road, the city's urban form is shaped by a patchwork of distinct and well-established communities. These neighborhoods, corridors, and commercial districts form the backbone of Gary's identity—and serve as the foundation for its future.

The Future Land Use Map, updated as part of this Comprehensive Plan, is a critical tool to help the City of Gary strengthen that foundation. Rather than reinventing the city, the map is designed to build upon existing land use patterns and development traditions, while identifying strategic opportunities to catalyze new investment, encourage infill development, and reimagine underutilized sites across the city.

Although many parts of Gary are already developed, the city faces a legacy of disinvestment that has left behind thousands of vacant parcels and abandoned buildings. The Future Land Use Map guides the city in aligning redevelopment efforts with its neighborhood fabric—preserving what works, improving what's underused, and carefully introducing new development typologies that support population growth and economic revitalization.

The future land use map, explored in more detail in this section, is more than a planning tool—it is a strategic framework for future decision-making. It will be used by the City Council, Plan Commission, Redevelopment Commission, and other entities to evaluate development proposals, rezonings, and policy initiatives. It links the city's land use history to its land use future—providing a calibrated vision for what comes next.

Aesthetics and Design Guidelines

Traditionally, comprehensive plans focus on the physical development of a municipality in the form of discrete goals and policies related to future land use, redevelopment, transportation, parks, and community facilities. A comprehensive plan, therefore, establishes a vision and framework for (re)development. It also strives to clarify the relationships between land use policies and goals for urban design and community aesthetics. A clear relationship helps achieve high quality, attractive, functional, and sustainably-built environments that also support social and economic vitality.

Comprehensive Plans do not include design standards, those are found in a zoning ordinance. Aesthetics, and images within this plan are purely guidance, and descriptive. Cities use design standards within the zoning code to ensure new developments align with the urban design goals expressed in a comprehensive plan. Design standards should also ensure new development is integrated effectively within its context, enhances walkability, creates vibrant public spaces, and boosts economic and social activity.

Design standards written into zoning codes typically address the following:

- **Architectural Design** - Providing guidance on building form, height, materials, façade expression and fenestration, and massing and scale. Most design standards focus on achieving compatibility and not on mandating specific architectural styles. Best practice in design standards is to provide complementary and flexible approaches towards new architecture that is representative of place and authentic to the community and its residents today, and in the future.
- **Public Realm** - Providing guidance on the relationship of buildings to the street and the spaces in between, including sidewalks, plazas, pedestrian amenities, lighting and landscape treatments, green spaces, and public art.
- **Transportation and Connectivity** - Providing guidance on the integration of public transit and bicycle infrastructure within the public realm.
- **Sustainability** - Providing guidance on incorporating sustainable design features in buildings and the public spaces that advance energy efficiency and water conservation.

This map illustrates the 14th Ward of Chicago, divided into 15 distinct community areas, each color-coded for identification. The areas are: Brunswick (red), Westside (yellow), Black Oak (green), Tollestson (pink), Ambridge (blue), Downtown West (orange), Midtown (teal), Glen Park West (dark blue), Downtown East (yellow), Polaski (purple), Glen Park East (red), Emerson (light blue), Marshalltown (light blue), Glen Ryan (green), Aetna (purple), and Miller (teal). The map also shows major transportation routes, including I-55, I-54, and I-90, and key landmarks such as Lake Michigan, the Gary/Chicago International Airport, and the US Steel plant. A north arrow is located in the bottom left corner.

LAND USE

Existing Land Use

Existing land use refers to the current function or activity taking place on a parcel of land at a given time. It describes how land is actually being used, regardless of how it is zoned or planned for future development. Industrial uses dominate the northern sections of the city—primarily along the shores of Lake Michigan and the western city boundary adjacent to East Chicago. The historic downtown area is centered along Broadway, the city's primary north–south spine.

Gary is a city of neighborhoods, with strong mixed-use and residential areas. Miller is one such neighborhood, originally established as an independent town before being annexed by the city. It features its own commercial district along Lake Street, which serves as its north–south spine.

Key routes and corridors have significant clusters of business and commercial uses, as well as institutional uses, such as government buildings in the downtown area, the Indiana University Northwest campus along Broadway, and neighborhood churches spread throughout the city's various neighborhoods.



Existing Residential Land Use



Existing Commercial Land Use

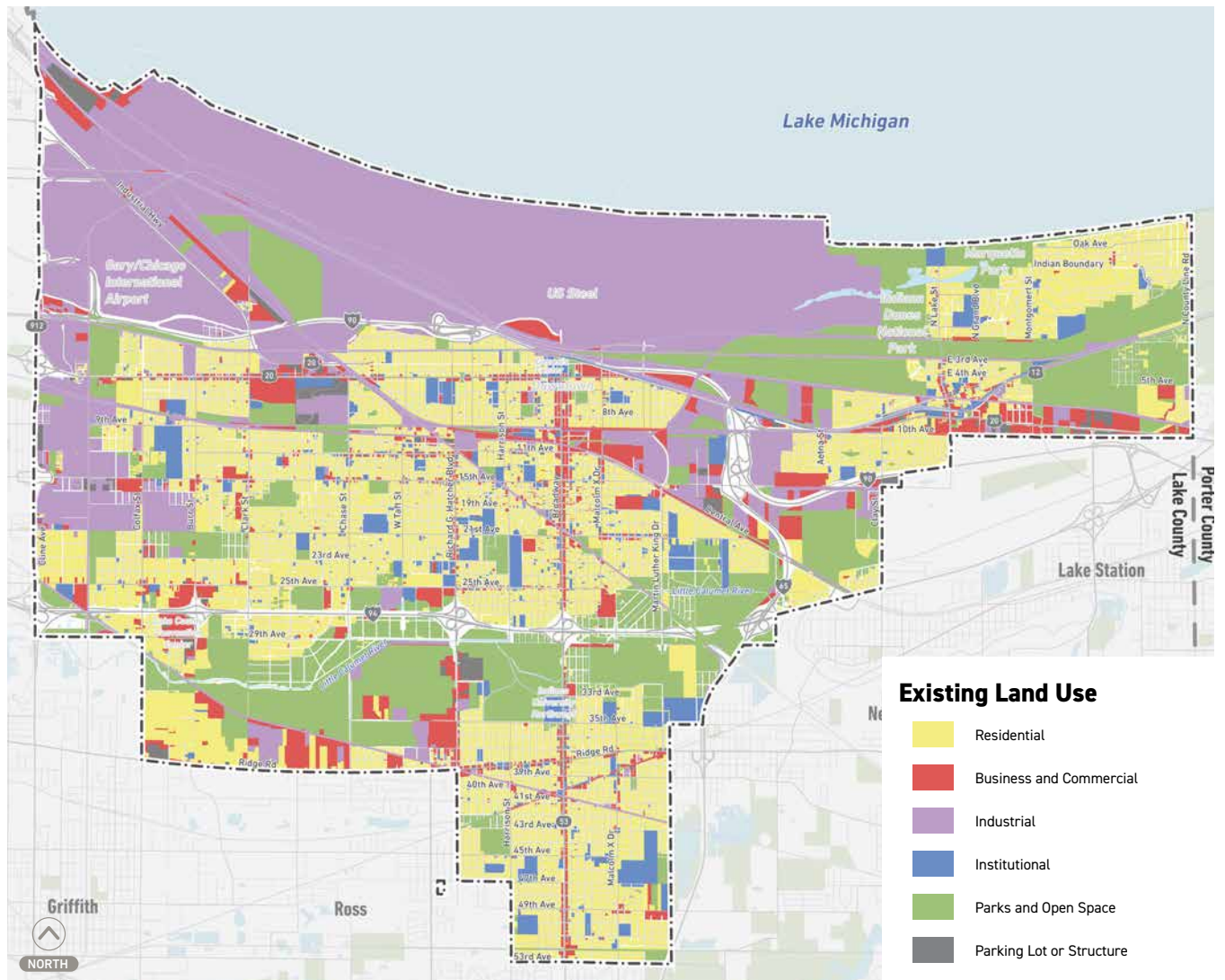


Existing Industrial Land Use



Existing Institutional Land Use

Figure 03: City of Gary Existing Land Use Map



LAND USE

Missing Middle Housing

As Gary reinvests in its core neighborhoods, “missing-middle” housing—defined as a range of multi-unit or clustered housing types such as duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, townhomes, and cottage courts—offers a powerful tool to stabilize neighborhoods, grow the population, and provide more diverse and attainable housing options. These modest-scale, neighborhood-compatible housing types are often absent from conventional zoning but fit well within traditional single-family neighborhoods. They support multi-generational living, sensitive infill development, and the reuse of vacant land and structures.

A 2024 zoning and policy analysis supported by AARP Indiana identified significant opportunities to expand missing-middle housing across Gary. **While many cities pursue these housing types to address affordability challenges, Gary’s primary needs include population growth, tax base stabilization, and the productive reuse of vacant land.** Redevelopment is especially important for enabling missing-middle implementation at scale. Many of these housing types require larger, contiguous parcels to be financially viable—allowing for shared infrastructure, construction efficiencies, and cohesive design.

Strategic redevelopment efforts can help assemble and prepare sites of sufficient size to support missing-middle projects, unlocking new opportunities for neighborhood revitalization and sustainable growth. Missing-middle housing is ideally suited for walkable, well-connected areas—including Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) zones near South Shore stations

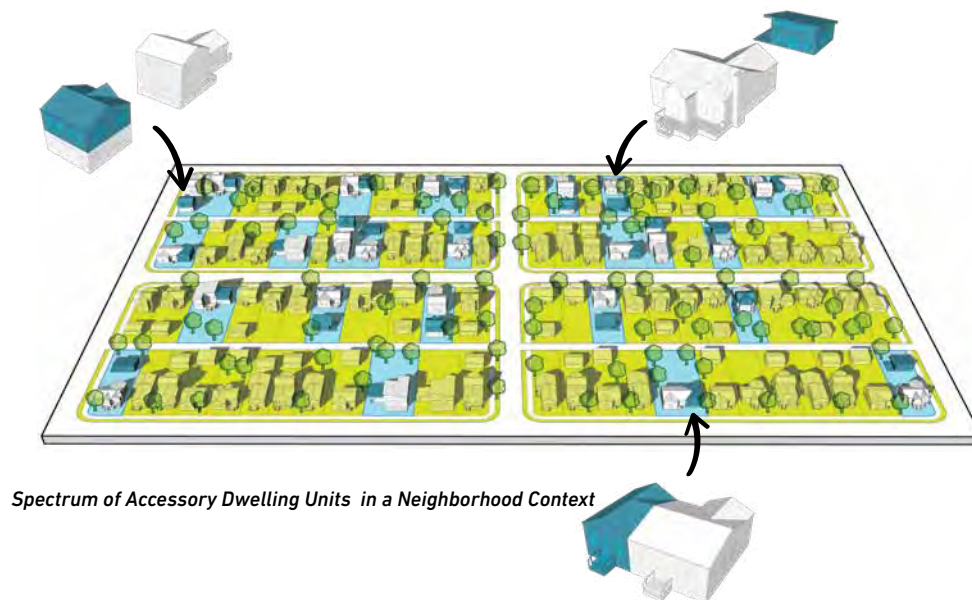
in Downtown and Miller, Trail-Oriented Development (TrOD) areas along the Marquette Greenway, on vacant/abandoned school sites, and neighborhood centers anchored by schools, parks, and small business corridors.

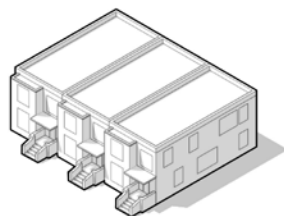
Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) refers to compact, mixed-use development located within walking distance of high-quality public transit, designed to reduce reliance on cars and support vibrant, walkable communities. Trail-Oriented Development (TrOD) is a similar concept, focusing on development near major multi-use trail corridors to encourage active transportation, enhance connectivity, and support healthy, accessible neighborhoods. These locations benefit from existing infrastructure, reduce car dependency, and support vibrant, mixed-income communities.

City-owned former school sites present a unique opportunity for missing-middle housing development at scale. These properties are already embedded within residential neighborhoods and offer the land, access, and public control needed to overcome common development challenges—making them ideal candidates for public-private partnerships and model infill projects.

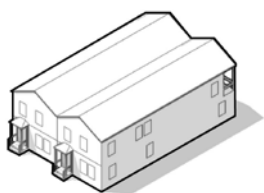
Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)

An additional solution that the city could look to incorporate as a tool to help grow their housing options and livable spaces is accessory dwelling units (ADUs). An ADU is a smaller, secondary residential unit located on the same lot as a main residence, with ADUs having their own spaces for living, sleeping, and cooking.

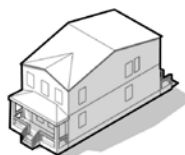




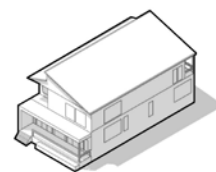
Townhouse



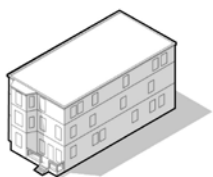
Duplex: Side-by-Side



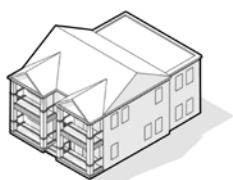
Duplex: Stacked



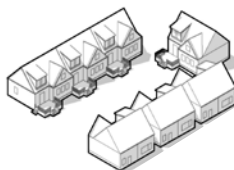
Triplex: 2 Story



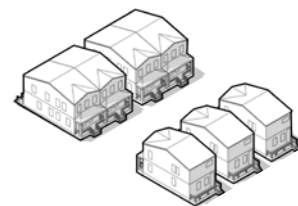
Triplex: 3-Story



Fourplex



Cottage Court



Walking Court

Spectrum of Missing Middle Housing in a Neighborhood Context

CASE STUDY

Indianapolis, IN

A relevant example of neighborhood revitalization through missing-middle housing is found on Indianapolis's Near Eastside, led by Englewood CDC and Near East Area Renewal (NEAR). In partnership with the City of Indianapolis and local nonprofits, the team used a Housing TIF to fund infrastructure, land acquisition, and affordable housing. This supported the transformation of over 100 vacant lots into a walkable, mixed-income neighborhood with duplexes, townhomes, and single-family homes.

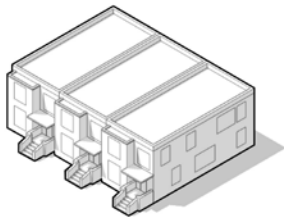
Key projects included the adaptive reuse of a former school into teacher housing and the redevelopment of the P.R. Mallory Building into lofts, a charter high school, and a business incubator. Englewood CDC's Homes for Teachers initiative further strengthened community ties by encouraging educators to live where they work.

The Near Eastside—especially St. Clair Place—offers a strong model for Gary. By leveraging vacant school sites, Housing TIF, and public-private partnerships, Gary can deliver missing-middle housing, stabilize neighborhoods, and attract long-term reinvestment.



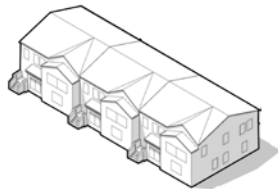
RESIDENTIAL HOUSING TYPOLOGIES

The following are examples and descriptions for various housing typologies the city can look to implement:



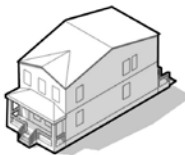
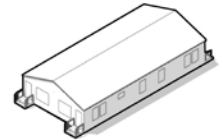
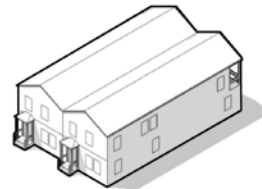
Townhouse

A Townhouse Development consists of three (3) to six (6) individual Townhouse buildings with shared sidewalls. Each Townhouse may have up to 2 dwelling units with a shared entrance.



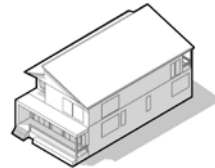
Duplex: Side-by-Side

Duplex: Side-by-side consists of two (2) dwelling units beside each other in a single building, with a separate entrance for each unit.



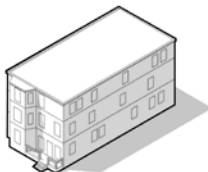
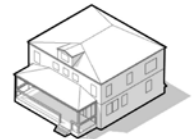
Duplex: Stacked

Duplex: Stacked consists of two (2) dwelling units, with one unit on the first story and one unit on the second story.



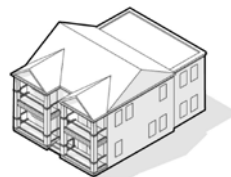
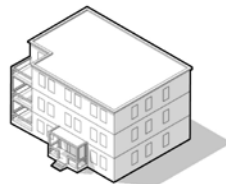
Triplex: 2 Story

Triplex: 2-Story Stacked consists of three (3) dwelling units, with one unit on one story and two units on another story.



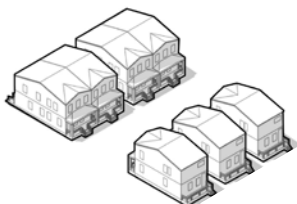
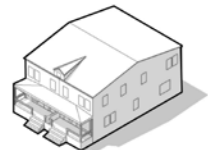
Triplex: 3-Story

Triplex: 3-Story Stacked consists of three (3) dwelling units, with one unit on each story.



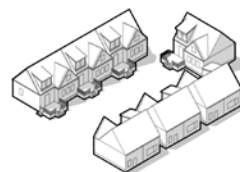
Fourplex

Fourplex: Stacked consists of four (4) dwelling units, with two units on each story.



Walking Court

A Walking Court consists of a group of at least four (4) buildings, each on their own lot, arranged around a central pedestrian way. Each building contains a maximum of two (2) dwelling units.



Cottage Court

A Cottage Court consists of a group of at least three (3) buildings arranged around a central court. Each building contains a maximum of two (2) dwelling units.



Example image from in Rainier Vista Neighborhood in Seattle, Washington - this is an example of a mixed-income neighborhood that replaced earlier affordable housing in one of the best examples nation wide on a transit line for blended housing.

LAND USE CATEGORIES

Future Land Use

The updated Future Land Use Map is a key outcome of this Comprehensive Plan update. It is intended to guide the City of Gary in identifying and promoting desired land use patterns, particularly in areas where land use is expected—or desired—to change over the next decade.

Although much of Gary is already developed with established neighborhoods and key corridors, the city has a significant number of vacant parcels and abandoned or underutilized buildings in need of redevelopment. **The Future Land Use Map will serve as a tool for decision-makers to reimagine and repurpose these areas, supporting the city's efforts to grow its population and workforce, and to inform future zoning updates.**

The Future Land Use Map will be used to help guide City Council, commissions, boards, and city staff when considering development proposals, potential rezonings, and other planning-related requests. While it accounts for existing land use, it also establishes desired land use typologies for the future. These typologies will be summarized in detail on the following pages of this document.

These new land use typologies include:

- Residential
- Business
- Mixed-Use
- Destination District
- Manufacturing
- Floodway/Floodplain

Residential

Description: The Residential category supports neighborhoods where housing is the primary use, accommodating a wide range of scales—from traditional, walkable core neighborhoods to lower-density suburban areas, and everything in between.

Housing types may include single-family homes, duplexes, townhomes, cottage courts, and apartment buildings. Development should reflect and reinforce the character of the surrounding area, while allowing for gradual, context-sensitive increases in density.

Infill and redevelopment efforts—particularly on larger or assembled sites—can enable missing-middle housing, which fills the gap between single-family homes and large apartment buildings. These modest-scale housing types expand housing choices, support walkability, and make efficient use of existing infrastructure.



Business

Description: The Business category supports areas where employment, commerce, and services are the primary uses, accommodating a broad range of scales—from small, walkable neighborhood nodes to larger, auto-oriented commercial corridors and employment centers.

Business types may include retail shops, offices, personal services, restaurants, and commercial uses. Development should reflect the surrounding context—emphasizing pedestrian orientation and mixed-use compatibility in denser areas, while allowing for more auto-accessible formats in suburban or transitional zones.

Infill and redevelopment efforts—especially along key corridors and at underutilized commercial sites—can support modern business formats, shared parking, and improved multi-modal access. These areas are critical to economic development, providing local jobs, services, and activity hubs that enhance neighborhood livability and citywide connectivity.



Mixed-Use

Description: The Mixed-Use category supports compact, walkable areas where residential, business, and destination uses are integrated. Appropriate for settings like Downtown Gary, Miller, and emerging neighborhood nodes. This designation allows flexible building forms and densities based on context.

Mixed-use areas may include housing, retail, offices, restaurants, and cultural or institutional uses—either vertically within buildings or as coordinated clusters. Development should prioritize pedestrian access, active public spaces, and high-quality design. These areas support a variety of housing types that promote inclusive, mixed-income neighborhoods.

This category is ideal for TOD near South Shore stations and TrOD along the Marquette Greenway, supporting higher density and reduced car dependency. Redevelopment of vacant or underused sites can create vibrant, transit-supportive districts with 2–3 story infill or 5+ story mid-rise buildings—advancing neighborhood revitalization and sustainable growth.



Destination District

Description: This category includes civic, cultural, recreational, and institutional anchors that provide essential services, attract visitors, and spark investment. As Gary's most flexible land use category, it allows for intentional mixing of public, nonprofit, commercial, and residential uses.

Anchors may include government buildings, schools, parks, museums, and major destinations like the Hard Rock Casino and planned Lake County Convention Center. Supporting amenities—such as cafés, housing, retail, and mobility hubs—enhance access and vibrancy.

Located near key corridors, these districts range from neighborhood plazas to regional campuses and are ideal for redeveloping vacant or underused sites through placemaking, walkability, and inclusive, community-focused design.



Manufacturing

Description: The Manufacturing category supports intensive industrial, logistics, production, and distribution uses that are critical to Gary's economic base. These areas typically feature large warehouse-style buildings, freight access, and indoor or outdoor operations that may generate noise, odor, or vibration. As such, they should be clearly separated from residential and other sensitive uses.

Located near highways, rail lines, and industrial corridors, Manufacturing districts support production, assembly, warehousing, and emerging uses like tech manufacturing or data centers. These areas require strong infrastructure and thoughtful design, including buffering and truck access management for safety and compatibility.

Redevelopment of former industrial sites can meet modern needs, promote land reuse, and create jobs. Investing in well-located Manufacturing areas helps strengthen Gary's industrial economy and support long-term employment.



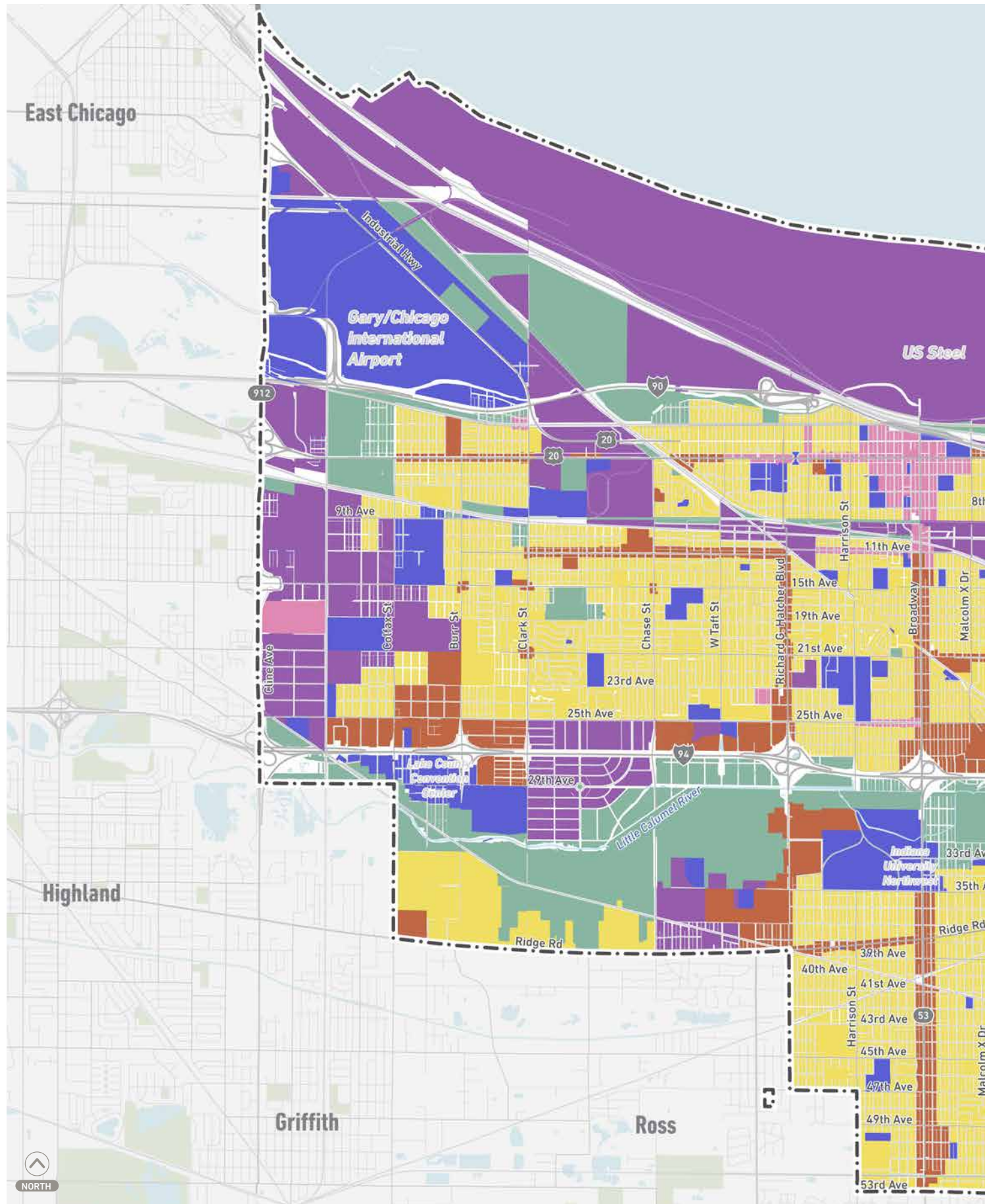
Floodway/Floodplain

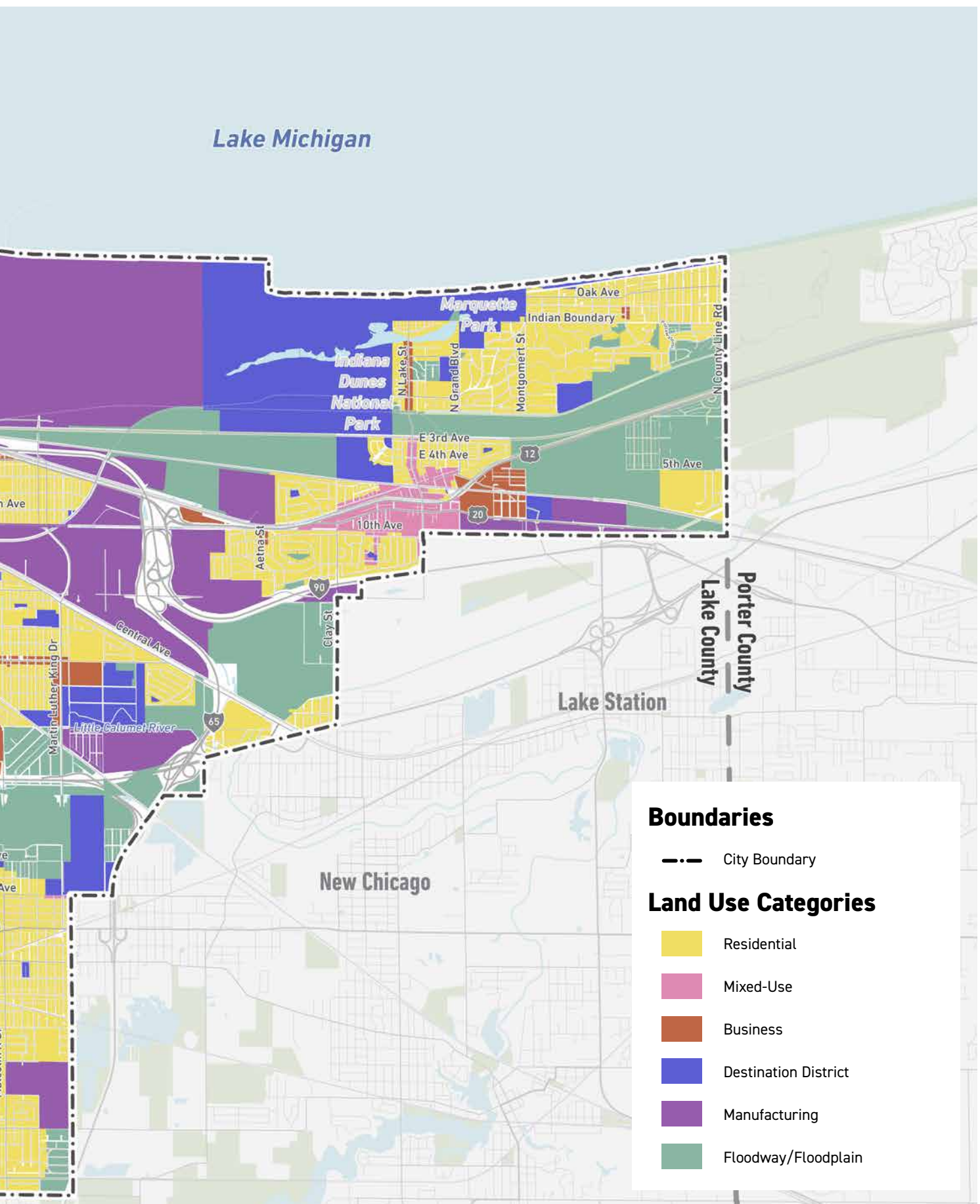
Description: The Floodway/Floodplain category includes environmentally sensitive areas such as floodways, wetlands, woodlands, and wildlife habitats. These areas help manage stormwater, reduce flood risk, and support ecological health. Development should be limited to prevent damage and preserve natural functions like water filtration, erosion control, and habitat protection. Low-impact uses such as trails, parks, greenways, and habitat restoration are appropriate, allowing public access while maintaining environmental integrity.

This designation also supports climate resilience by protecting flood storage areas and reducing long-term infrastructure and disaster recovery costs. Preserving these lands helps Gary safeguard natural resources, improve public safety, and enhance quality of life.



Figure 04: City of Gary Future Land Use Map





03

REDEVELOPMENT





REDEVELOPMENT

Redevelopment is a critical strategy to revitalize Gary's neighborhoods, grow its population, and strengthen the city's tax base. After decades of disinvestment and population loss, meaningful reinvestment in targeted areas can restore vitality, support economic opportunity, and improve quality of life for residents. Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) near South Shore Line stations, the introduction of missing middle housing in walkable neighborhoods, and the reuse of vacant school sites represent some of the city's strongest opportunities for transformational redevelopment. These strategies create compact, connected, and inclusive neighborhoods that support both housing diversity and economic growth. The State of Indiana and the Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority (RDA) have partnered with the City of Gary to advance major blight elimination efforts in the Downtown TOD area. These actions are unlocking high-potential properties for reinvestment, reducing barriers for developers, and signaling that now is the time to invest in Gary's future.

The following strategies introduce short-term opportunities that can serve as a guide for future redevelopment. They provide a foundation for engaging with property owners, residents, and business owners; attracting prospective investors and developers; and identifying opportunities for public-private partnerships. These efforts will help align local and regional resources toward catalytic projects that bring visible, lasting change. By focusing on strategic redevelopment—aligned with transit, infrastructure, and neighborhood revitalization—Gary can convert vacant and underutilized land into vibrant, mixed-use districts that attract residents, businesses, and visitors. This work is crucial to restoring community confidence, drawing private investment, and laying the foundation for long-term, equitable growth.

Redevelopment concepts identified in this plan may be delivered through a variety of implementation models—including fully public projects led by the city, private sector-led developments, public-private partnerships (PPPs), or other creative procurement and financing strategies that align with the city's goals and capacity.

Redevelopment practices can help the city:

Invest in Vacant and Underutilized Properties

The city contains hundreds of vacant parcels, deteriorating structures, and abandoned or aging industrial sites. However, the city has been proactive in obtaining control of properties for redevelopment. Redevelopment presents an opportunity to transform these properties into assets that support future growth and align with the city's strategic priorities. These include expanding housing options, attracting small businesses, and enhancing the public realm. Together, these efforts can improve public image and safety while increasing property values across the city.

Promote Economic Growth and Job Creation

Strategic redevelopment projects can stimulate economic investment and promote long-term growth. By targeting modern industries—such as logistics, advanced manufacturing, or technology hubs—Gary can attract new employers and diversify its economic base. These projects also support both short- and long-term job creation, strengthening the local tax base and reducing unemployment.

Advance Public and Environmental Health

Redevelopment offers opportunities to secure federal and state funding to clean up and reinvest in brownfields and legacy industrial sites that may pose health or environmental risks. Remediating these properties can improve the well-being of residents and contribute to the development of healthier, more resilient neighborhoods.

Create Sustainable Infrastructure

Contemporary redevelopment efforts often incorporate sustainability measures such as green infrastructure and transit-oriented development. These improvements not only reduce vulnerability to future environmental hazards but also enhance the city's sense of place—making Gary a more attractive and livable community for residents, businesses, and visitors.

Blight Elimination

Blight elimination is a cornerstone of revitalization efforts in both Downtown Gary and key residential neighborhoods such as Aetna. Years of disinvestment have left behind thousands of vacant, abandoned, and hazardous structures that threaten public safety, depress property values, and hinder redevelopment. A 2015 parcel survey estimated more than 6,500 vacant buildings in need of demolition, and although over 1,300 structures have been removed since 2012, thousands more remain. Many of these properties are also tax-delinquent—more than 11,000 parcels are auctioned off by the County Treasurer each year, with 94% failing to sell, becoming a sunk cost for Gary taxpayers and a persistent burden on City services.

In 2023, the Indiana General Assembly passed Senate Enrolled Act 434, which established the Blighted Property Demolition Fund under Indiana Code 36-7.5-6. This legislation provides up to \$6 million annually for two years—matched 1:1 by local or other sources—for a total of \$12 million in available demolition funding. The City of Gary has successfully secured the necessary match to unlock the full \$12 million, with funds administered by the Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority (RDA). Additional funding could become available in the near future, further expanding the initiative's reach. The first round of demolitions is expected to occur in 2025.

To guide these efforts, the City and RDA collaborated on a 2023 Blight Elimination Strategy, which examined publicly-owned properties in the downtown area. High-priority demolitions are being phased in, with initial focus on catalytic sites that can generate redevelopment opportunities and key parcels along Broadway. At the same time, parallel demolition activity is advancing in neighborhoods such as Aetna, where concentrated investment is helping to stabilize residential blocks and create a safer environment for future reinvestment.

This targeted, phased strategy is essential to clearing the path for Transit-Oriented Development (TOD), reinvigorating neighborhood cores like Aetna, restoring the City's tax base, and supporting Gary's broader revitalization goals.

REDEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The sites shown below are all example sites within the listed boundaries and are meant to help show redevelopment potential that exists within the city.



Downtown TDD



Miller TDD



Former School Sites



Underutilized Prominent Sites



Vacant Parcels



Vacant Parcels

CASE STUDY

Cities with stories similar to Gary—such as Pittsburgh, PA; Detroit, MI; Buffalo, NY; and Benton Harbor, MI—have successfully reversed decades of population loss and disinvestment through bold, coordinated redevelopment strategies. These cities demonstrate that legacy communities with strong bones and unique assets can chart a new course toward growth, resilience, and renewed vibrancy.

Pittsburgh, PA

Transitioned from an economy rooted in heavy industry to one focused on education, healthcare, and innovation. Strategic reinvestment in its riverfronts, university districts, and cultural assets helped draw new residents, boost its tax base, and reposition the city as a model for post-industrial revitalization.



Detroit, MI

Has leveraged targeted demolition, neighborhood stabilization, and major private investment—including the transformation of its downtown and Midtown areas—into walkable, mixed-use hubs. With strong public-private partnerships, Detroit has seen growing population centers, new housing construction, and renewed interest from investors and residents.



Buffalo, NY

Focused on infrastructure improvements, waterfront redevelopment, and historic preservation to bring new energy to its downtown and surrounding neighborhoods. Investments in transit, anchor institutions, and the reuse of industrial buildings have attracted residents and small businesses back to the urban core.

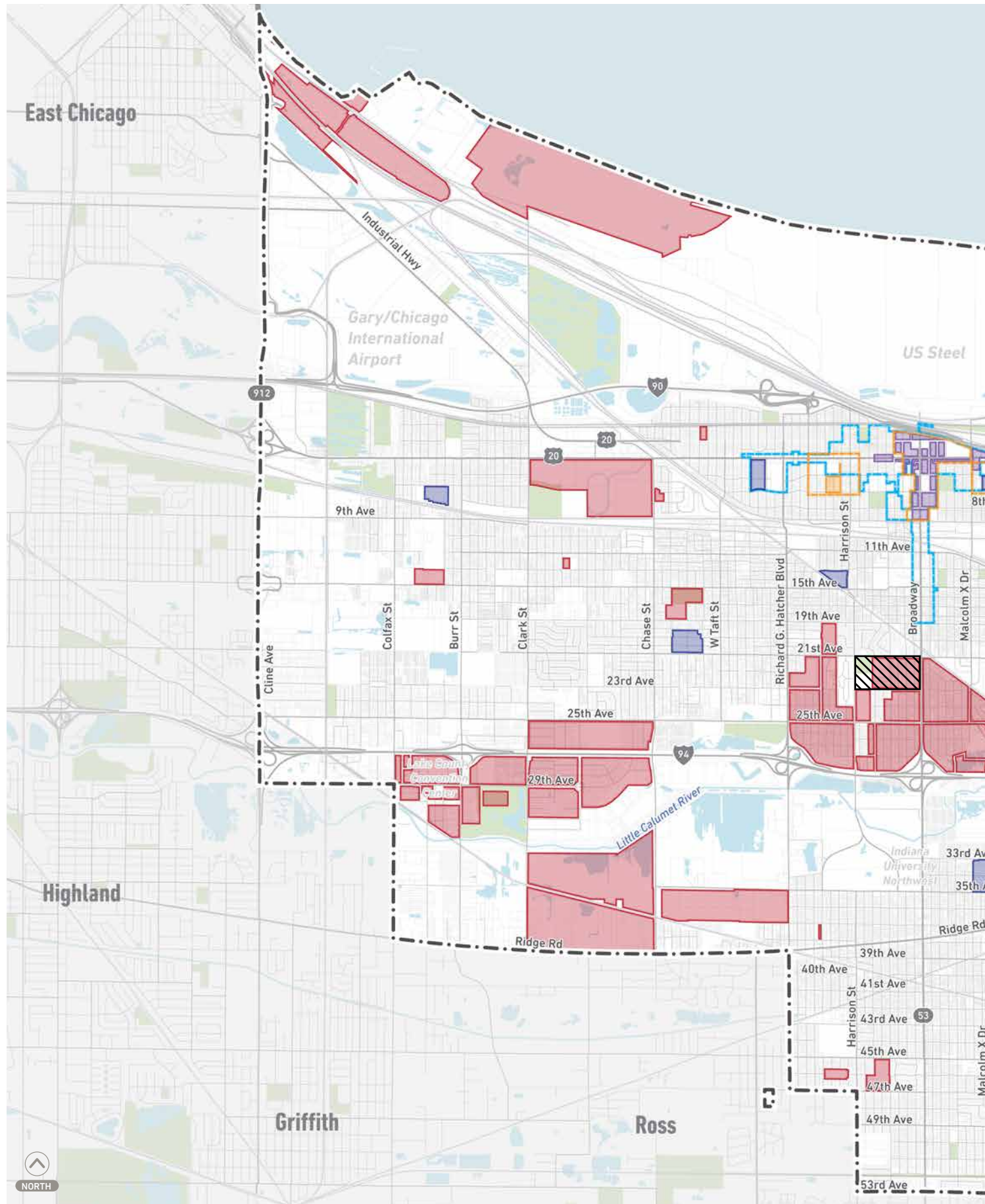


Benton Harbor, MI

Though smaller in scale, demonstrates the power of catalytic public-private partnerships, blight reduction, and infrastructure upgrades. Redevelopment of its downtown, parks, and housing stock has supported gradual population stabilization and visible improvements to community life.



Figure 05: City of Gary Redevelopment Map



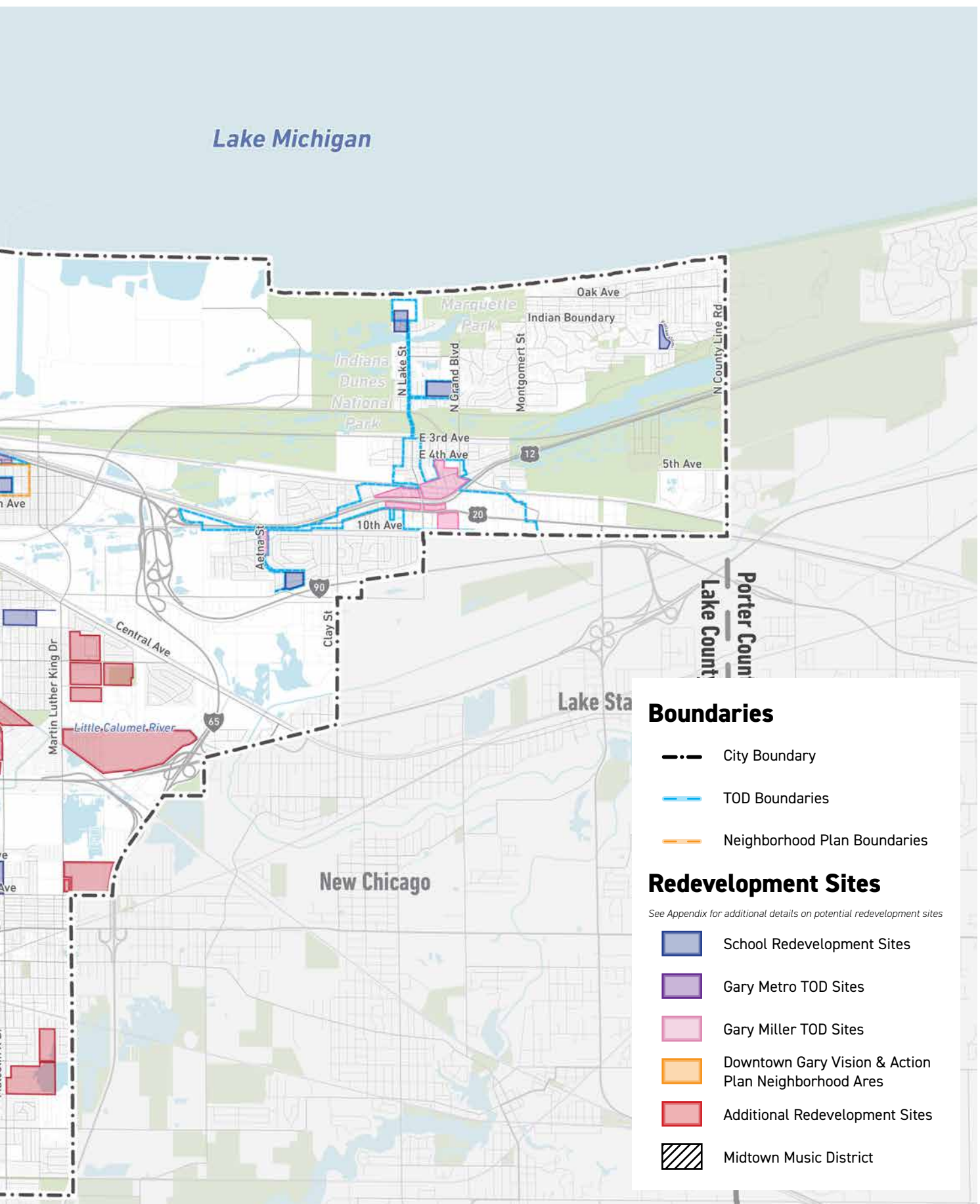
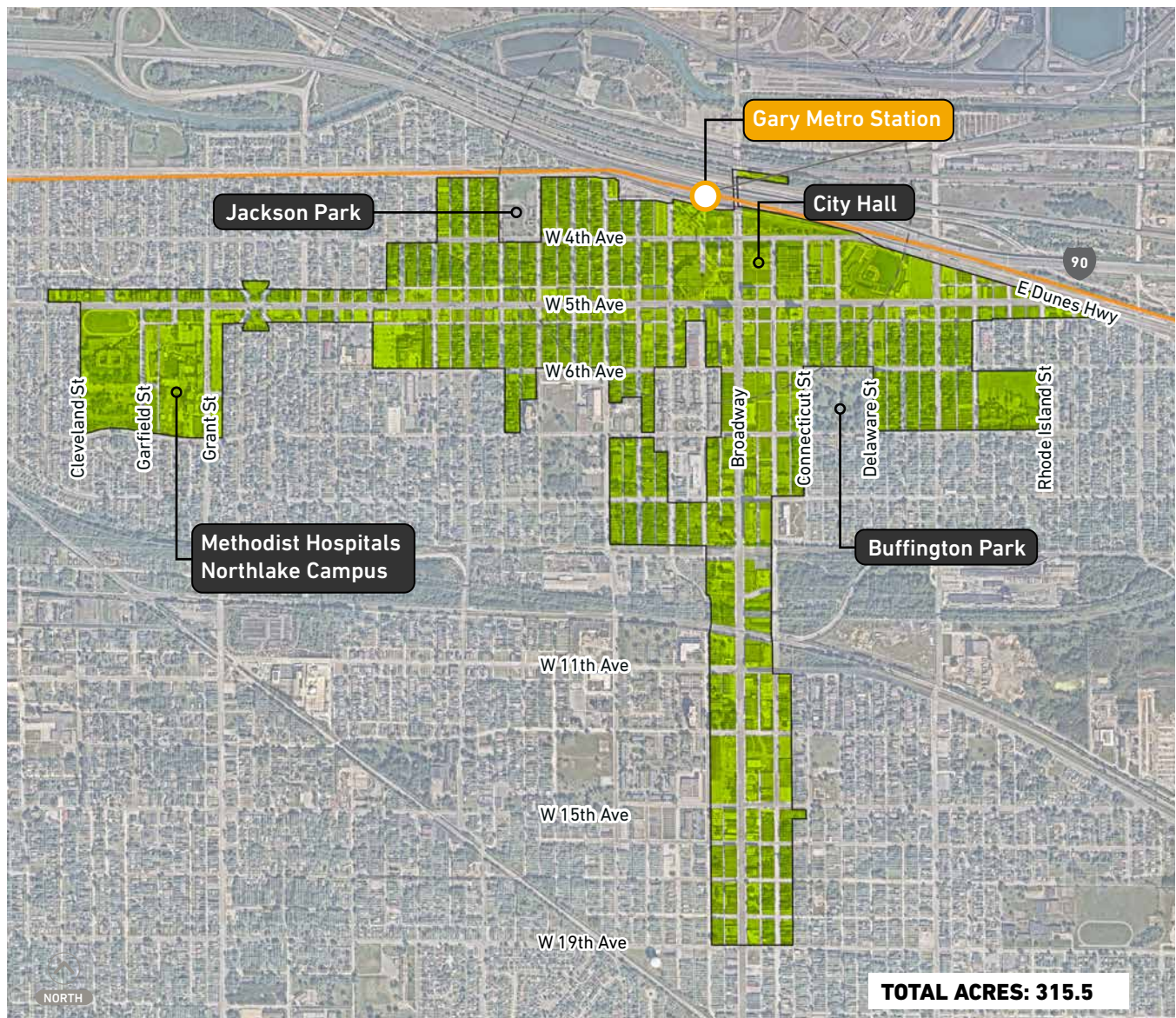


Figure 06: Downtown Gary TDD Boundary



Map from the Indiana Regional Development Authority

Boundary Summary

The 315.5-acre Gary Metro TDD focuses on Corridor Development, Downtown TOD, and Infill Redevelopment to catalyze investment around the new Metro Station. The City and RDA are prioritizing strategic property acquisition and redevelopment to reactivate the downtown core and support TOD. The district is now collecting property and local income tax increment from those who live and work within the TDD, which is reinvested locally and administered by the RDA. The boundary may be expanded once, up to 640 acres, through 2047 in collaboration with the City of Gary.

Figure 07: Gary Miller TDD Boundary



Map from the Indiana Regional Development Authority

Boundary Summary

The 315.7-acre Gary Miller TDD targets Corridor Development, Infill Redevelopment, and Industrial Repositioning, with key opportunities near the new Miller Station and along Lake Street. Infrastructure investments along U.S. 20 and the planned vacation of U.S. 12 position the area for growth, supported by additional tools like tax credits and Opportunity Zone funding. The TDD is actively collecting property and income tax increment for reinvestment, administered by the RDA. The boundary may be expanded once, up to 640 acres, through 2047 in collaboration with the City of Gary.

REDEVELOPMENT AREA PROFILES

DOWNTOWN DISTRICT

New momentum is building—driven by political transition, emerging funding sources, and growing local commitment to redevelopment. In 2023, legislation advanced to establish a funding source through the State of Indiana and the Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority (RDA) to match local dollars for blight elimination and the construction of a new Gary Metro Station. At the time of this plan, the Gary Metro Station Authority—tasked with owning, operating, and managing the new station—is being formed through a partnership among the City of Gary, the State of Indiana, and the RDA. Together, the City and RDA are actively pursuing state and federal grants as well as philanthropic support to realize this vision.

In October 2023, the RDA used a federally funded Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Implementation Study to collaborate with the City and establish the Gary Metro Transit Development District (TDD) boundary. This 315.5-acre district is positioned to benefit from revitalization efforts through targeted infrastructure investments, blight elimination, and community-focused redevelopment. The TDD is designed to leverage funding authorized by SB 434, enacted in 2023, which created matching grant programs for blight elimination and multi-modal station construction. These investments are expected to catalyze Downtown Gary's revitalization and economic growth. The TDD, administered by the RDA, reinvests property tax and incremental local income tax revenue from residents and workers within the district back into the area. The RDA may also partner with the City to enhance bonding capacity through the Indiana Finance Authority. More information about the legislation is available at nwtdd.com.

A revitalized Downtown has the potential to anchor equitable, transit-oriented growth across the city. By prioritizing a new multi-modal station and leveraging publicly controlled property, a comprehensive redevelopment strategy can take shape. Walkable, pedestrian-scaled corridors and trail connections to local and regional systems position Gary for sustainable, place-based reinvestment. Strategic phasing and prioritization will be essential to realizing long-term success. The redevelopment of Gary Metro Center and its neighboring sites will serve as the anchor for future downtown development.



Sketch from Notre Dame Vision and Action Plan Study



Downtown development rendering from TOD Implementation Plan

Parallel with infrastructure investments, the City should continue acquiring under-performing or vacant properties in strategic locations. Focus should be placed on key downtown parcels with high redevelopment potential, targeting them for demolition, stabilization, and a mix of subsidized and market-rate infill residential development. As a second phase, priority sites surrounding the Gary Metro Station—including the current site of the Genesis Convention Center—could be redeveloped as a vibrant mixed-use core. Southern parcels along Broadway Avenue form a corridor for future commercial and mixed-use development. Where feasible, historic buildings in good condition should be preserved and considered for adaptive reuse. The overarching goal is to build a critical mass of development that generates a robust market for TDD and supports Gary's broader economic development path.



Downtown character rendering from TOD Implementation Plan

Within the Downtown TDD study area, two parallel strategies were pursued. The first focused on catalytic sites that could attract short-term private investment. The second targeted longer-term opportunities expected to mature as public and private investment and infrastructure improve. These strategies informed development concepts that were analyzed for their economic and spatial impact, shaping a phased “arc of development” aligned with the City’s growth objectives.

Improved commuter access to Downtown Chicago—with reduced travel to Chicago substantially increasing Gary’s regional competitiveness. The replacement of the 40-year-old Gary Metro Station with a modern, multi-modal facility with integrated, secure parking is the linchpin of this transformation. The TDD strategy prioritizes the station and focuses on shovel-ready sites due to vacancy, public ownership, utility access, and station proximity. These include the immediate blocks surrounding the station, the Genesis Convention

Center, and parcels along Broadway extending to 8th Avenue—all envisioned as part of a walkable, mixed-use downtown core. Two concepts are explored within this plan, with ultimate flexibility desired as this comes to fruition in the next several years.

In August 2024, the Legacy Foundation of Lake County submitted an Eli Lilly Regional Proposal to link Gary and Northwest Indiana with the Marquette Greenway via the National Park Connector Route—originally proposed in 2009 by the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC). This investment would complement the new station by establishing a “Discovery Hub” in Downtown Gary, connecting visitors to the Indiana Dunes National Park and further reinforcing Gary’s role as a regional destination.

VISION FOR A NEW MULTI-MODAL TRANSIT CENTER

Content provided courtesy of the University of Notre Dame Housing and Community Regeneration Initiative.



FIGURE 58: Aerial View of the Existing Site

Gary's twin domed buildings currently frame the approach to Broadway, but are surrounded by open land that does not effectively interact with either the city or the interstate and train lines passing by.

Source: Google Earth



FIGURE 59: Proposed Multimodal Transit Station within a Revitalized Downtown Core

The new multimodal transit station acts as a gateway to the city for visitors arriving by car, bus, or train. The arms of the station embrace the relandscaped Gateway Park, and its central mass sits respectfully between but not in front of the historic paired domes of City Hall and the Courthouse.



The first level of the transit center includes essential transit services as well as multiple retail opportunities that engage with and frame the public space to the south of the main structure.



The second level contains the primary station room, with access to a new platform for boarding the South Shore line.



This third level provides for revenue-generating office space at a unique and convenient location with unparalleled views.



The top level is an event space with outdoor terraces, which can generate revenue from both meetings and events. Addition of this space to downtown Gary as a whole is important, as the city lacks a hotel or ballroom.

FIGURE 62: Floor Plans for the Four Levels of the Multimodal Transit Center

The project spatially creates a grand outdoor room defined by the new transit center, City Hall, the Courthouse, and the adaptive reuse of the Adam Benjamin Jr. Metro Center. Throughout the charrette process, citizens expressed frustration at how the current platform is accessed, which requires navigating several level changes and crossing over a parking lot in a "hamster tube." This solution relocates the train platform access to track level, providing clear wayfinding and greatly improving safety and accessibility.

A CONCEPT ALONG THE BROADWAY CORRIDOR

Content provided courtesy of the University of Notre Dame Housing and Community Regeneration Initiative.

KEY FINDINGS

1 The Broadway Corridor is the anchor for downtown Gary's public realm

With the heart of downtown at the intersection of Broadway and Fifth Avenue, the continuation of Broadway heading south to Ninth Avenue was historically the primary corridor of activity, and is well placed to continue in this role as Gary revives.

2 Gary citizens have a strong sense of history, culture, and future-forward growth

The primarily African-American community of Gary takes great pride in aspects of Black history and culture in the city, which can be highlighted and celebrated in the built environment. At the same time, the community is very future-focused.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1 Create continuity and variety with a series of districts

Because the Broadway Corridor is so long and linear, holding interest and maintaining energy all the way down is only possible with variety. Establishing a series of districts allows successive pockets of Broadway to offer different experiences.

2 Honor elements of the past, while carving out space for the built environment of the future

The Broadway Corridor is lined with a number of historic buildings, as well as a large amount of vacant land, which offers a slate to develop a mix of traditional fabric buildings with iconic, contemporary buildings in special locations.

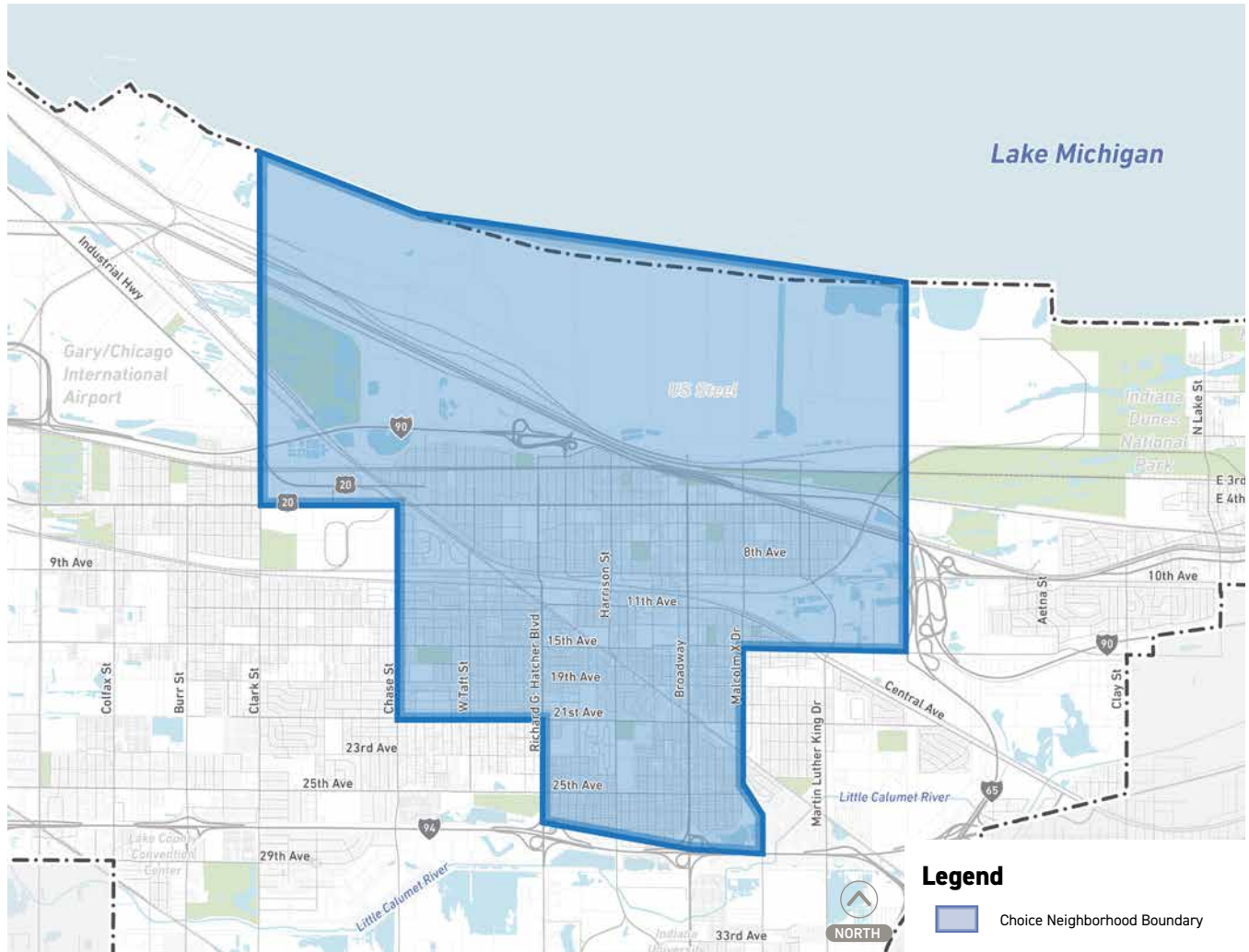


FIGURE 46: District Plan for the Broadway Corridor

The corridor unites a series of overlapping districts, each with their own character. This combination of variety and energy will keep pedestrians engaged with the overall experience of walking down Broadway, an experience which evolves along the north-south trajectory.

CHOICE NEIGHBORHOODS PROGRAM

Figure 08: Northwest Greater Gary Gateway Map



HUD's Choice Neighborhoods Program funds local strategies to replace distressed housing, improve resident outcomes, and attract reinvestment to transform neighborhoods. It focuses on mixed-income housing, better access to education, jobs, and health, and creating vibrant, sustainable communities--
<https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/choice-neighborhoods/>

Northwest Greater Gary Gateway – HUD Mapping Tool Summary

The Gary Housing Authority's 2024 application includes four public housing sites—Delaney, Genesis Towers, Broadway Manor, and Gary Manor—with 28,657 residents and 16,670 housing units. The poverty/ELI rate is 38.96%, and long-term vacancy is 30.42%, signaling high distress and an affordable housing shortage.

How the Tool Can Be Used

This HUD mapping tool provides key neighborhood distress indicators—poverty, vacancy, and housing need—that help applicants demonstrate eligibility, strengthen funding proposals, and prioritize strategies for neighborhood revitalization.

VISION FOR A TRANSFORMATIVE LAKE MICHIGAN MARINA IN GARY

Gary, Indiana stands on the precipice of a monumental transformation. The opening of land east of the U.S. Steel shipping canal presents an unparalleled opportunity to forge a world-class marina on Lake Michigan, a vibrant centerpiece that will redefine our city's relationship with its waterfront and ignite a new era of economic vitality. This isn't just about building a marina; it's about reclaiming our industrial legacy and reimagining it as a breathtaking public amenity that serves as a beacon for residents and visitors alike.

This strategically located, currently inaccessible, and underutilized lakefront is the ideal canvas for a bold public-private partnership (P3). We envision a full-service marina that won't just offer slips and boat storage, but will be a dynamic destination in its own right. Imagine a bustling hub with diverse public amenities, integrated retail, and enticing dining experiences, all seamlessly woven into the fabric of Gary's burgeoning identity.

The power of this vision lies in its connection to Gary's inherent strengths. The marina will be a gateway to the majestic Indiana Dunes National Park, offering unparalleled access to Lake Michigan's pristine waters and connecting directly to our expanding network of recreational trails. This project will finally unlock a significant portion of our shoreline, transforming a long-isolated area into a vibrant and accessible public realm.

Through a robust P3 model, the City of Gary and its partners will spearhead essential investments in site preparation, crucial environmental remediation, and foundational infrastructure. Private partners will bring their invaluable capital and expertise to design, construct, operate, and program not only the state-of-the-art marina but also complementary adjacent developments that amplify its economic impact. This collaborative approach will ensure a sustainable, world-class asset that generates significant returns for our community. This marina will be more than a place to dock boats; it will be a catalyst for economic revitalization, a symbol of Gary's resurgence, and a source of immense pride for generations to come.

CASE STUDY

Buffalo Harbor, (Buffalo, New York)

While Buffalo's prominent waterfronts used to be historically isolated from the rest of the city and dominated by steel mills, shipping ports, and tanneries, a revival of the Buffalo River occurred with the help of state and federal initiatives and funding to help waterfront development. One of the areas established was the Buffalo Harbor Brownfield Opportunity area (BOA), a 1,000+ acre area that included the Inner and Outer Buffalo harbors, portions of downtown, and a residential neighborhood.

Much of the BOA contained large concentrations of vacant parcels and abandoned brownfields, the lasting footprint of the past industrial uses that once existed along the waterfront. Today, the brownfields are undergoing remediation processes overseen by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and redevelopment efforts are beginning to be realized along Buffalo's waterfront which include new development, public spaces, pedestrian and bike trails, ferry services, and other outdoor amenities.



SCHOOL SITES

Strategy

A major redevelopment opportunity in Gary lies in the city's portfolio of former school sites. Due to decades of population decline, many schools were forced to close and have remained vacant for years. While several of the buildings still stand, many are in poor condition—some too deteriorated for reuse—leaving large, underutilized parcels within residential neighborhoods.

As Gary begins to see signs of population growth and renewed investment, these long-vacant sites offer new potential. The city faces rising demand for new housing, workforce-oriented development, and modern amenities. Reimagining these properties as community assets can support neighborhood revitalization, expand the housing supply, and respond to the city's evolving needs.

In collaboration with city staff, stakeholders, and the community, this section identifies 10 priority school redevelopment sites and the former Naval Armory site. These locations were selected based on redevelopment potential, infrastructure access, neighborhood context, and alignment with citywide planning goals.

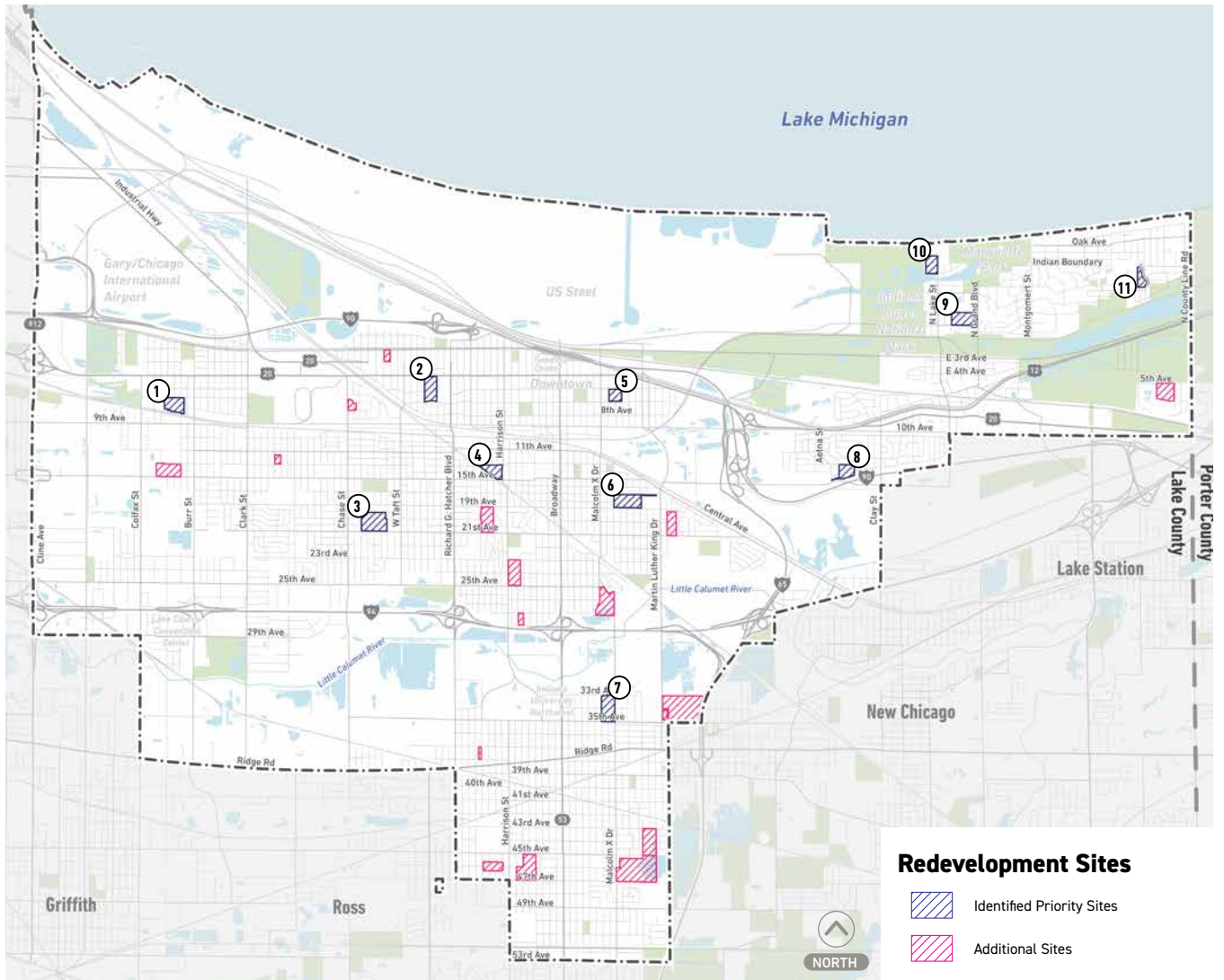
The priority sites include:

- Site 1 - Brunswick Site
- Site 2 - Horace Mann Site
- Site 3 - Ernie Pyle Site
- Site 4 - Norton Site
- Site 5 - Emerson Site
- Site 6 - Dunbar-Pulaski Site
- Site 7 - Franklin Site
- Site 8 - Aetna Site
- Site 9 - William A. Wirt Site
- Site 10 - Naval Armory Site
- Site 11 - Nobel Site

Recommendations for each site are informed by demographic trends, existing infrastructure conditions, land use patterns, regional plans, and feedback from public engagement activities and workshops. Redevelopment concepts aim to balance housing, open space, environmental sustainability, and neighborhood character.

The map to the right shows the location of these sites across the city. Blue-highlighted parcels represent the 11 priority sites addressed in this section. Additional sites, marked in pink, are privately owned and categorized as secondary opportunities that could be considered for redevelopment as community needs evolve.

Figure 09: Redevelopment School Sites Location Map



Former Horace Mann High School Building



Former Aetna Elementary School Building



Former Brunswick Elementary School Building



Former Emerson High School Building

Figure 10: Brunswick Site Existing Conditions

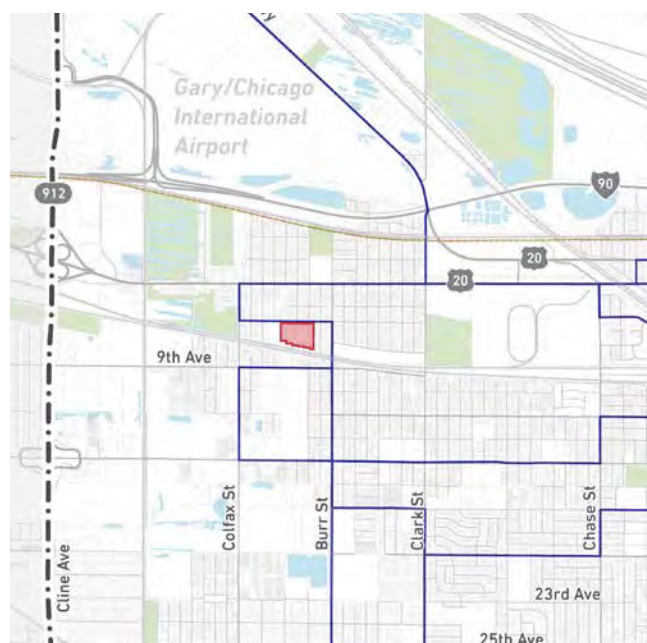


Site #1: Brunswick (700 Calhoun Street)

Site Acreage:	15.4
Ownership:	City of Gary

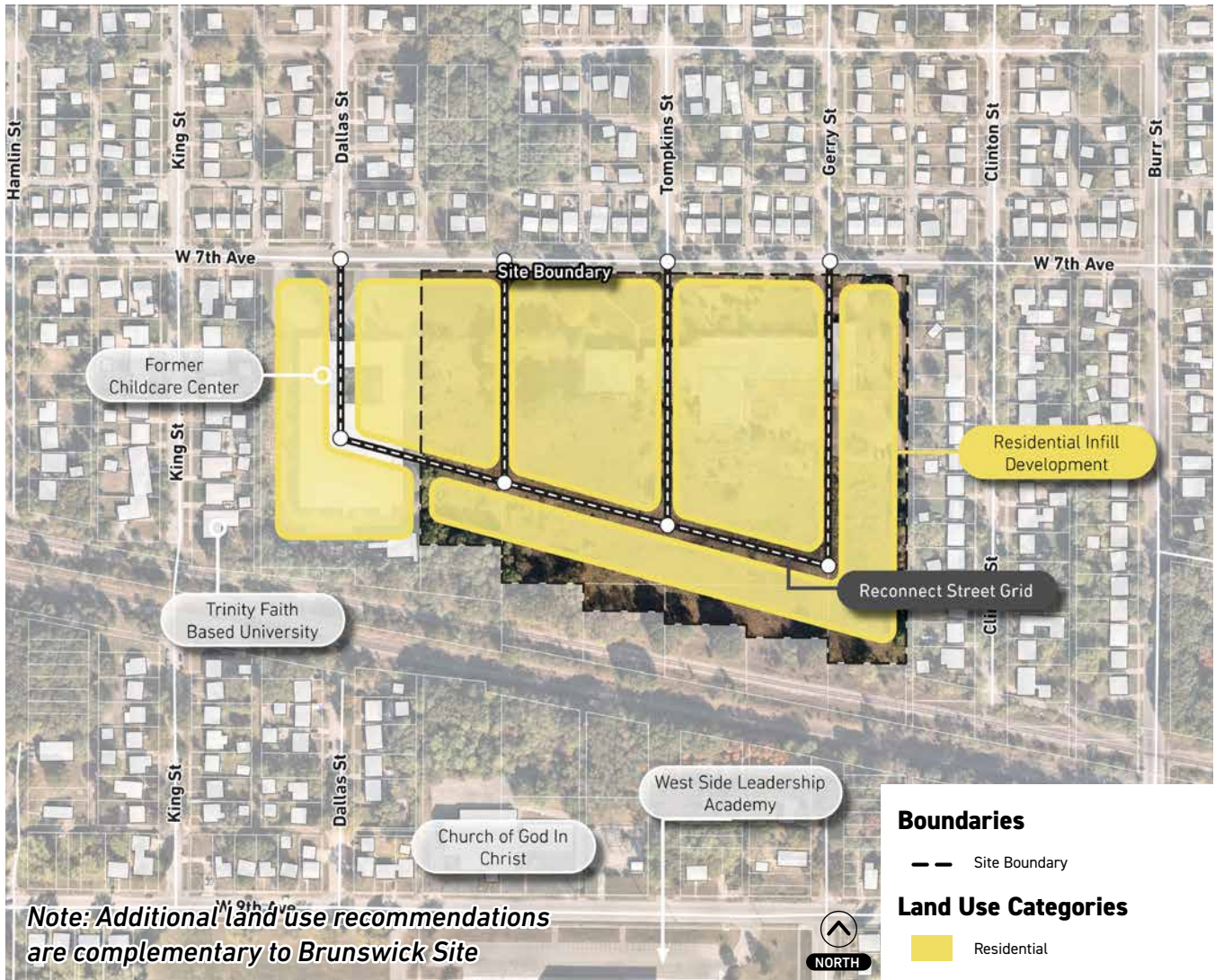
The Brunswick site is located on the west side of the city. Alongside the former school site there is a former childcare center located to the west, and an active rail runs along the south of the site. There are various institutional uses that exist around the site, but the primary surrounding context are residential homes.

-  South Shore Station
-  South Shore Line
-  GPTC Stop
-  GPTC Route



Locational Map

Figure 11: Brunswick Site Redevelopment Recommendations



Recommendations

The site should be developed with residential infill to match the existing characteristics and feel of the surrounding neighborhood. The former childcare center to the west of the site should also be residential infill development.



Imagery to help picture potential development density and scale

Figure 12: Horace Mann Site Existing Conditions

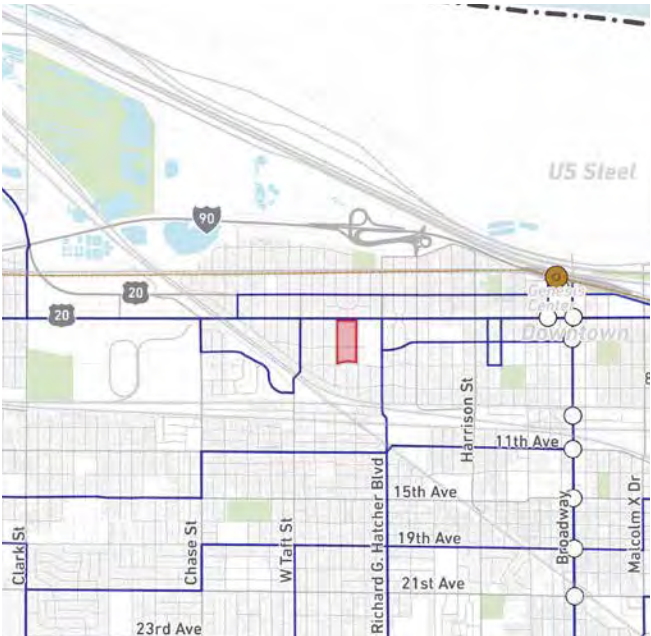


Site #2: Horace Mann (524 Garfield Street)

Site Acreage:	10
Ownership:	Gary Housing Authority

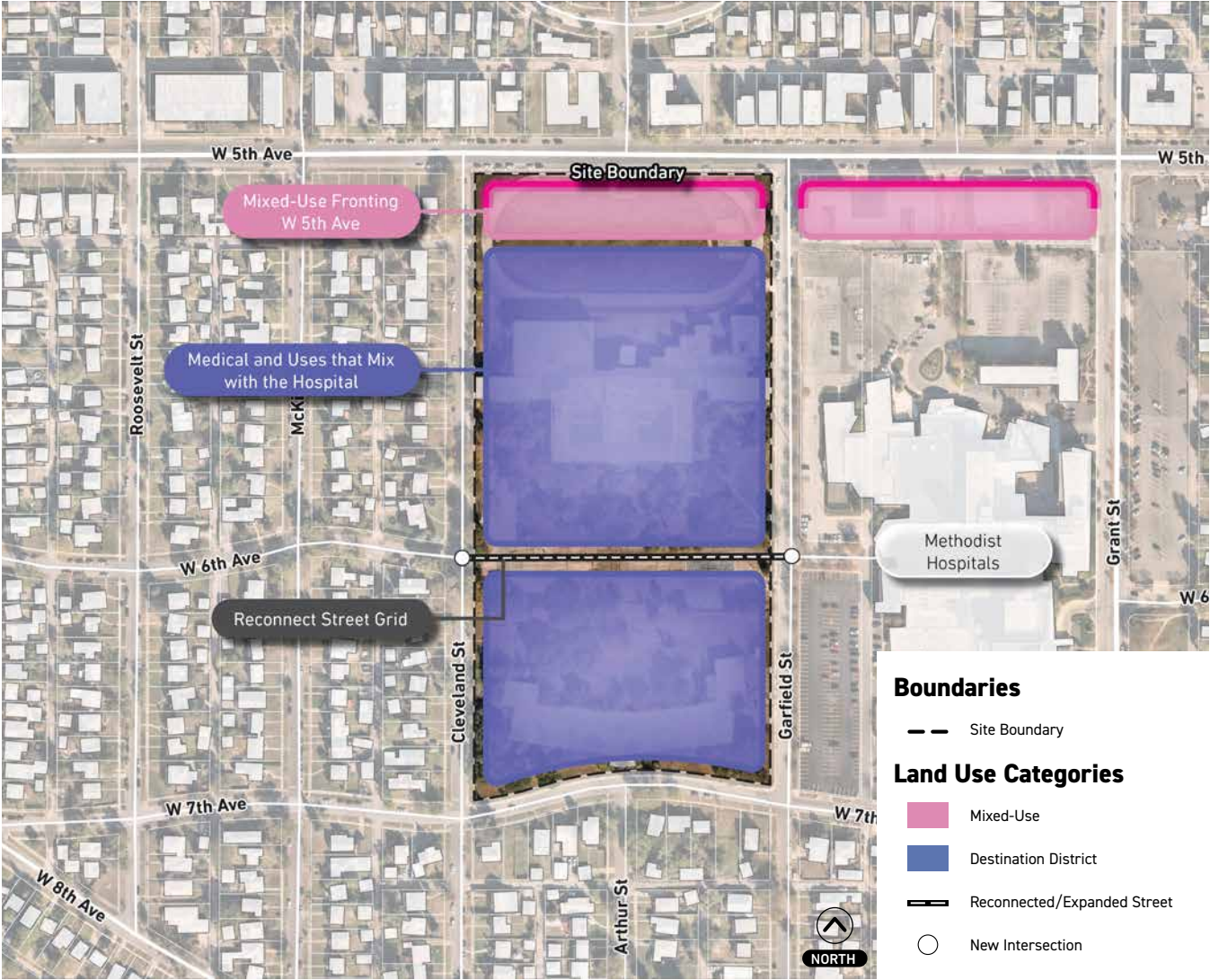
The Horace Mann site is 10 acres in total and runs along W 5th Ave, a primary roadway within the city that has numerous apartment complexes and commercial business/offices that run along the corridor. The biggest asset that exists near the site is Methodist Hospital, located just to the east of the site along Grant Street. The hospital used to use the Horace Mann site for helicopter landings in the past, though they no longer utilize the space anymore. Residential homes surround the site to the west and the south.

- South Shore Station
- ++++ South Shore Line
- GPTC Stop
- GPTC Route



Locational Map

Figure 13: Horace Mann Site Redevelopment Recommendations



Recommendations

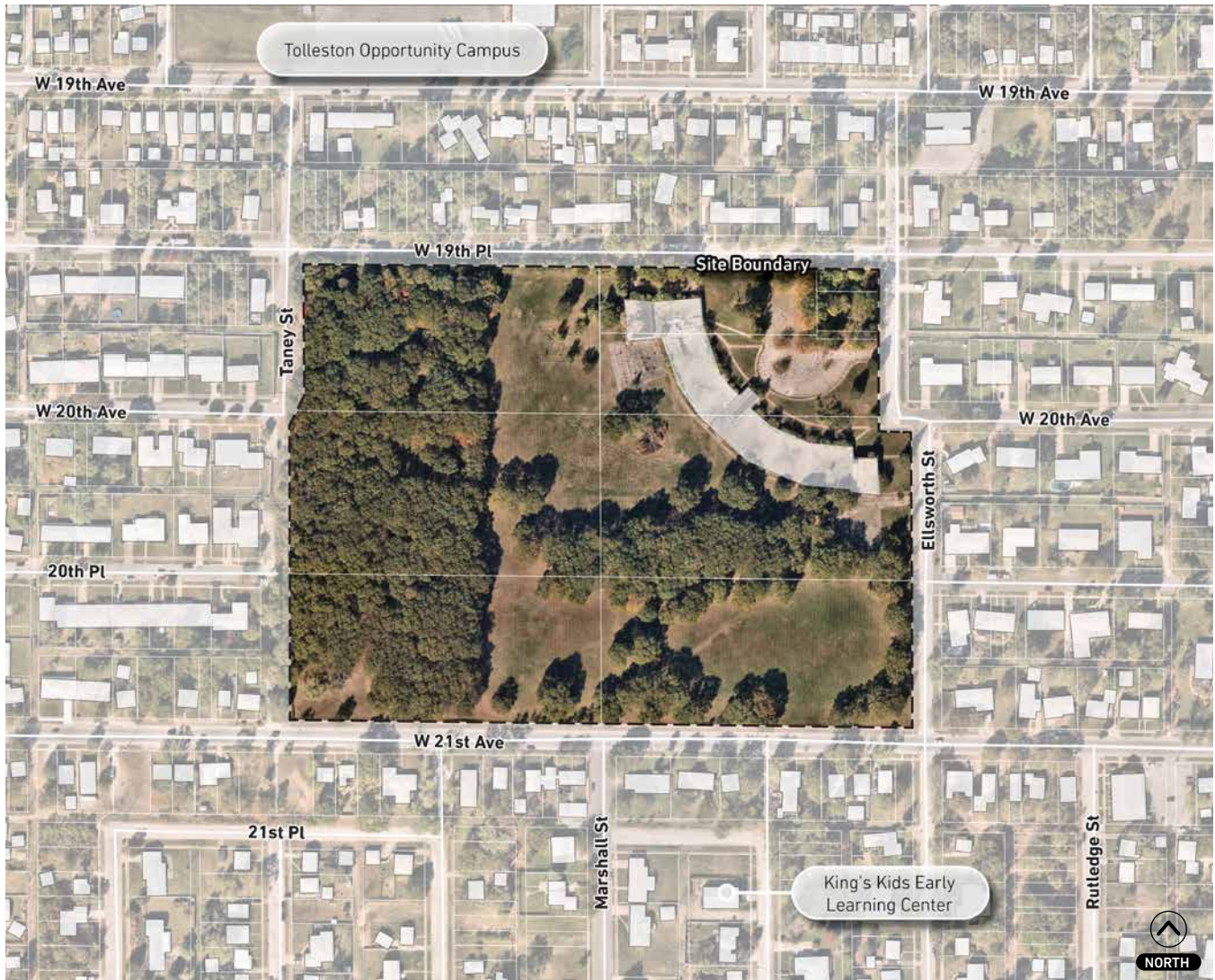
Mixed-use space should be facing W 5th Avenue and should offer uses that match the corridor as well as the hospital. Residential uses can be utilized above the ground floor.

W 6th Ave should continue through the site and reconnect, splitting the site in two. The remaining site should be used as medical offices and other uses that mix with the hospital. Partnerships with the hospital for this site should also be explored.



Imagery to help picture potential development density and scale

Figure 14: Ernie Pyle Site Existing Conditions

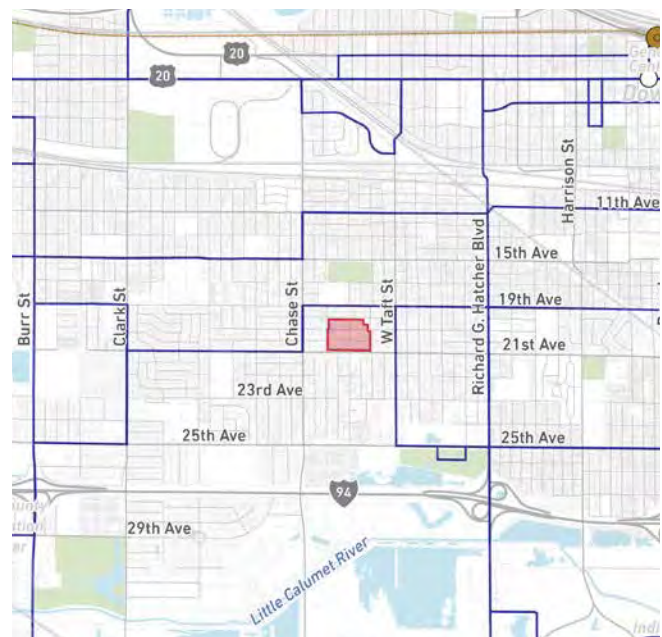


Site #3: Ernie Pyle (2521-89 W 19th Avenue)

Site Acreage:	25.53
Ownership:	Gary Housing Authority

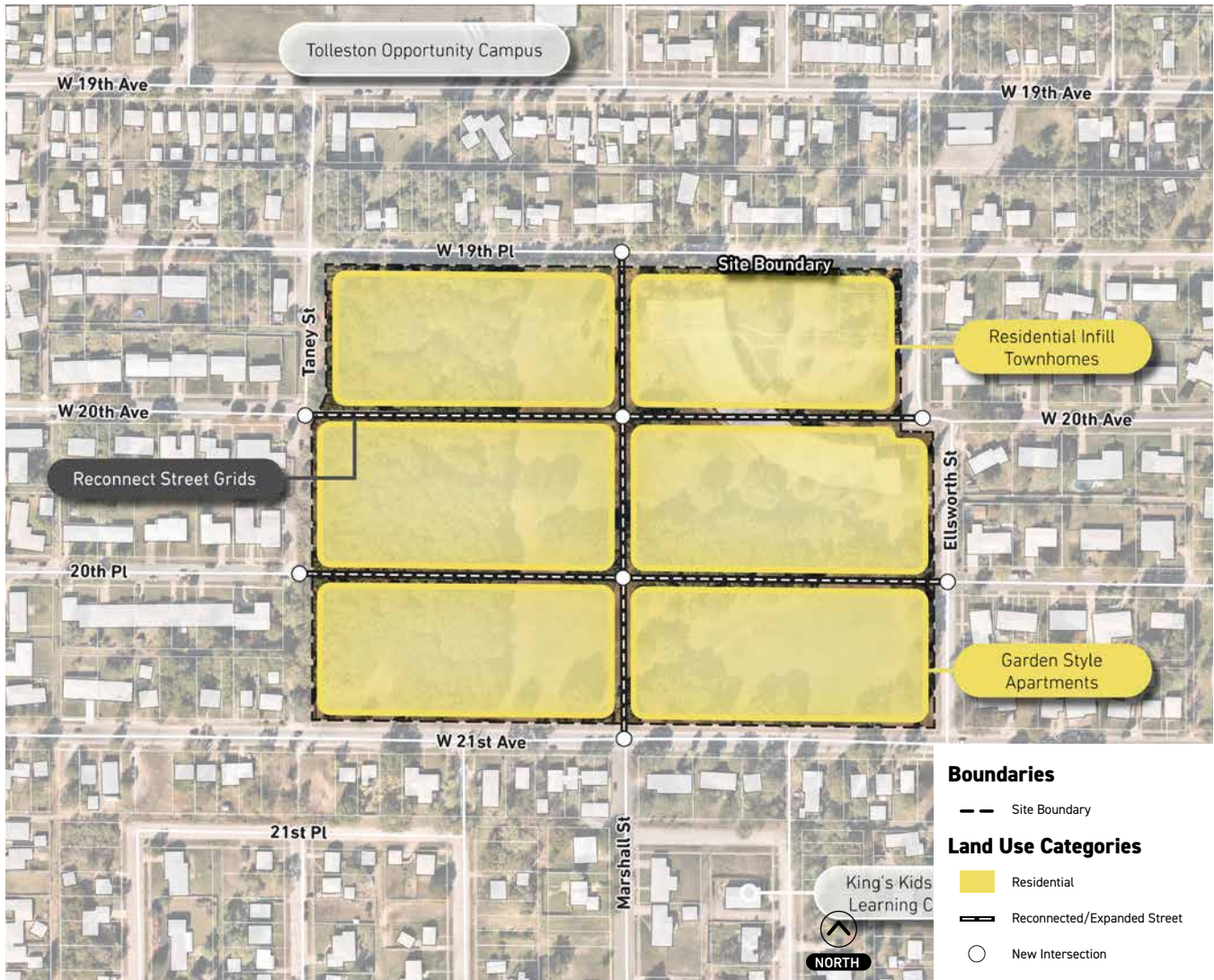
The Ernie Pyle site is 25.53 acres in total and is located between 19th and 21st Avenue. The former school site is tucked along the top right of the site, with the rest of the site being mostly wooded and/or open space. The surrounding context is primarily residential homes and neighborhoods, but a few blocks north is the Boys & Girls Club of Greater Northwest Indiana - Gary Club, as well as Tolleston Park.

-  South Shore Station
-  South Shore Line
-  GPTC Stop
-  GPTC Route



Locational Map

Figure 15: Ernie Pyle Site Redevelopment Recommendations



Recommendations

Reconnecting W 20th Avenue and 20th Place and having Marshall Street continue up through the site will create a new street grid on the site that splits up the site.

The north side of the site can be used for street facing townhomes with parking in the back. The southern portion can have garden style apartments that match the architecture of the surrounding homes and shouldn't be taller than 3 stories.

Preservation of existing trees along the west side of the site should be considered.



Imagery to help picture potential development density and scale

Figure 16: Norton Site Existing Conditions

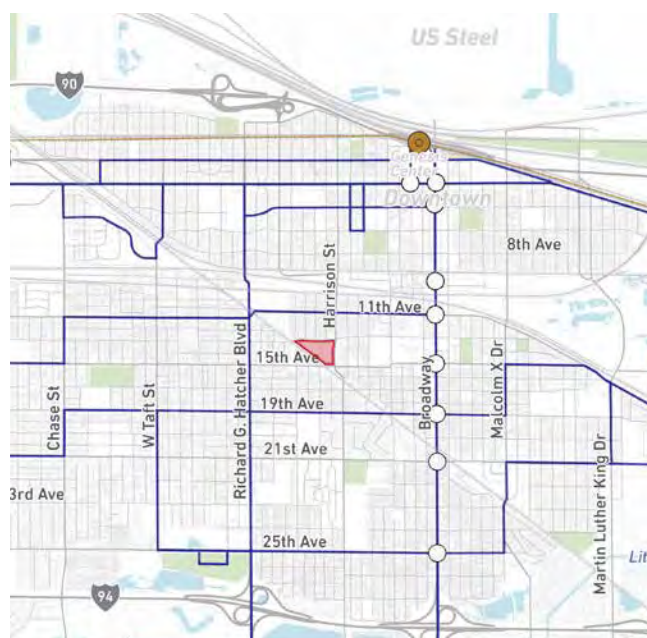


Site #4: Norton (1356 Harrison Boulevard)

Site Acreage:	11.74
Ownership:	City of Gary

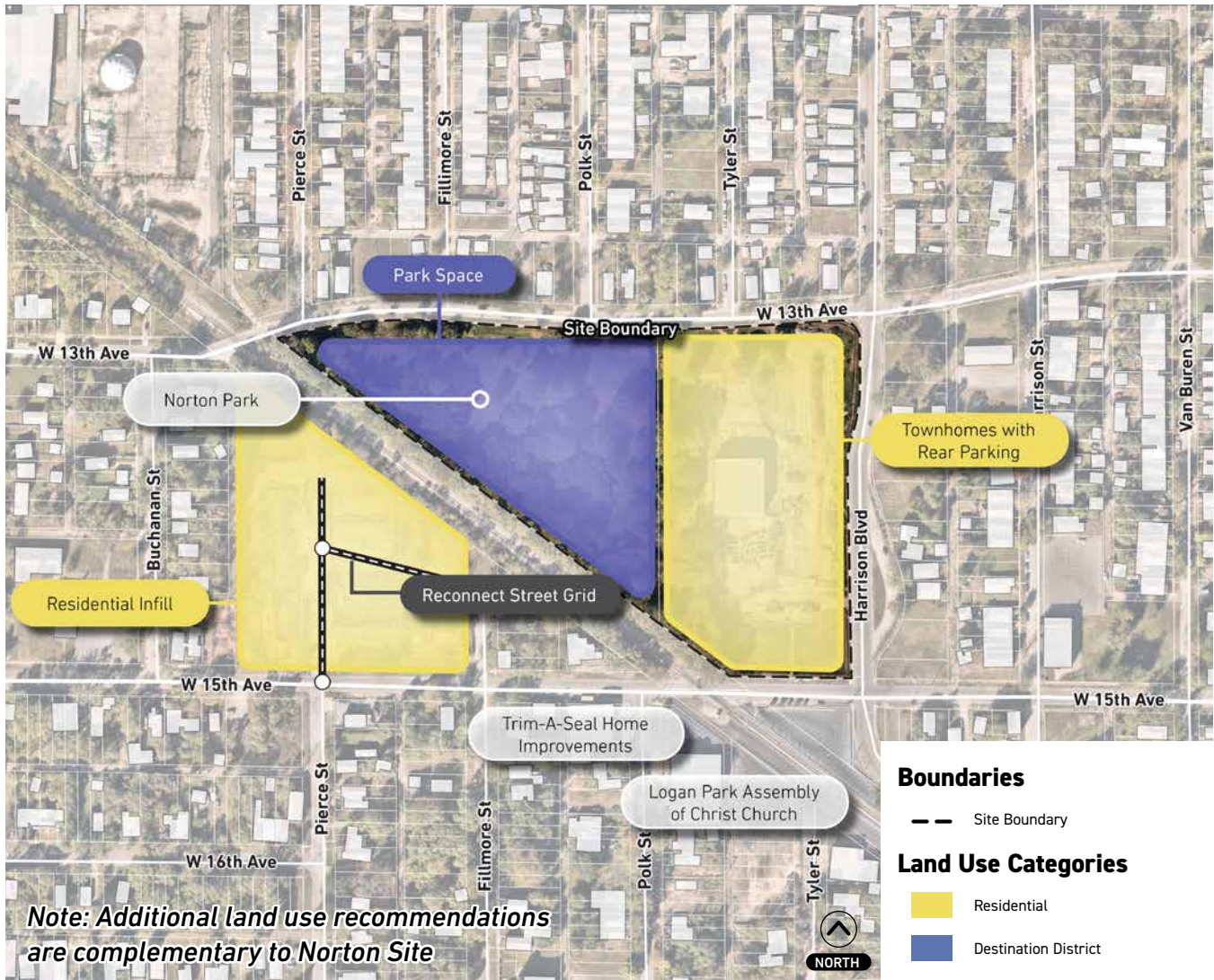
The Norton site is located between W 13th and W 15th Avenue and is 11.74 acres in size. The former school was located along Harrison Boulevard on the west side of the site, with a rail line running along the southwest side of the full site. Norton Park is the primary asset located on the site, located just to the west of the former school. The park is primarily wooded, with some open space along W 13th Avenue to the north. Former industrial sites are present on the other side of the rail to the west of the site, with residential homes and a few businesses and institutional uses around the site.

-  South Shore Station
-  South Shore Line
-  GPTC Stop
-  GPTC Route



Locational Map

Figure 17: Norton Site Redevelopment Recommendations



Recommendations

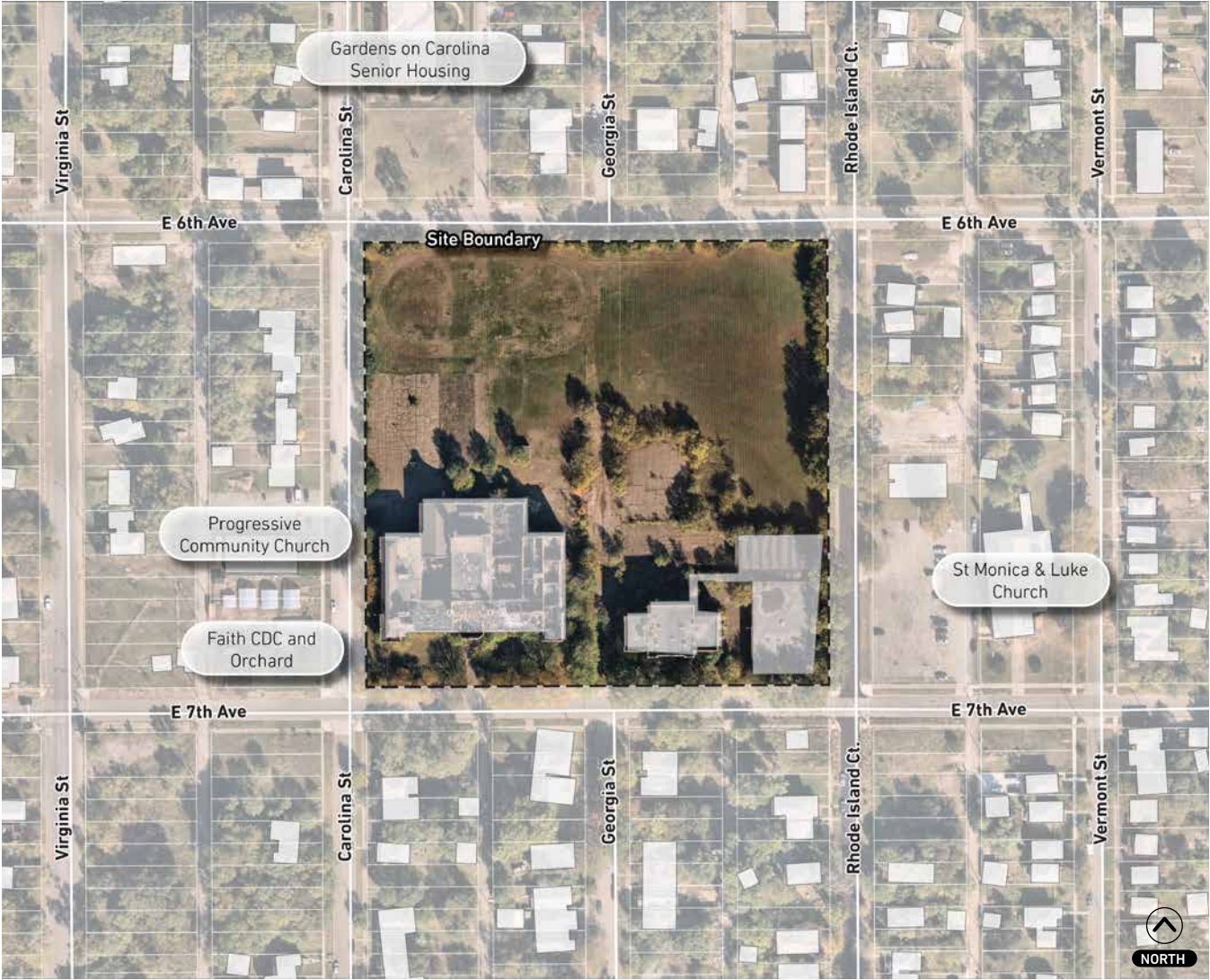
Norton Park will remain on the site, with resources allocated to help keep up maintenance and ensure that the park is in good shape for city and neighborhood residents.

For the former school site location, townhomes can be built that face forward towards Harrison Boulevard and W 13th Avenue. The townhomes should have parking lots on the rear side and match the existing neighborhood aesthetic in appearance.

The former industrial site to the southwest can also be allocated for redevelopment with residential infill matching the surrounding neighborhood.



Figure 18: Emerson Site Existing Conditions

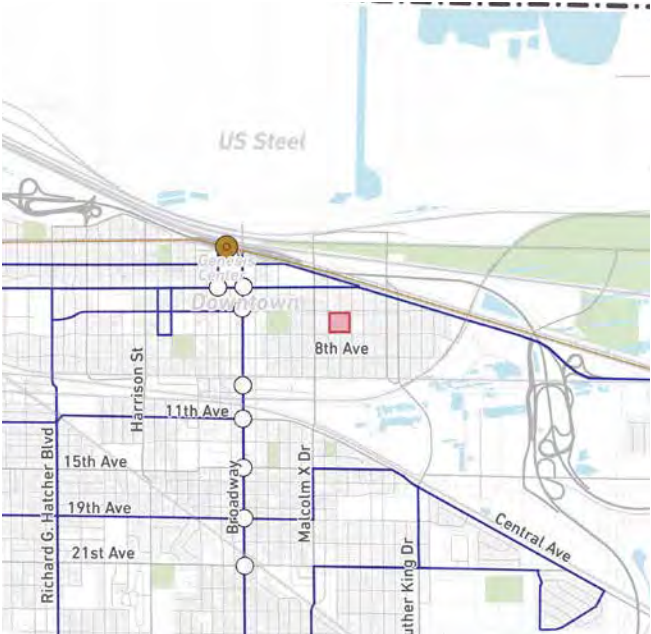


Site #5: Emerson (716 E 7th Avenue)

Site Acreage:	8.6
Ownership:	Gary Housing Authority

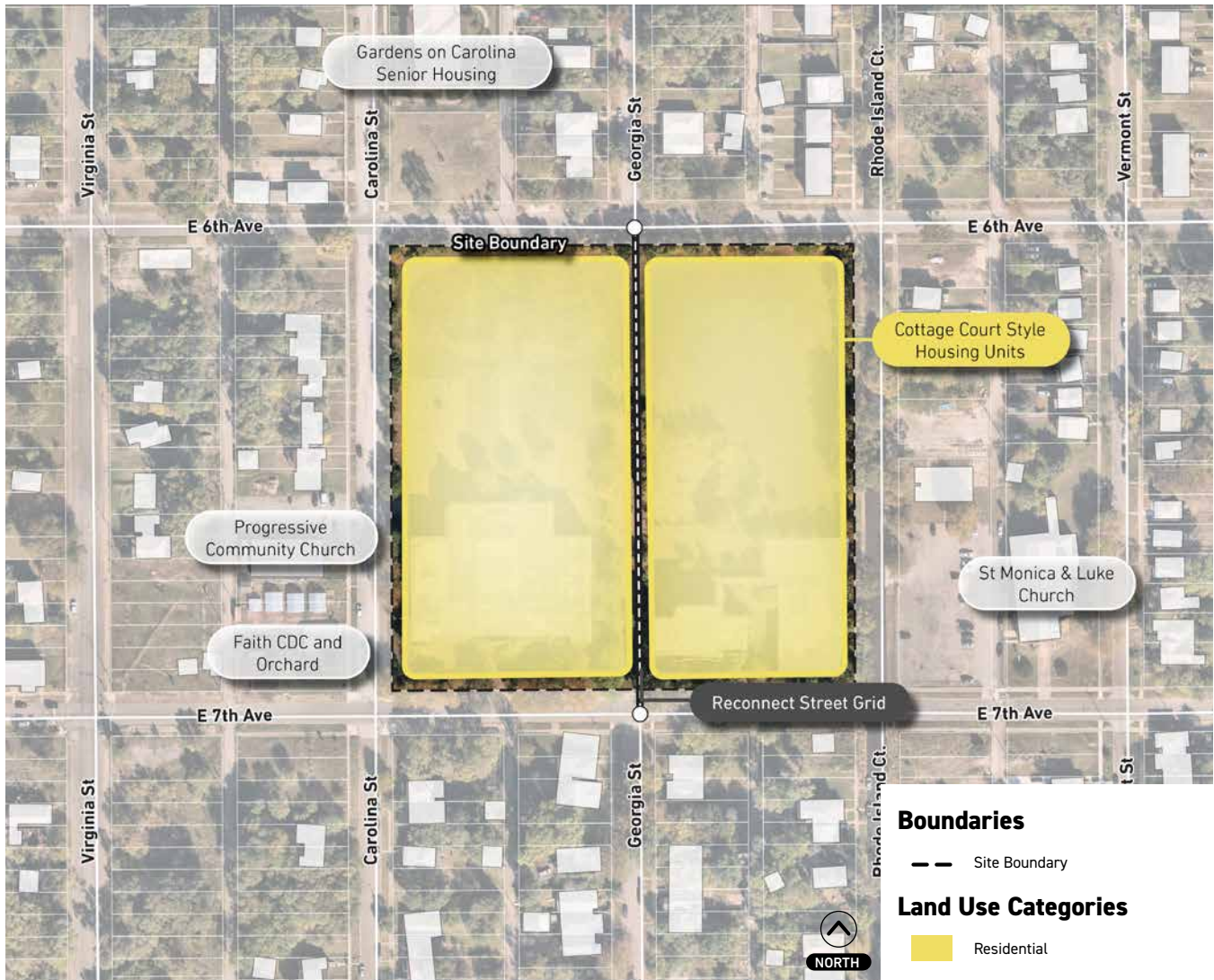
The Emerson site is located along the east side of Gary and a few blocks east of Buffington Park. The site is 8.6 acres and has three former structures existing on the site along E 7th Avenue, with the rest of the site primarily being pavement and open space. Residential homes and vacant parcels are spread throughout the surrounding neighborhood context, with a few small business and institutional uses spread around, with The Gardens on Carolina, a senior housing center, are located along Carolina Street to the north of the site.

- South Shore Station
- ++++ South Shore Line
- GPTC Stop
- GPTC Route



Locational Map

Figure 19: Emerson Site Redevelopment Recommendations



Recommendations

Cottage court style housing units can be implemented throughout the Emerson site, allowing the neighborhood to have additional housing typologies and rates that are not currently present. The front facade of the former Emerson school building should also be preserved and maintained, potentially being a marker for the new community.

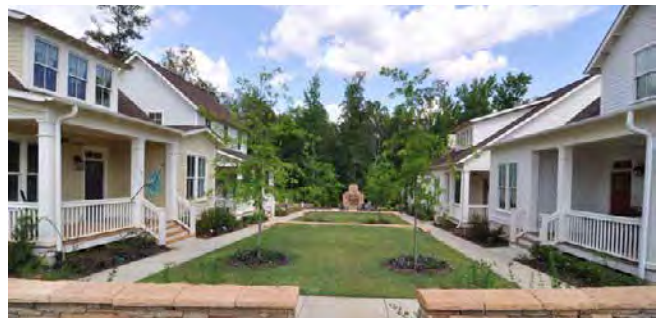


Figure 20: Dunbar-Pulaski Site Existing Conditions



Site #6: Dunbar-Pulaski (920 E 19th Avenue)

Site Acreage:	21
Ownership:	Privately Owned

The Dunbar-Pulaski site sits between E 17th and E 19th Avenue and is around 21 acres total. Just off key roadways Central Avenue and Martin Luther King Drive, the site also located right along the existing Daniel Hale Williams Elementary School. The former school building is still standing along the west side of the site, with the remaining site being primarily cleared open space, and the surround context of the neighborhood is mainly residential homes.

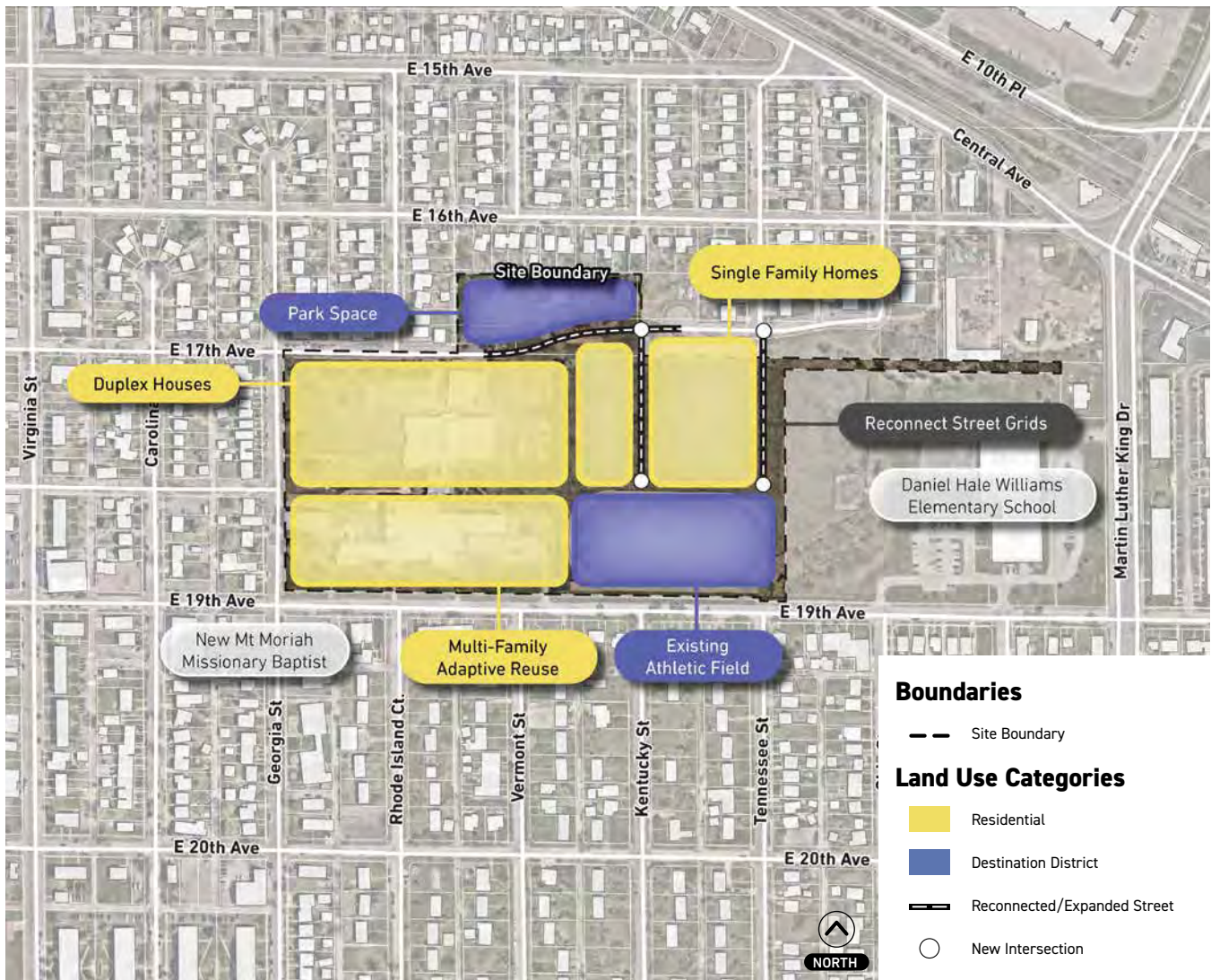
This privately owned parcel was included by recommendation of the property owner.

-  South Shore Station
-  South Shore Line
-  GPTC Stop
-  GPTC Route



Locational Map

Figure 21: Dunbar-Pulaski Site Redevelopment Recommendations



Recommendations

Kentucky and Tennessee Street will reconnect to E 17th Avenue running alongside the new streets. The homes should match the existing scale and architecture of the neighborhood.

The school building along E 19th Avenue could be adaptively reused for new multi-family units, with the back portion of the school site being demolished to allow for duplex houses or demolished due to its deterioration and environmental concerns.

Along the top of the site, E 17th Avenue should reconnect with the existing park space for the residents of the neighborhood.



Figure 22: Franklin Site Existing Conditions



Site #7: Franklin (600 E 35th Avenue)

Site Acreage:	20.42
Ownership:	City of Gary

The Franklin site is 20.42 acres in size and is located on the south side of the city, south of interstate 94 and sitting between E 33rd and 35th Avenue. The former school site sits on the south side of the property along 35th Avenue and the rest of the site is primarily open space. The most north portion of the property is located within the floodplain and is mostly wooded area, with one single building still standing along the corner of E 33rd Avenue and Virginia Street. While the surrounding context is primarily residential homes, it is important to note that to the west of the site along Broadway is the Indiana University Northwest campus.

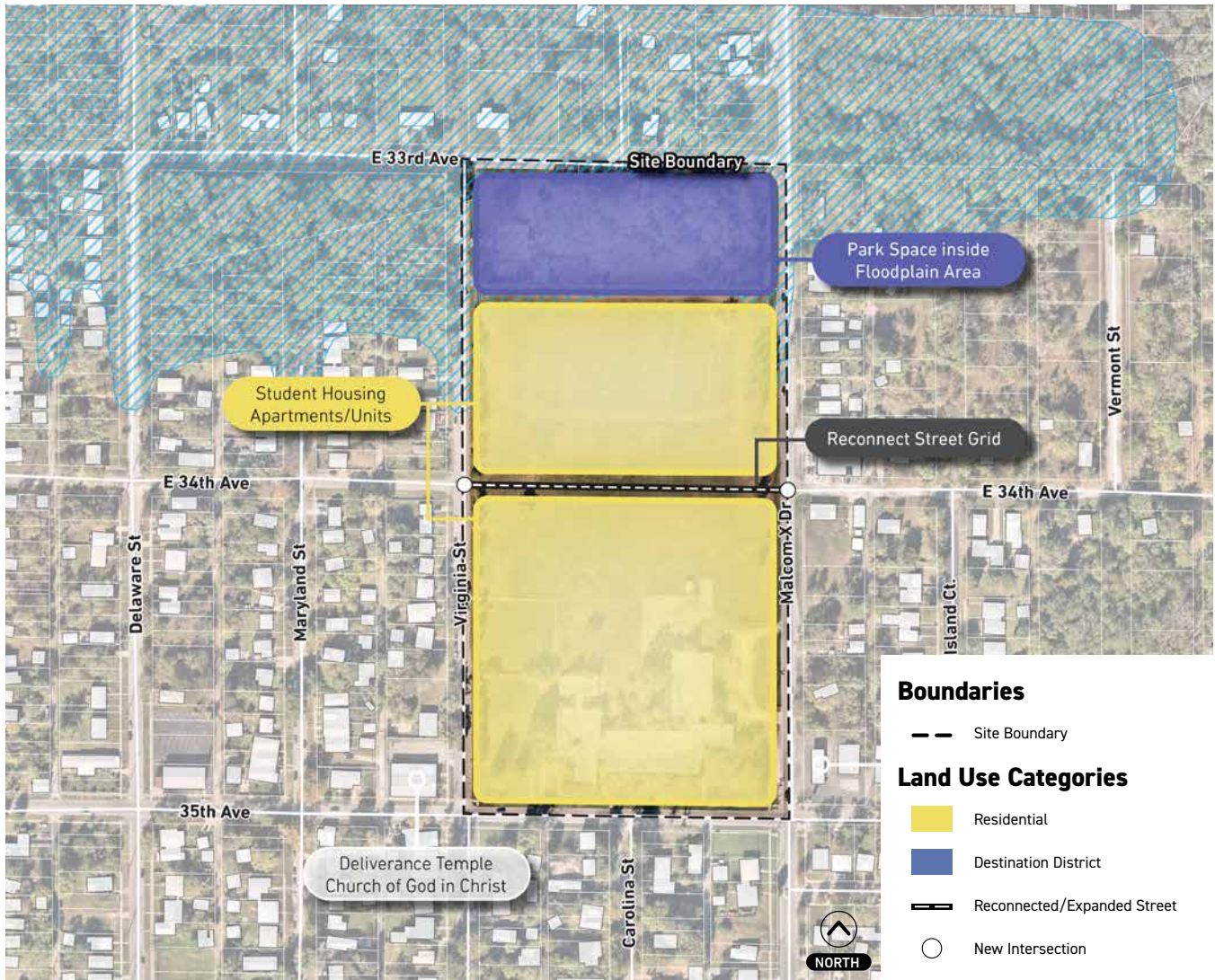
- South Shore Station
- ++++ South Shore Line
- GPTC Stop
- GPTC Route

Approximately **0.5 mile** from Broadway/
Indiana University Northwest campus



Locational Map

Figure 23: Franklin Site Redevelopment Recommendations



Recommendations

Reconnecting E 34th Avenue to cut through the site will split the site into a north and south section and help reconnect the existing street grid. For both the north and south section, student housing should be viewed as an option to help connect with the Indiana University Northwest campus, providing students with additional housing options and helping keep students within the city.

The section to the north that is within the existing floodplain can be used as park space and/or floodplain management.



Figure 24: Aetna Site Existing Conditions

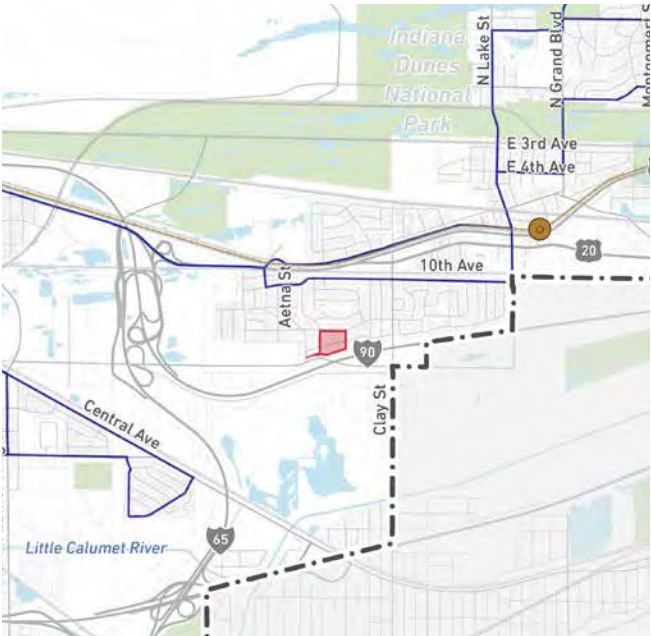


Site #8: Aetna (1301-1314 Arizona Street)

Site Acreage:	10
Ownership:	City of Gary

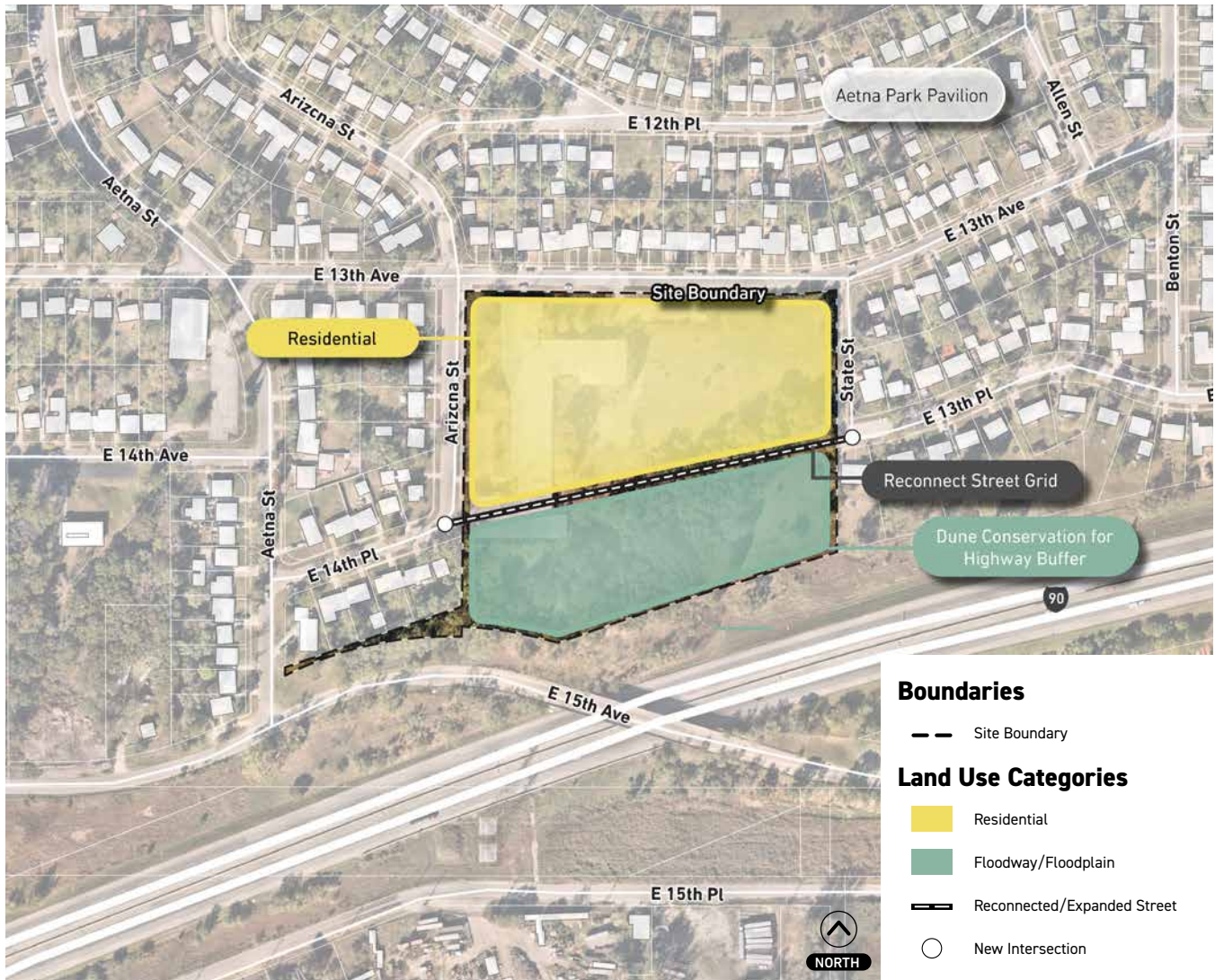
The Aetna site located within the Aetna neighborhood, to the north of interstate 90, and is 10 acres. The former school building is still standing and is located primarily along Arizona Street. Being located in a neighborhood, the surrounding context is largely residential homes, however just to the north of the site is Aetna Park Pavilion, showcasing the neighborhood feel this site is located within. The business and industrial uses to the south of the site are separated and buffered by the interstate.

- South Shore Station
- ++++ South Shore Line
- GPTC Stop
- GPTC Route



Locational Map

Figure 25: Aetna Site Redevelopment Recommendations



Recommendations

Connect E 14th and E 13th Place splitting the site into two different sections. The bottom half of the site should remain as dune conservation to help with the buffer between the neighborhood and the interstate.

The top half of the site can be single family homes, helping create new residential options within the neighborhood. The homes should be similar architecture and scale as the surrounding residential environment.



Figure 26: William A. Wirt Site Existing Conditions



Site #9: William A. Wirt (210 N Grand Blvd)

Site Acreage:	18.1
Ownership:	City of Gary

The William A. Wirt site is located along N Grand Boulevard and Birch Avenue in the Miller neighborhood. The site is just south of the Lake Michigan shore front, with N Grand Boulevard running up to Marquette Park and the Gary Aquatorium. The former school building still stands on the site and sits to the south of the Banneker Elementary. Residential homes make up the rest of the surrounding context.

Consideration should be given to renovating the theater, auditorium, and Olympic-sized pool on the site for potential public amenities such as sports fields.

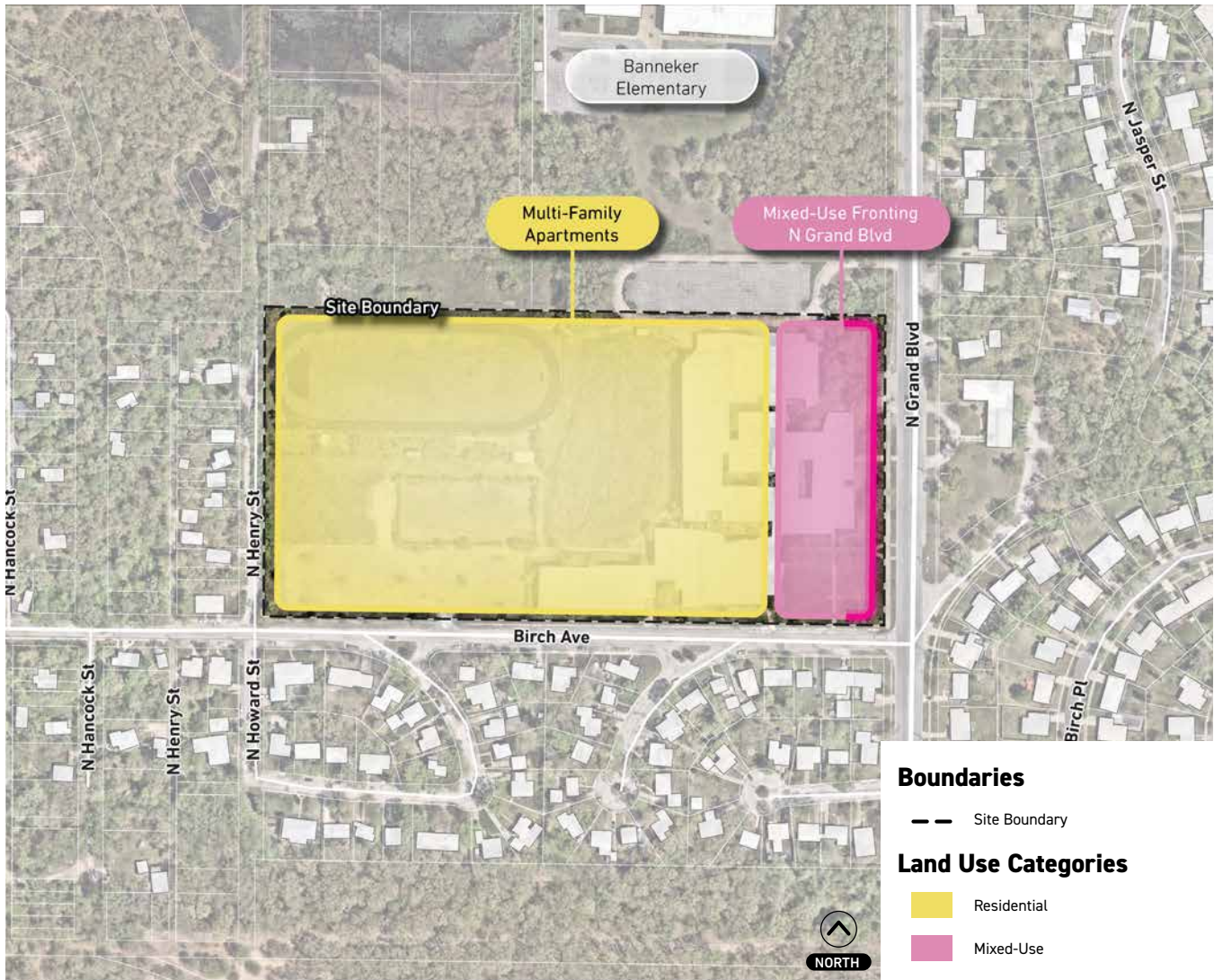
Approximately **1 mile** from Lake Michigan/Shoreline and **1.5 miles** from the South Shore Line Miller Station

- South Shore Station
- ++++ South Shore Line
- GPTC Stop
- GPTC Route



Locational Map

Figure 27: William A. Wirt Site Redevelopment Recommendations



Recommendations

Mixed-use running along N Grand Boulevard can help with promoting local businesses within Gary and attracting visitors. This building can include residential apartments above the ground floor uses, with the building being a maximum 8 stories.

Behind the mixed-use on N Grand Boulevard are market rate multi-family apartments along Birch Avenue to help match the residential uses surrounding the site. Depending on if the investment into restoring and renovating the existing recreational features on the site, the option exists to utilize the western part of the site for recreational activities.



Figure 28: Naval Armory Site Existing Conditions



Site #10: Former Naval Armory Facility

Site Acreage:	5.3
Ownership:	City of Gary

This site is located directly adjacent to Lake Michigan. The site contains the former Naval Armory building as well as associated parking lots with N Lake Street being the main road that leads to and from the site. Residential homes exist to the south of the site and parkland/open space run along both sides of the site.

-  South Shore Station
-  South Shore Line
-  GPTC Stop
-  GPTC Route



Figure 29: Naval Armory Site Redevelopment Recommendations



Recommendations

Being along the Lake Michigan and alongside national park space a lakefront hotel space could be an ideal use for this site. The city has few hotels and a lakefront hotel could help to attract outside visitors and promote overnight stays within Gary while increasing tourism along the lakefront.

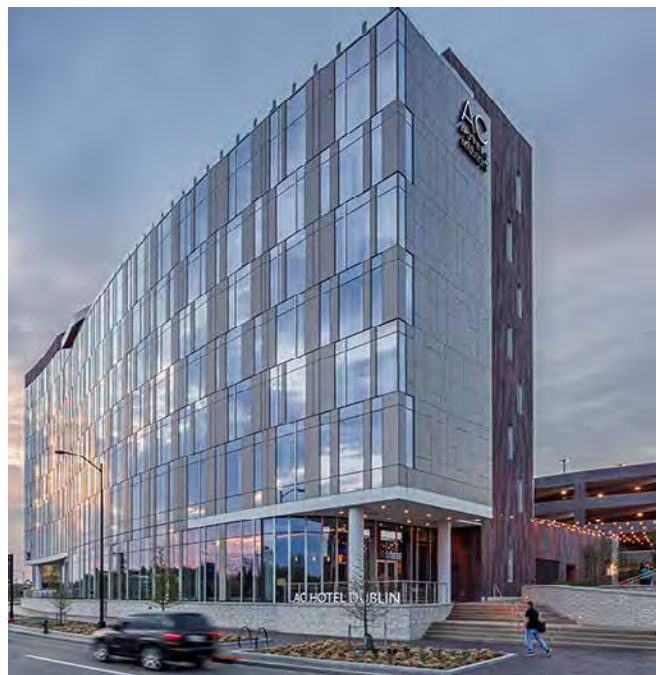


Figure 30: Nobel Site Existing Conditions



Site #11: Nobel (8837 Pottawatom Trail)

Site Acreage:	6.67
Ownership:	City of Gary

The Nobel site, totaling 6.67 acres, is located in the northeast corner of Gary and is just a few streets south of the Lake Michigan shoreline. Running along N Vanderburg Street/ Pottawatom Trail, the former school building has been almost completely demolished with the exception of one small structure leftover. To the east of the site, the Shirley Heinze Bayless Dune Trailheads makes up a recreational asset to the neighborhood, as well as the Marquette Greenway running to the south of the site which helps connect it to Gary Miller.

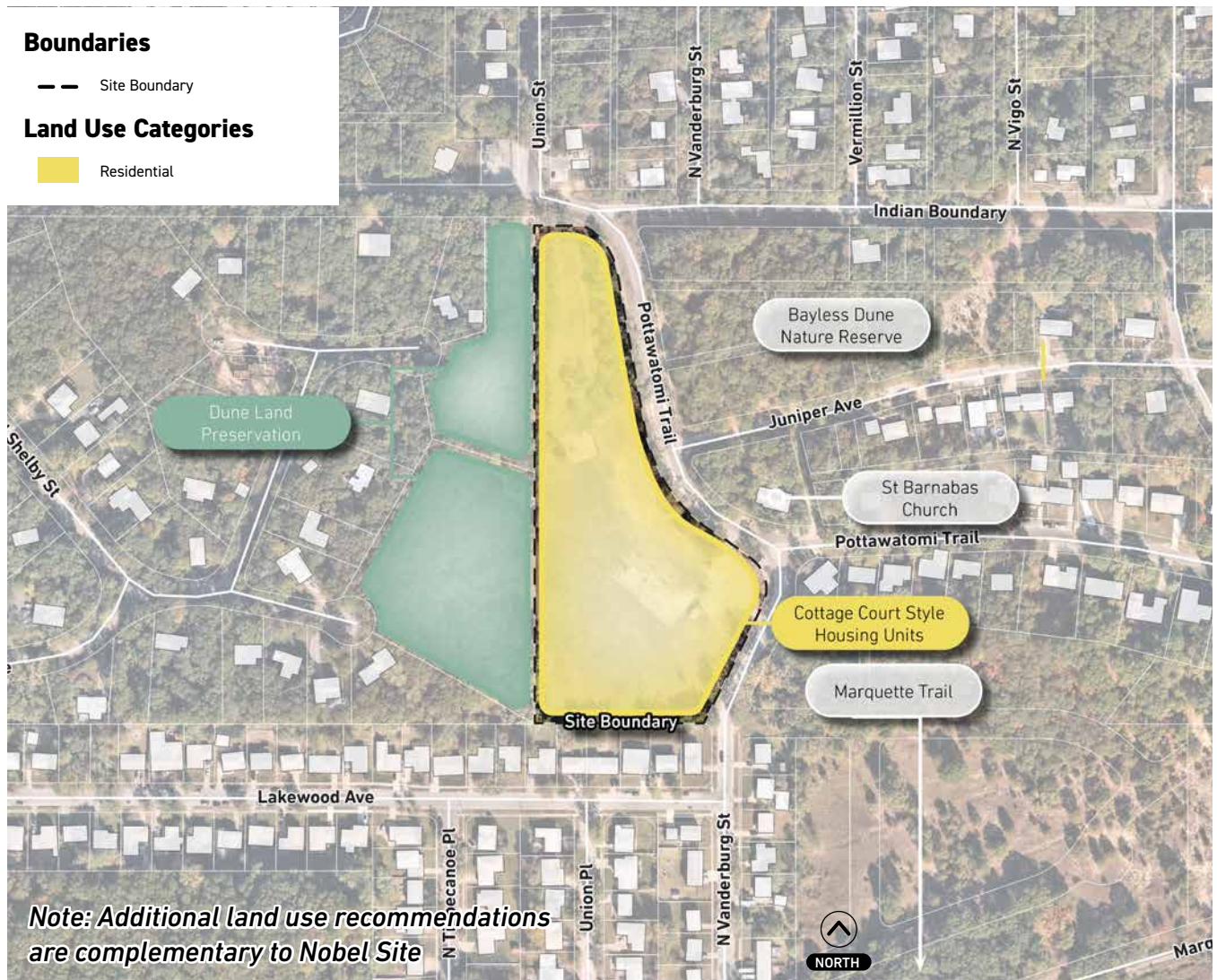
Approximately **2 miles** from
Lake Michigan/Shoreline

- South Shore Station
- ++++ South Shore Line
- GPTC Stop
- GPTC Route



Locational Map

Figure 31: Nobel Site Redevelopment Recommendations



Recommendations

The site could accommodate a wide range of missing middle housing.

Cottage court style housing units could be developed to create a new housing complex, matching the style of the existing residential units found within the neighborhood. The parcel to the west of The Nobel site should be reserved for dune land preservation due to the topography the exists, which could lead to a potential partnership with the Shirley Heinze Land Trust.



NEIGHBORHOOD PLANS

VISION FOR EMERSON NEIGHBORHOOD

Content provided courtesy of the University of Notre Dame Housing and Community Regeneration Initiative.

KEY FINDINGS

- The Emerson School and local churches act as neighborhood anchors**
A neighborhood grows well around local architectural character and established cultural nodes.
- Ample open land is an opportunity for housing**
There is a large amount of open land to the north of the Emerson School, which can be easily densified into a mixed-use neighborhood with many housing options.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Highlight and support the community gathering spaces in the area**
Churches and a community garden already sit on this site, establishing a strong culture that can be built upon.
- Build new homes and convert the Emerson School to housing**
The combination of adaptive reuse of the Emerson School as apartments and multiple blocks of new buildings will provide ample and varied housing options.



FIGURE 65: Masterplan Detail of the Emerson Neighborhood
 The Emerson Neighborhood offers a variety of housing options, public parks, community gathering spaces, and a relationship with existing churches and community gardens. The architectural anchor for the area is the converted Emerson School.



FIGURE 66: Aerial View of the Existing Site

The current Emerson site is primarily vacant or abandoned, with extensive open land and parking lots. The existing Emerson School shell (top left) and St. Monica & Luke Church (bottom right) offer anchors for new development.

Source: Google Earth

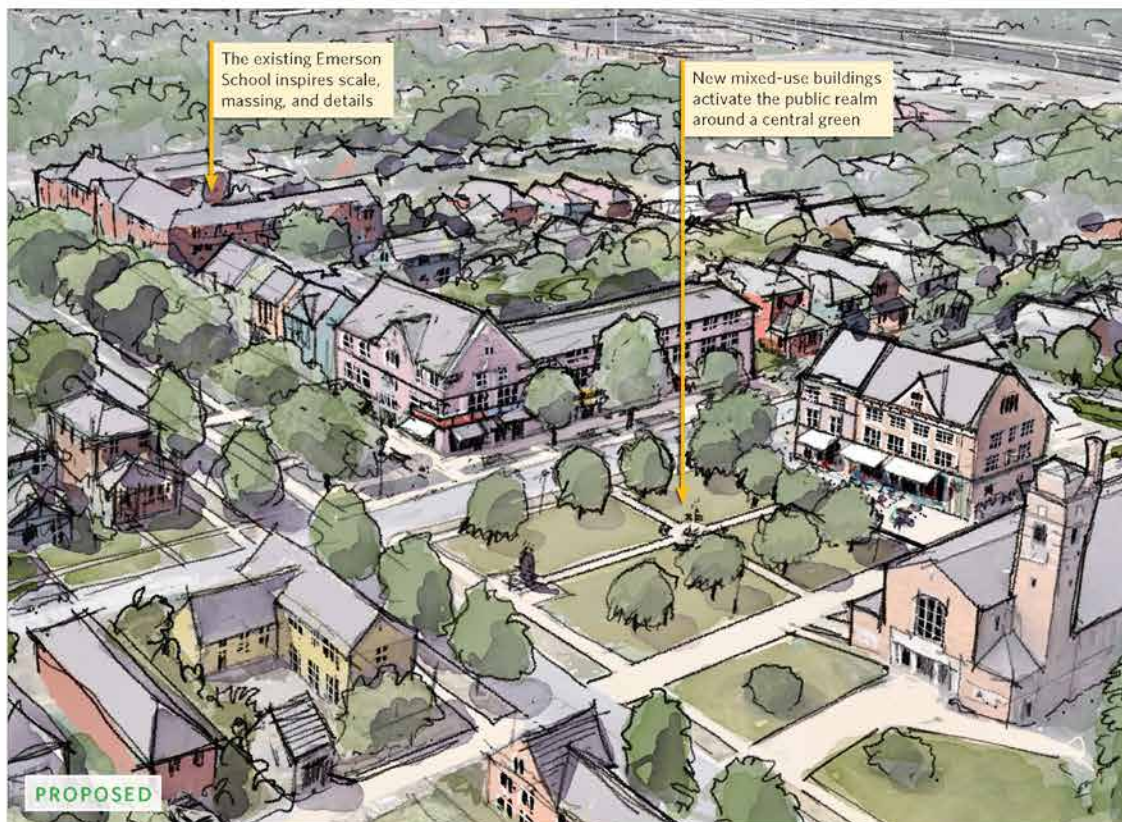


FIGURE 67: Aerial View of the Proposed Emerson Neighborhood

The neighborhood unites restored historic structures with new infill buildings, creating a dense environment.

VISION FOR HOLY ANGELS NEIGHBORHOOD

Content provided courtesy of the University of Notre Dame Housing and Community Regeneration Initiative.

KEY FINDINGS

- 1 Holy Angels Cathedral is an anchor for new development**
The cathedral is a beautiful and well-loved building on the west side of the city, and a strong node for growth in this neighborhood. The parish owns several adjacent properties, including a school building that could potentially reopen.
- 2 The St. Mary's Hospital is a potential opportunity for adaptive reuse**
Currently abandoned, this hospital is in decent condition, and is worth considering renovating to satisfy future housing needs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 Build neighborhood amenities around the church property**
With community gathering space and a possible school already attached to Holy Angels Cathedral, it is the ideal area for clustering other amenities to serve the immediate neighborhood, such as health services and a local market.
- 2 Provide new housing in the converted hospital and infill buildings**
New residents will be drawn by the flourishing church, school, and other amenities of the neighborhood as it grows. The converted hospital building will have ample housing, and there are many nearby vacant lots for infill buildings.

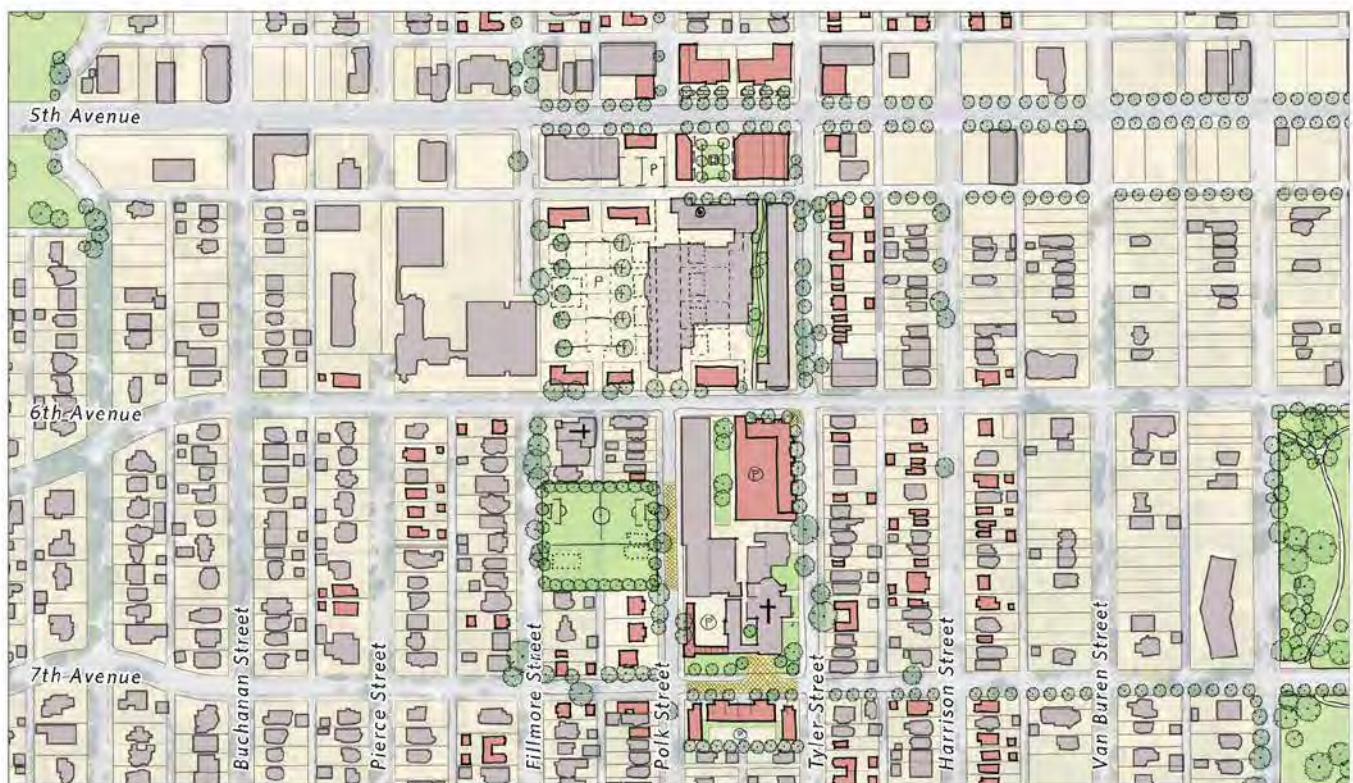


FIGURE 73: Masterplan Detail of the Holy Angels Neighborhood

Centered around the Holy Angels Cathedral, the Holy Angels Neighborhood offers a variety of housing options, public parks, community gathering spaces, and a refined relationship with existing structures.



FIGURE 74: Aerial View of the Existing Site

The current conditions of this site are characterized primarily by large structures – some abandoned – surrounded by empty land, with a sporadic ring of smaller buildings. A phased approach to redevelopment will allow the gradual conversion of abandoned buildings, revival of the Cathedral School, and infill of lots and parking with new housing and mixed-use buildings.

Source: Google Earth

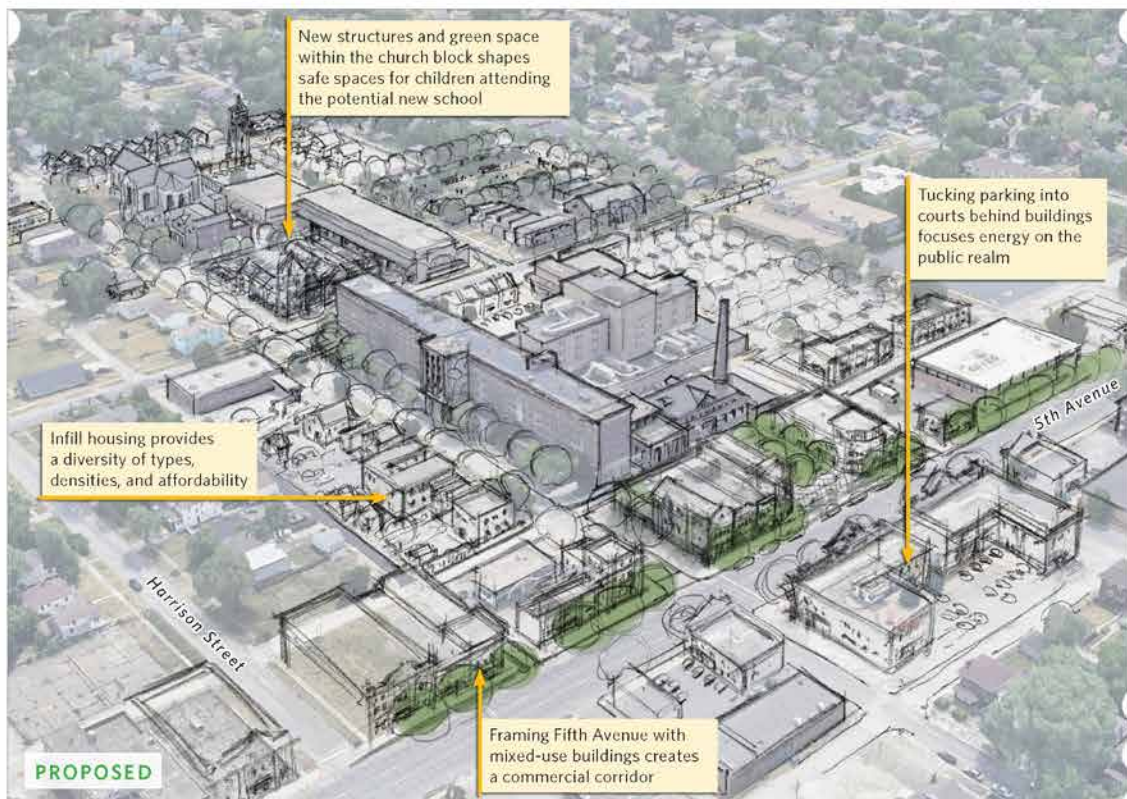


FIGURE 75: Aerial View of the Proposed Holy Angels Neighborhood

The neighborhood unites restored historic structures with new infill buildings, creating a dense environment that exemplifies the ten elements on page 88.

INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

Strategy

Gary's industrial economy is a core asset that continues to provide stable employment and long-term growth potential. The City is committed to supporting existing industrial users, retaining and expanding quality jobs, and positioning itself to attract a new generation of manufacturing, clean energy, logistics, data infrastructure, and food processing industries. With the right infrastructure, strategic land use planning, and alignment with regional efforts like the Northwest Indiana Forum's "Ignite the Region" strategy, Gary is poised to lead a new wave of Midwest industrial reinvestment.

A major focus of this strategy includes the redevelopment of Buffington Harbor, which offers rare lakefront industrial and intermodal potential. With direct access to Lake Michigan, rail, and highway networks, Buffington Harbor is a critical opportunity area for logistics, maritime shipping, warehousing, and manufacturing. Targeted investments in this area can unlock shovel-ready sites that support regional and national supply chains.

Similarly, the Gary/Chicago International Airport remains a premier logistics asset for the city. The recent expansion of FedEx operations and the airport's growing role in air cargo and freight movement present a unique opportunity for surrounding industrial development. With available land, runway capacity, and direct access to I-90 and I-94, the airport is a key driver for attracting aviation-related businesses, logistics hubs, and distribution centers.

Gary's legacy industrial base also continues to evolve. The U.S. Steel and Nippon Steel partnership marks a significant commitment to the modernization of steelmaking operations in the city—securing hundreds of existing jobs while creating a foundation for future industrial innovation. This reinvestment signals long-term confidence in Gary's industrial workforce, infrastructure, and position within the national manufacturing economy.



US Steel



FedEx Airport Facilities

Ignite the Region Plan

As identified in the Ignite the Region strategy led by the Northwest Indiana Forum, the City of Gary is focusing its industrial redevelopment efforts on four key sectors that align with regional strengths and local assets:

- **Manufacturing** - Building on Gary's industrial legacy, the city is well-positioned to attract reinvestment in steel, clean energy, automation, and materials manufacturing—supported by a skilled workforce and available infrastructure.
- **Intermodal Logistics and Supply Chain** - With access to rail, highways, Buffington Harbor, and the Gary/Chicago International Airport, Gary is a prime location for logistics and distribution businesses serving the broader Midwest.
- **Agri-Business and Food Processing** - Gary's transportation access and proximity to major markets make it attractive for food production and packaging, provided sites are carefully selected to maintain air quality.
- **Airport-Supported Industry and Data Infrastructure** - Continued investment around the Gary/Chicago International Airport—including FedEx's expanded operations—creates opportunities for air cargo, cold storage, light assembly, and future passenger service. Additionally, Gary's access to power and underused industrial land makes it ideal for data centers and other technology-related infrastructure.

By investing in infrastructure, preserving industrial land, and aligning economic development efforts around strategic assets like Buffington Harbor, the Gary/Chicago International Airport, U.S. Steel, and FedEx, Gary can strengthen its role as a 21st-century industrial city—creating jobs, building tax base, and attracting businesses that power the regional economy.



Example Data Center



Example Food Processing

Ignite the Region Plan: <https://www.nwiforum.org/economic-initiative>

04

NATURE





NATURE

Gary exists within the Indiana Dunes ecosystem, a unique and diverse coastal environment that spans the southern shores of Lake Michigan. The Indiana Dunes ecosystem is special for a number of reasons, including its biodiversity, rare native species, recreational opportunities, and natural beauty. Gary possesses both significant environmental assets and challenges. The city contains 13 miles of lakefront, 2,623 acres of conserved duneland ecosystem, 4,269 acres of wetlands, and 109 acres of actively managed park land in addition to other unmanaged natural areas and open spaces.

The Greater Gary Environment and Sustainability Advisory Council (GESAC) was established by Mayor Melton to provide advice and guidance to the mayor and council on building sustainability and resilience within the city.

The charge of the GESAC is to identify community-driven pathways to implement climate action reduction goals for city departments to reduce their carbon footprint by 50% before 2028, integrate community-driven climate resilience strategies into the five (5) community systems from the Climate Ready Gary Plan, host environmental and sustainability educational events, strengthen partnerships with key community stakeholders through the Gary Community Ambassadors program, and conduct research and develop recommendations for the Mayor and Council.



Miller Beach



Marsh/Wetlands

The Greater Gary Environment and Sustainability Advisory Council (GESAC) Subcommittee Focus Areas

The committee is currently made up of seven subcommittees, each targeting a different core aspect within the city, including:

- Healthy Residents - Active living, healthcare, public safety, food systems, and the environment.
- Green Generation - Empower and prepare the next generation of environmental stewards.
- Natural Systems - Green spaces and connectivity, parks, and healthy ecosystems.
- Sustainable Energy - Air quality, climate neutrality, renewable energy, water conservation and efficiency, water reuse and recycling.
- Resilient Infrastructure - Land remediation and reuse, natural features, gray and green infrastructure, stormwater management, connectivity, and street network.
- Community Readiness - Engagement and inclusion, cultural identity, public spaces, affordable quality housing, healthy home, resilience and emergency preparedness.
- Economic Vitality - Access to opportunities, quality education, economic development, emerging job markets, innovation and entrepreneurship, and a living wage.

EXISTING PARK SPACE

30

ACTIVE

27

INACTIVE



109

ACRES OF ACTIVELY
MANAGED PARKS

MILES OF LAKEFRONT

5

MILES OF LAKEFRONT WITH
PUBLIC ACCESS

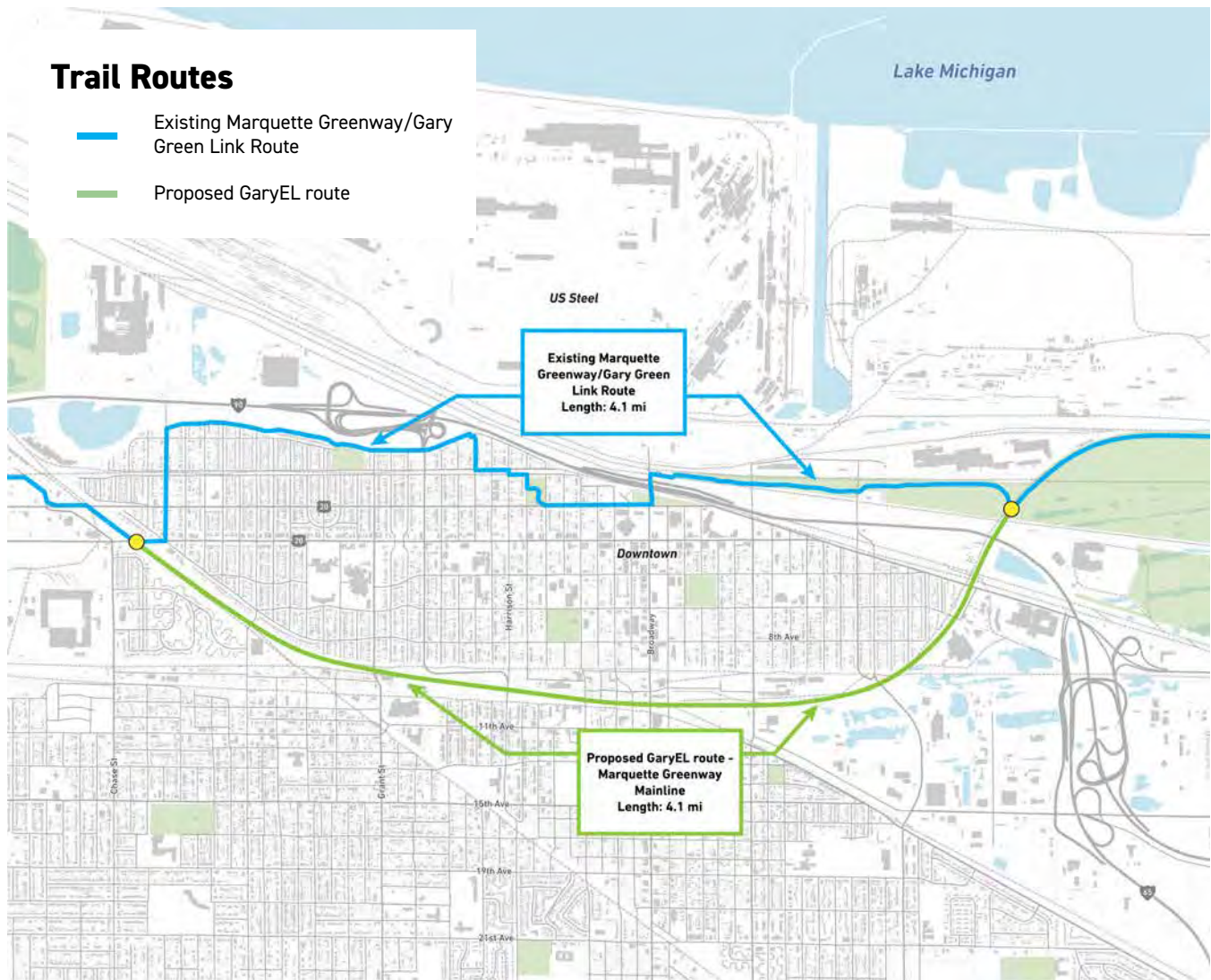
Source: United States Census Bureau

GARY PARKS

The environment, of course, does not start and stop at the boundary lines of conservation land. Gary's 57 parks, playgrounds, and tot lots serve as critical sources of open space within the city's neighborhoods. The following provides information on high-value natural resources at many of Gary's parks (and a few school sites).

- **Marquette Park:** The crown jewel of Gary's Park system, and abutting the Indiana Dunes National Park property, Marquette Park boasts numerous high-quality natural features of the Indiana Dunes ecosystem, including sand dunes, lagoons, upland forests, and wetlands. The park underwent a \$28 million redevelopment and enhancement in 2010, including restoration of the dunes, remediation of the lagoons, and installation of wet prairies on the eastern portion of Grand Boulevard.
- **Brunswick Park:** One of the largest parks in the city, Brunswick possesses 33 acres of remnant black oak savanna, dune and swale, and upland forest, and has been the focus of recent trail development and wetland mitigation efforts.
- **Hatcher Park:** Located in the Pulaski neighborhood, and sitting directly to the north of the wetlands that run along the Little Calumet River corridor, Hatcher Park possesses bottomland forests while the southern portion exists in the floodplain.
- **Seberger Park:** Located on Bell Street and 25th Avenue, Seberger Park possesses 6.5 acres of wetlands and forests that include rare and native species.
- **Edison Park:** Located in the Brunswick neighborhood, Edison Park contains 4 acres of native prairie and woodlands on the northern portion of a vacant school site. The native features overlap with a section of the park that includes an abandoned pool.
- **Diamond Park:** Located at 25th Avenue and Prospect Street in the Pulaski neighborhood, standing at 47 acres, Diamond Park sits directly to the north of the Little Calumet River, the floodplain, and Little Calumet River Basin Development Commission property. While the park is almost entirely overgrown, it possesses significant wetland features.
- **Ernie Pyle School:** Located in the Tolleston neighborhood at 19th Avenue and Taney Street, the vacant Ernie Pyle school site holds nearly 8.5 acres of upland woods on a preserved forested dune, with a corridor of black oak trees running perpendicular.
- **Little Calumet River Wetlands and Gleason Park (southern corridor):** Located just northwest of IUN, Little Calumet River Wetlands, and Gleason Park include a mixture of wetland, prairie, and woodlands.

Figure 32: Gary ELevated Proposed Route



GARY ELEVATED VISION

Gary ELevated represents a complete reimagining of Mid-Town Gary. The core of the proposal involves the re-routing of the Marquette Greenway to take advantage of an abandoned elevated rail line running through the heart of the city. The neighborhoods where the trail will run through represent the most economically depressed in the Northwest Indiana Region. The corridor has a number of vacant properties in various states of decay. The population is minority-based and low-income, with few opportunities to safely access other parts of the city by walking or bicycling, including any access to areas of public gathering and nature.

The siting of the Marquette Greenway through Mid-town Gary represents a tremendous opportunity to transform this depressed and disinvested area of the city into a renewed and vibrant community offering both existing and new residents a bounty of places to shop, work and play.

Key to the success of this plan is the direct integration of those living in these neighborhoods, and having them be the champions for the proposal.

To aid with the careful integration of community input, Gary ELevated should follow civic engagement concepts currently underway in five US cities through the "Reimagining the Civic Commons" approach. Gleaning off the successes of these endeavors will help lead the way towards the realization of the Gary ELevated vision.

The City of Gary and the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission aim to bring together a broad spectrum of stakeholders to work towards three main deliverables. These include a feasibility and design plan for the trail, a market analysis and neighborhood action plan. Each document will be produced through a thoughtful process involving both planning professionals and neighborhood leaders. Taken together these documents will serve as the foundation towards the development of the trail, and the revitalization of the surrounding Midtown neighborhoods.

OTHER LANDS

Figure 33, provided by The Trust for Public Land, depicts existing parks (shown in green) and areas with a high need for new parks (shaded in purple, with the darkest areas indicating the greatest need).

The Trust for Public Land's Parks Initiative identifies neighborhoods lacking access to safe, high-quality parks within a 10-minute walk from home. In Gary, 67% of residents live within a 10-minute walk of a park, with no significant differences in accessibility across age groups—approximately two out of three children, adults, and seniors have nearby park access. One of Gary's ongoing challenges, however, is its geographic size: the city has a significantly lower proportion of land dedicated to parks and recreation compared to the national median.

A related challenge is that roughly 27 municipal parks are not actively maintained by the Department of Public Parks. The Trust for Public Land's mapping tool highlights populated areas outside a 10-minute walk of a park, considering factors such as population density, concentrations of low-income households and people of color, community health, urban heat islands, and air pollution. Using these measures, the tool identifies the top five locations where new green space would most benefit vulnerable communities. Similar tools could also help Gary prioritize sites for new urban greening projects and prioritize existing parks most in need of rehabilitation.

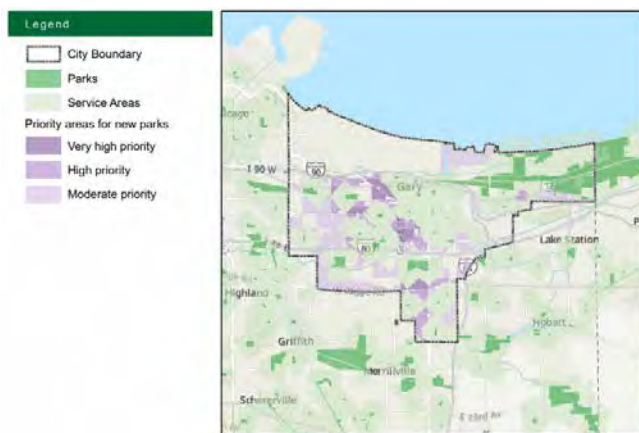


Figure 33: Current and Potential Parks in Gary

PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN

The Gary Parks and Recreation Systems Master Plan was conducted to help create a periodic roadmap to help set goals and establish priorities for the city from 2023 to 2027. The objectives of this plan were to gain public input for the Gary Public Park's Department and Board of Park Commission to use for direction of important policy issues and build wide-spread support of the plan for successful implementation, create a published plan that will make Gary eligible for grant and pass through funding from IDNR-State Parks, Community Grants, and Trails, provide an accessibility assessment of park and recreation facilities and programs to determine whether they are encompassing and accessible for all individuals, and Identify barriers to participation and establish priorities for barrier removal.

The main action items identified from the plan included:

- Complete renovations of the six recognized jewel parks which received ARPA funding.
- Collaborate with the Redevelopment and other internal departments to develop and enhance connectivity to parks through bike and pedestrian pathways.
- Improve accessibility across the park system.
- Replace aging equipment and amenities.
- Improve stewardship of limited resources.
- Define and actively seek partnerships that enhance department capacity.
- Create and promote new programming opportunities that contribute to park users' quality of life and offer a sense of safety and security in parks.

EXISTING CONSERVATION LAND

Gary's existing conservation areas reflect an Indiana Dunes ecosystem that existed prior to modern development. This ecosystem is comprised of sand dunes, oak savannas, swamps, bogs, marshes, prairies, rivers, and forests, all of which mix together over 15,000 acres and 15 linear miles of National Park, State preserves, and land trust properties.

The natural environment plays a vital role in Gary's efforts to revitalize its urban landscape and economy, offering public health, recreational and long-term benefits. Climate change threatens local ecosystems, including neighborhoods, parks and the Indiana Dunes National Park. To address this, The Department of Venues, Parks and Recreation partnered with Great Lakes Urban Forestry Management to outline a strategic vision for enhancing the city's tree canopy and overall green infrastructure; resulting in an Urban Forestry Management Plan (UFMP) that guides tree care and expansion through 2050. Based on a 2020 inventory of over 2,300 trees across city parks and Indiana University Northwest, Figure 34 illustrates urban heat islands across Gary, with a gradient from yellow to red indicating increasing intensity, red representing the most severe heat zones.

Long-term objectives include establishing a city-run nursery, repurposing vacant lots for tree planting and food forests, and incentivizing tree planting on private property. The plan highlights how Gary's urban forest provides essential services like stormwater filtration, heat island reduction, carbon capture and improved mental and physical health for residents. With a current tree canopy coverage 23.4%, the UFMP sets a goal to increase coverage to 25% by 2050. However, the average tree condition is below optimal, highlighting the need for improved maintenance and investment. Strengthening this natural asset is key to building a healthier, more resilient city.

To build climate resilience through nature-based solutions, it is recommended that Gary prioritize efforts to mitigate the urban heat island effect by expanding urban forestry, adapt stormwater management systems and increase green infrastructure to handle more intense precipitation, and improve the resilience of regional ecosystems by establishing landscape corridors and climate refugia that support species migration and adaptation to warming conditions.

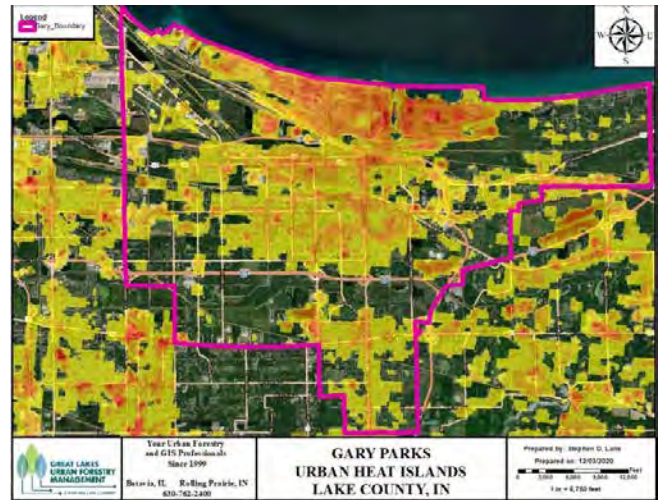


Figure 34: Urban Heat Islands within Gary

CONSERVATION & RESTORATION EFFORTS

Building on these efforts, Ivanhoe South Nature Preserve is undergoing a transformation thanks to new funding secured by the Shirley Heinze Land Trust, in partnership with the city. These investments are supporting the construction of new infrastructure at the 53-acre preserve, which is home to rare dune and swale ecosystems and black oak savannas. The project will boast new trails, boardwalks, and community gathering spaces to ensure this beloved preserve will serve as a future vessel for connecting residents to nature. By enhancing connectivity to nearby schools and neighborhoods, the initiative aims to transform the previously overlooked area into a welcoming hub for environmental education, youth engagement and neighborhood pride.

Complementing this work, restoration efforts are also being prioritized in other parts of the city. The Hatcher Park and Marshalltown Marsh restoration project is revitalizing over 300 acres of degraded floodplain and wetland habitat, including the Little Calumet River. These restored areas are being transformed to become natural filters for stormwater, ensure flood protection, support bird migration and offer new opportunities for community recreation. These projects also help local economies through job creation, tourism, and data-driven planning for flood mitigation and climate resilience. The project is guided by local input and aims to reconnect residents with nature.

Figure 35: Existing Conservation Land, Active Parks, and FEMA Floodplains in Gary

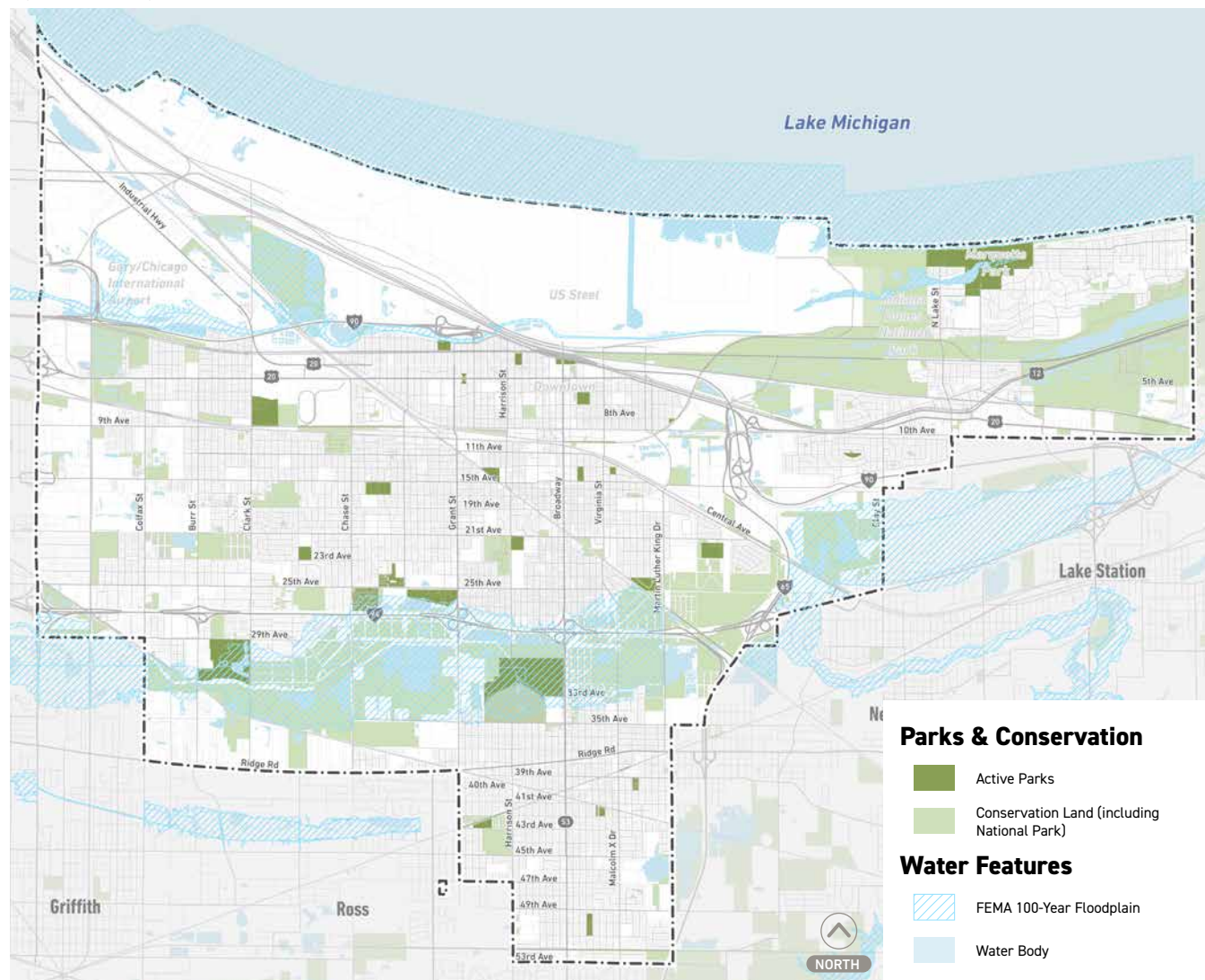


Figure 36: Renovation Areas within Ivanhoe South Nature Preserve (source: Shirley Heinze Land Trust)

Figure 37 is the current state of The Hatcher Park and Marshalltown Marsh the green areas representing parks with public access.

Figure 38 is the restoration that Audubon Great Lakes, partnering organizations and Gary residents are proposing.

- MLK South Wetland:** MLK South Wetland is a 105-acre parcel located between Georgia St and MLK Drive, directly south of I-80. Our partnership has been working to restore MLK S Wetland for 4.5 years, focusing mainly on treating invasive plant species such as *Phragmites australis* and establishing native species through planting and seeding. A water control structure installed in 2023 is used to manage water levels with the goal of encouraging the establishment of hemimarsh and other wetland habitats for the benefit of marsh birds and other wildlife. Public access is available at MLK South Wetland via the paved levee trail. The site falls within the floodplain and levee system and contains parcels owned by the Gary Parks Board, NIPSCO, and The Little Calumet River Basin Development Commission.
- Grant Street Wetland:** Grant Street Wetland is a 208-acre parcel that is part of a larger, 800-acre site known as the Chase Street Complex. Improvements to Grant St Wetland have been underway since 2021 and have largely been focused on controlling invasive plants and the establishment of native plant communities. Public access is available at Grant Street Wetland via the paved levee trail. The site falls within the floodplain and levee system and with the exception of NIPSCO's Taney Substation, is owned entirely by The Little Calumet River Basin Development Commission.

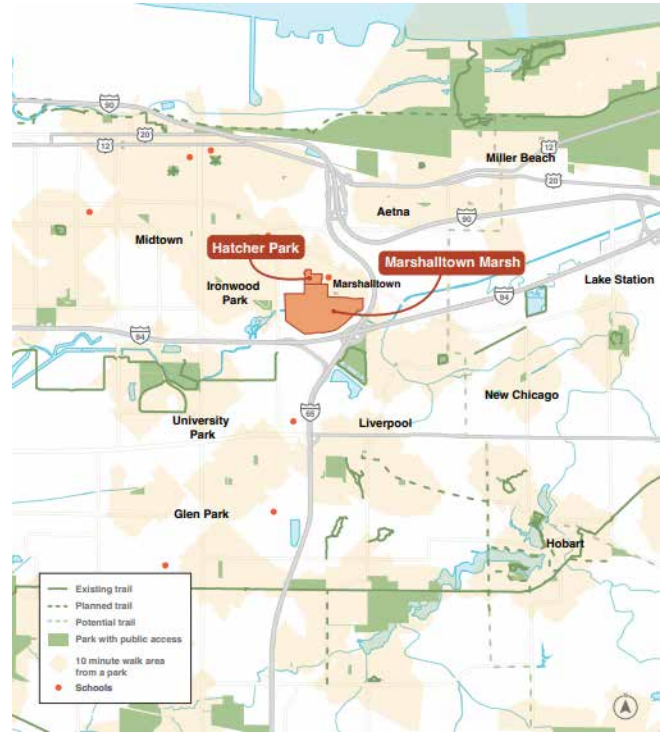


Figure 37: Hatcher Park and Marshalltown Marsh (source: Audubon Great Lakes)



Figure 38: Proposed Park Restoration (source: Audubon Great Lakes)

- Marshalltown Marsh & Hatcher Park:** The Marshalltown Marsh Complex sits south of Hatcher Park from MLK Drive to the I-65 interchange. It also includes the “MLK North” parcel which is located inside of the levee system south of Ironwood Park and directly west of MLK Drive. This 400-acre floodplain area has high potential for habitat restoration and public access. In 2024, the LCRCC completed 60% engineering and design plans for habitat restoration and re-meandering of the Little Calumet River within the site was completed. These plans identify opportunities to develop over 50-acres of marsh habitat as well as an extensive trail system and a variety of nature-based recreation options. We have been working closely with local residents and community leaders to activate Hatcher Park via community events and to develop a shared vision for future restoration and public access at this site. With the exception of Hatcher Park, the majority of the Marshalltown Marsh Complex falls within the floodplain. The site is a patchwork of owners, but largely consists of parcels owned by The City of Gary, NIPSCO, and The Little Calumet River Basin Development Commission.
- Chase Street Complex:** The Chase St Complex is an 800-acre site bounded by Clark Road, Grant Street, Ridge Road and I-80. The LCRCC is currently developing 60% engineering plans for extensive habitat restoration, public access, and potential re-meandering of the Little Calumet River that will be completed by the end of 2025, with plans to pursue 100% design in the following year. To ensure community interests are represented throughout the planning process, a Community Advisory Board was formed in late 2024. In collaboration with the Board and local community-based organizations, our partnership has helped facilitate important community connections, developed relevant programming, and collected feedback on design plans. The site is directly adjacent to Lake Etta County Park and contains several miles of paved levee trails. The site falls almost entirely within the floodplain and levee system and contains parcels owned by The City of Gary, NIPSCO, and The Little Calumet River Basin Development Commission.

These local restoration efforts are part of a broader regional recognition of Gary’s ecological value. The Chicago Wilderness Green Infrastructure Vision (GIV) prepared by The Conservation Fund identifies Gary’s natural assets as high value contributors to ecosystem services that support both ecological health and community resilience. Wetlands in the region can store between 1 and 1.5 million gallons of floodwater per acre, while forest buffers can remove up to 98% of pollutants from runoff, significantly improving water quality and reducing the need for costly treatment systems. Restoring and protecting natural areas can save money, improve health and help the city handle climate challenges.

To protect these water resources and reduce flood risk, it is recommended that designated floodplains be prioritized for conservation and green infrastructure, while manufacturing development be directed towards less critical areas to ecological function. Zoning updates should also incorporate Clean Water Act buffer requirements, including a minimum 50-foot vegetative buffer along waterways, to strengthen the city’s resilience to climate impacts and reduce long-term infrastructure costs. Building on flood-prone land increases the likelihood of runoff contamination, infrastructure damage and long-term environmental degradation. Preserving these spaces for green infrastructure, conservation and community use will ensure a resilient water system for future generations.

WATERSHEDS

This approach complements a broader strategy focused on watershed-based planning, which is essential to Gary's citywide strategy for environmental resilience, infrastructure improvement, and public health. Water plays a vital role in Gary, IN where all businesses and residents get their drinking water from Lake Michigan or from groundwater sources. This makes water quality and conservation not just environmental priorities but also essential to economic vitality and community well-being. The map below shows how the city's rivers, streams, and surrounding land are all connected, highlighting the importance of managing stormwater outfalls and runoff to protect water quality.

In support of these efforts, the city developed a Water Quality Characterization Report (WQCR), that provides a detailed assessment of current water quality conditions within the Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) boundary, which defines the area where Gary's stormwater is managed to protect water quality. The report is in alignment with the MS4 General Permit requirements, advances the City's comprehensive planning goals by identifying pollutant sources, assessing watershed health, and recommending best management practices to protect and improve local water resources.

Reducing the stormwater flow was identified as a critical activity towards achieving the goals outlined in the WQCR in the most critical areas. However, the highest priority areas are not located in the Gary MS4. For highly urbanized areas within the watershed, including the Gary MS4, the recommended best management practices include promoting low impact development, retrofitting existing sites or systems to enhance water quality, and restoring riparian corridors along with native vegetation in upland regions.

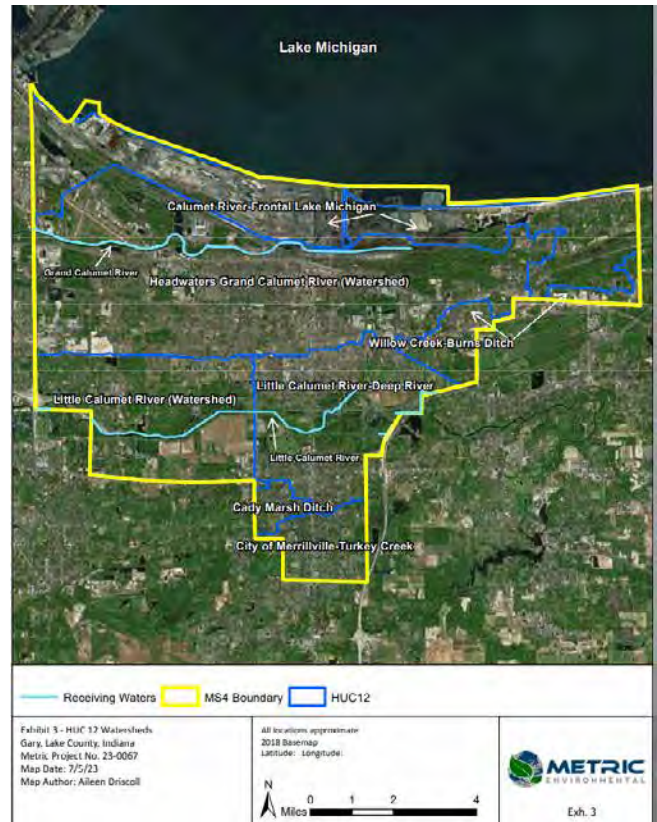


Figure 39: Watershed within Gary (source: Metric Environmental)

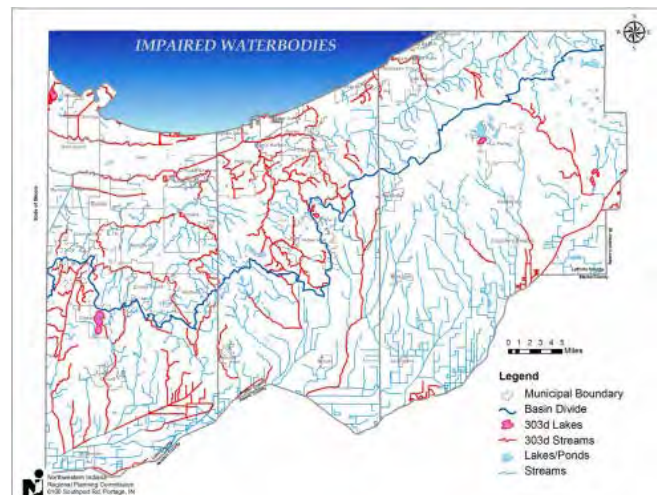


Figure 40: Impaired Waterbodies in NWI (source: NIRPC 2040 Plan)

Under Section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act, states are required to identify waters that do not meet State water quality standards. There are three streams and four open water features in the Gary MS4 that are included on the table below:

Impaired Waterway Name	Parameter(s)	Designated Use
Grand Calumet River	E. coli	Full body contact
	PCBs in Fish Tissue	Human Health and Wildlife
	Ammonia	Warm Water Aquatic Life
	Biological Integrity	Warm Water Aquatic Life
	Oil and Grease	Warm Water Aquatic Life
	Cyanide	Warm Water Aquatic Life
Little Calumet River	Dissolved Oxygen	Warm Water Aquatic Life
Burns Ditch	PCRs in Fish Tissue	Human Health and Wildlife
Marquette Park Lagoons	PCBs in Fish Tissue	Human Health and Wildlife
Lake Michigan Shoreline	PCBs in Fish Tissue	Human Health and Wildlife
	Mercury in Fish Tissue	Human Health and Wildlife

Figure 41: Listed Waters in Gary MS4

The WQCR emphasizes watershed priorities given Gary's location within the Little Calumet-Galien watershed (HUC 8- 04040001). This watershed is 441,269 acres in size and crosses into Michigan and Illinois. Within the Little Calumet-Galien watershed, there are seven HUC 12 watersheds that are present within the MS4 boundaries.

HUC 12 Number	HUC 12 Name	Area within MS4
040400010603	Calumet River- Frontal Lake Michigan	30,687 acres
071200030406	Headwaters Grand Calumet River	15,343 acres
040400010509	Willow Creek-Burns Ditch	13,406 acres
040400010508	Little Calumet River – Deep River	12,149 acres
071200030305	Little Calumet River	16,425 acres
071200030303	Cady Marsh Ditch	10,236 acres
040400010505	City of Merrillville-Turkey Creek	12,493 acres

Figure 42: HUC 12 Watersheds in MS4

The Little Calumet River and the Grand Calumet River each flow from east to west across the city boundary, and the watersheds associated with these streams are the second and third largest HUC 12 watersheds in the MS4 (Exhibit 3). Stormwater outfalls in the MS4 exclusively discharge into the Little Calumet River and the Grand Calumet River, which ultimately outlet into Lake Michigan. At the time of the WQCR report, there were 34 stormwater outfalls that discharge into the Little Calumet River and 47 stormwater outfalls that discharge into the Grand Calumet River.

IDEM and the U.S. EPA have approved the following watershed management plans within the Gary MS4 area: The Little Calumet River Watershed Management Plan was developed for three HUC 12 watersheds: the Little Calumet-Deep River Watershed (040400010508), the Willow Creek-Burns Ditch Watershed (040400010509), and Little Calumet River

(071200030305). The watershed management plan encompasses the western branch of the Little Calumet River within the Gary MS4 area. The primary target pollutants within the watershed management plan are E. coli and sediment with the overall purpose of reducing E. coli levels during base stream flows.

While the plan acknowledges the challenges of incorporating post construction best management practices in highly urbanized areas, it also presents an opportunity to reimagine urban water systems as assets for resilience and community benefit. Protecting the existing natural areas and the area within the levee is a high priority. The recommended best management practices for the highly urban areas within the watershed included infiltration strips, wet ponds, dry extended detention ponds and constructed wetlands.

The Gary Stormwater Management District began developing a watershed management plan for the West Branch of the Little Calumet River in 2008 prior to IDEM establishing the watershed plan guidelines in 2010. The overall goal was to identify primary sources of pollution into the stream; identify expected pollution sources included leaking septic tanks, streambank erosion, and polluted non-point source runoff.

A partnership with the NIRPC resulted in the expansion of this watershed management plan to encompass the entirety of Deep River-Portage Burns Waterway (HUC 10- 0404000105). This watershed management is primarily located in Lake County, though a portion of the watershed extends into Porter County, as well. It encompasses the southeastern portion of the Gary MS4 and contains the upstream end of Little Calumet River in Gary and the downstream end of Burns Ditch. Target pollutants within this watershed management plan are sediment and nutrient loads. This planning effort allows for the modernizing of stormwater systems, integrating green infrastructure and restoring riparian zones. These improvements offer flood reduction, habitat restoration and economic development - making infrastructure investment a key driver of progress.

These water-shed based improvements directly inform the city's broader water infrastructure strategy, ensuring that future investments are both climate resilient and community focused.

WATER INFRASTRUCTURE

The City of Gary's Long-Term Control Plan (LTCP) is a vital strategy that outlines the future of water infrastructure as it pertains to climate resilience and sustainability. The LTCP addresses the urgent need to reduce combined sewer overflows (CSOs) that pollute local waterways during heavy rainfall occurrences. These overflows disproportionately affect historically underserved neighborhoods, making the LTCP not only an environmental initiative, but also a matter of public health and equity. The LTCP outlines a multi-phase strategy to modernize Gary's aging sewer infrastructure, reduce CSOs, and restore the health of the Grand Calumet and Little Calumet River, two vital water bodies that have long been plagued with industrial pollution.

Simultaneously, integrating the LTCP's implementation with green infrastructure, such as bioswales, permeable pavements, rain gardens and urban wetlands, can also reduce Gary's flood risk, improve water quality and enhance neighborhood livability. This plan furthermore presents opportunities for workforce development within city boundaries, as these infrastructure upgrades will require skilled labor, engineering expertise and long-term maintenance. Additionally, integrating LTCP goals with land use planning can help repurpose underutilized or vacant land for stormwater management. The success of this plan will require cross-sector collaboration and community engagement to ensure that water infrastructure improvements are not only technically sound, but socially equitable and sustainability centered.

05

TRANSPORTATION





TRANSPORTATION

The City of Gary is a well-established regional transportation and infrastructure hub, strategically positioned at the convergence of several major corridors. Three interstate highways—I-65, I-94, and the Indiana Toll Road (I-80/90)—pass directly through the city, offering unparalleled access for freight and passenger traffic. Gary also includes 67 miles of interstate highways, 54 miles of U.S. and State highways, over 435 miles of local streets, 500 miles of sidewalks, and hundreds of alleys that support local and regional mobility. The extensive freight rail infrastructure includes more than 150 miles of mainline rail—108 miles of which are active—along with hundreds of industrial spurs that connect businesses directly to the national rail network. Many of Gary’s industrial parcels retain access to rail or the potential for new connections. The South Shore Line, following a major modernization effort in 2024, now provides more frequent and reliable commuter rail service between Gary and Downtown Chicago—reducing travel times and expanding regional workforce access.

While Gary’s infrastructure network is a major asset, gaps in connectivity and changing freight patterns have resulted in heavy truck traffic through the city’s downtown and residential neighborhoods—contributing to safety concerns, noise, and wear on local streets. Reconnecting the city’s freight network to its interstate corridors offers a critical opportunity to reroute truck traffic out of neighborhoods and back onto highways, improving quality of life and reducing infrastructure strain. As part of ongoing efforts to improve public safety and restore basic services, Mayor Melton has partnered with NIPSCO to reactivate hundreds of nonfunctional streetlights and traffic signals—enhancing visibility, traffic flow, and resident confidence in neighborhood infrastructure. Anchoring this multimodal network is the Gary/Chicago International Airport (GYI), one of the region’s most distinctive infrastructure assets. With an 8,859-foot runway—the longest in the region after O’Hare—GYI accommodates general aviation, corporate, commercial, and cargo users. A fully staffed air traffic control tower and a state-of-the-art General Aviation U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) facility enable international operations while avoiding the congestion of Chicago’s major airports, positioning Gary as a gateway for global commerce and logistics.

VEHICULAR TRANSPORTATION

The following section describes Gary’s existing roadway network, including highways, the local street network, and designated truck routes.

Highways: Gary has robust interstate and highway access. Interchange locations within the city from the highway network have generally remained the same over the past several decades. The non-tolled interstate and regional highway network in Gary and throughout Northwest Indiana is operated and maintained by the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT). Generally, the system is in good operating condition. Interchange and access improvements - such as reconfiguration of the I-80/94 and I-65 system interchange, and the redesign of the I-65 and Ridge Road - were completed in recent years and an expansion of I-80/94 was completed in 2008.

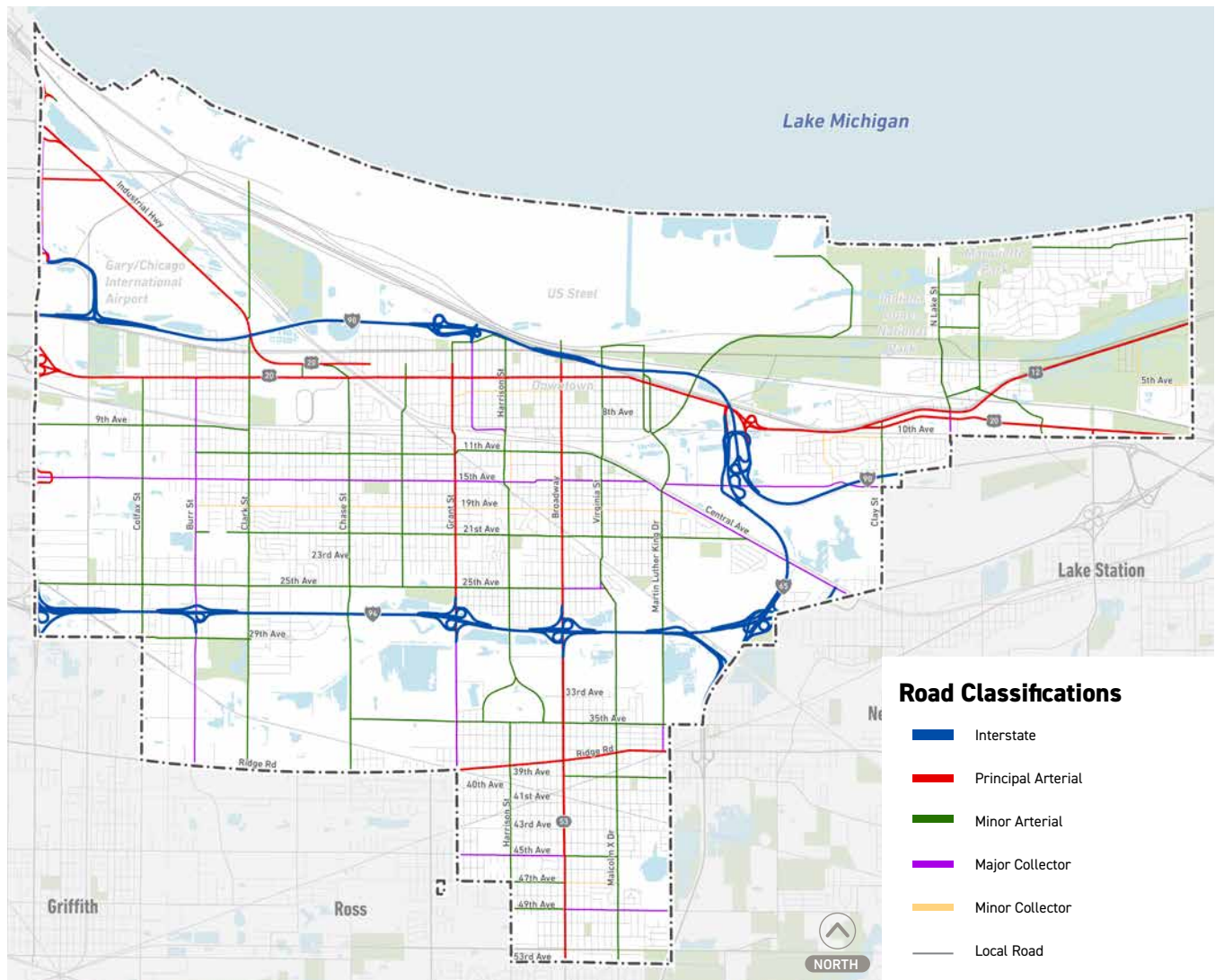
An interstate intersection at Chase and I-80/94 could be considered to spur economic development.

Local Street Network: Gary’s original street network has remained largely intact. Local streets, traffic signals, signs, sidewalks, and alleys are operated and maintained through the City’s Department of Public Works. The City conducts routine maintenance, repair, and rehabilitation of the local street network with a mixture of local, State, and federal funds. The City is required by INDOT to maintain a Pavement Asset Management Plan (PAM Plan) to track, manage, and prioritize decisions related to roadway preservation and to support applications for federal-aid projects.

Mobility within the city is sometimes hampered by one-way streets, at-grade crossings of roadway and rail lines, the condition of sidewalks, and the lack of “complete streets” that facilitate vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle travel.

Truck Routes: The interstates and highways that traverse Gary are also part of the National Truck Network that allows trucks of a certain weight, size, and length to use the system without a permit. INDOT further classifies certain routes as Indiana Extra Heavy-Duty Highways designated to carry heavy loads that exceed the National Truck Network Standard. These routes are specifically designed to withstand heavy loads associated with steel manufacturing. U.S. 20 (Dunes Highway), SR 912 (Cline Avenue), and 15th Avenue (north) are designated as Extra Heavy-Duty Highways. Beyond the Extra Heavy-Duty Highways designation, many other arterial and local streets are designated as truck routes, increasing conflicts with pedestrians and cyclists.

Figure 43: Existing Roadway Network in Gary



MULTI-MODAL TRANSPORTATION

Gary features an active transportation network with approximately 500 miles of sidewalks connected to its historic street grid. While sidewalk conditions vary across the city, they represent a significant asset that can be enhanced to support walkability and neighborhood connectivity. Similarly, while most streets have not yet been redesigned to include dedicated bicycle infrastructure, opportunities exist to integrate bike-friendly improvements into future roadway upgrades.

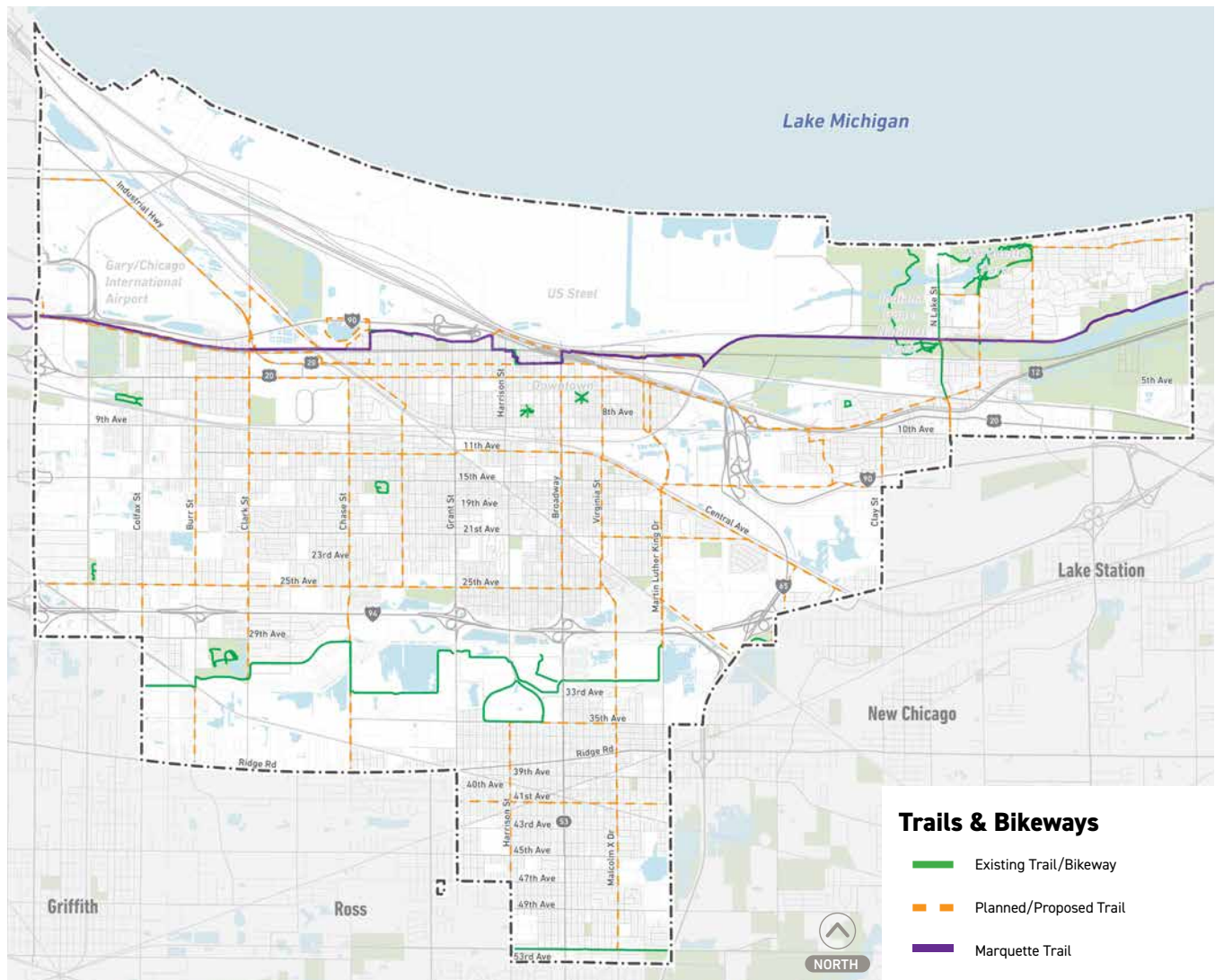
Currently, dedicated on-street bicycle facilities are limited, found primarily within Marquette Park in Miller and a few trail segments with shared roadway elements. However, Gary is steadily expanding its off-street trail network, which includes approximately 13 miles of open trails. These trails are supported and maintained by a wide range of public and nonprofit partners, including the Gary Parks Department, Lake County Parks, the Little Calumet River Basin Commission, Indiana Dunes National Park, and the Shirley Heinze Land Trust.

One of the most significant regional trail initiatives is the Marquette Greenway, first envisioned in the 2005 Marquette Plan. This 60-mile trail corridor is designed to connect Chicago, Gary, and New Buffalo, Michigan. Within Gary, the trail includes a completed segment from County Line Road to Grand Boulevard, known as the Miller Marquette Greenway. Additional segments—including the Miller Woods Greenway and Gary Greenway—are in various stages of planning and coordination. These future extensions present opportunities to enhance regional mobility, recreational access, and local connectivity.

Significant progress has been made in recent years. As of 2025, construction is underway on a nearly three-mile segment between the Paul H. Douglas Environmental Center and the West Beach entrance in Porter County, with completion anticipated by year's end. More than half of the full 60-mile Marquette Greenway has been completed, and another 12 miles are fully funded and moving toward implementation. As additional segments are built, this system will support recreation, active transportation, and access to nature throughout Gary.

Additionally, the lakefront and beach in Miller function as an important pedestrian corridor. The shoreline path runs through Marquette Park and across the public beach, serving as a scenic walking route and an extension of the broader Marquette Greenway corridor. It connects to nearby trails such as the Marquette Park Loop, Chanute Trail, Bayless Dune Trail, and the Paul H. Douglas Center trails—reinforcing Miller Beach as a major gateway for recreation and trail access in Gary.

Figure 44: Trail & Bikeway Network in Gary



PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Transit continues to serve as a critical link in Gary's local and regional mobility system. The Gary Public Transportation Corporation (GPTC) operates 12 bus routes—five local and seven regional—connecting residents to employment centers, schools, and services across Northwest Indiana. Recent upgrades, including the addition of electric buses, more frequent service, and the introduction of a mobile fare payment system, have strengthened the network and increased its accessibility. The Broadway Metro Express (BMX), Indiana's first branded rapid bus line, connects Downtown Gary to Crown Point via Merrillville with limited stops, enhanced shelters, and dedicated bus lanes—demonstrating the potential for high-quality, high-frequency regional corridors.

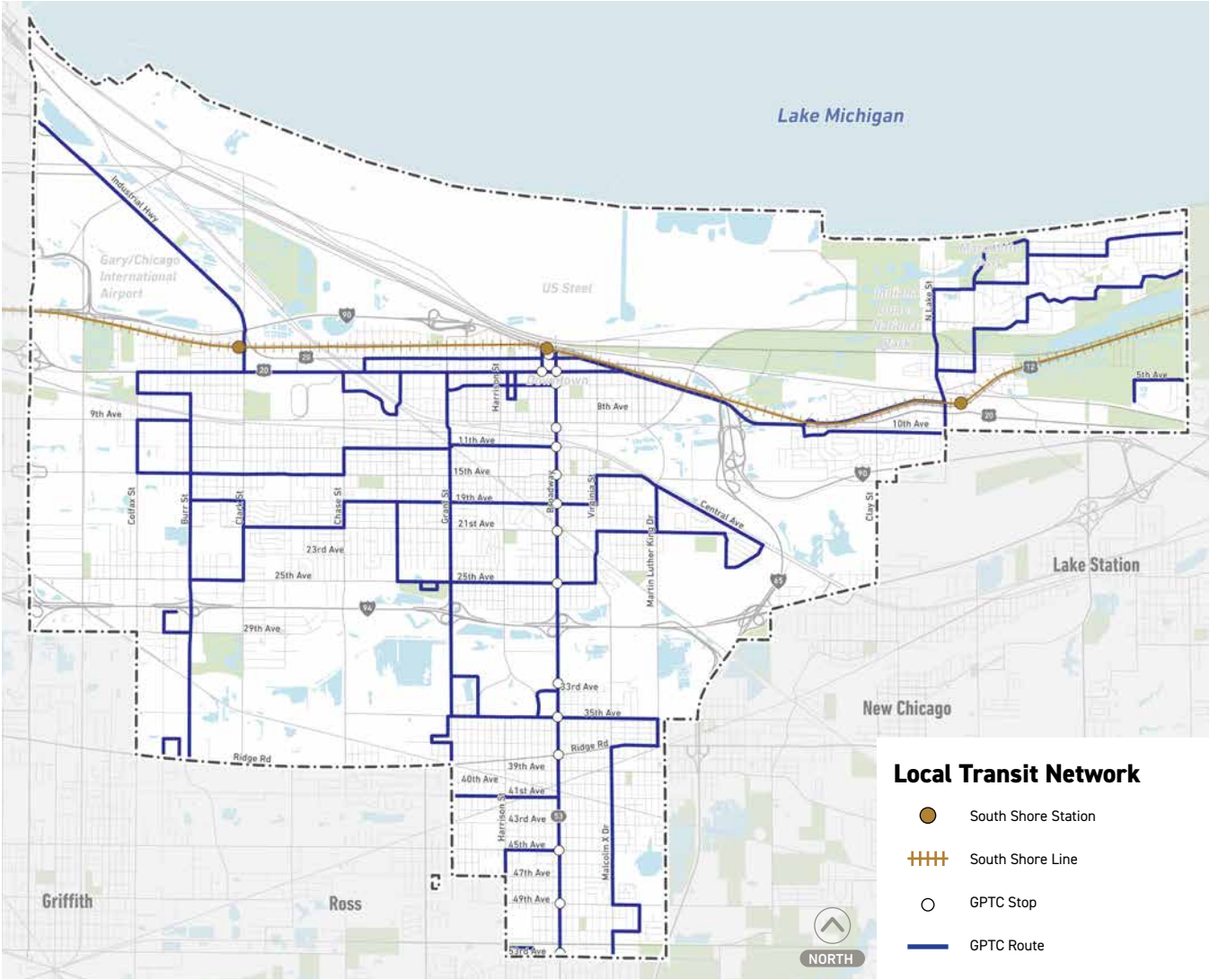
The most significant recent investment in Gary's transit landscape is the completion of the new Miller Station on the South Shore Line. This modern commuter rail facility, constructed as part of the once-in-a-generation South Shore double-tracking project, reestablishes Miller as a high-frequency transit destination and a catalyst for neighborhood reinvestment. The station serves as the anchor of the Miller Transit Development District (TDD), supporting walkable housing, commercial revitalization, and improved access to the lakefront and public amenities.

With Miller Station now complete, Downtown Gary has emerged as the next focus for major transit investment. The City of Gary, in collaboration with the Northwest Indiana Regional Development Authority (RDA) and other regional partners, is planning the replacement of the aging Metro Center station with a new multimodal hub. This future facility will serve as a regional gateway at the north end of Broadway—integrating South Shore Line commuter rail, GPTC local and regional buses, Greyhound intercity service, micromobility options, and a formal trailhead for the Marquette Greenway. The new station will also include a park-and-ride facility to accommodate regional commuters and support mode shift, particularly for those traveling to Chicago or other South Shore Line destinations.

In 2023, Indiana Senate Bill 434 allocated state matching dollars to support the development of this Downtown multimodal hub, reinforcing the project's importance to regional transit, economic development, and equitable access. As a key anchor of the Gary Metro TDD, the new station is envisioned as a catalyst for transit-oriented development (TOD)—surrounded by walkable mixed-use projects, public space improvements, and investments in housing, culture, and employment. The station's integration with the Marquette Greenway positions it as both a mobility hub and a recreational destination, linking downtown to regional trail systems, the lakefront, and adjacent neighborhoods.

To the west, the Clark Road South Shore station, located near the Gary/Chicago International Airport, offers additional long-term potential for intermodal connectivity. As the airport continues to expand its logistics and passenger operations, the station can serve as a strategic hub linking air, rail, and freight infrastructure. Investments in Clark Road and surrounding industrial properties could further support job growth, air cargo development, and increased access to airport-related employment centers.

Figure 45: Transit Network in Gary



PORT AND AIRPORT TRANSPORTATION

Buffington Harbor is a strategically located multimodal asset on Lake Michigan with significant potential to support expanded freight and port operations. With the closure of the waterfront casino and recent State legislation enabling its relocation, the harbor is now positioned for transformation into a modern industrial port. It's direct access to Great Lakes shipping routes, adjacency to Class I rail lines, and proximity to major highways makes it a prime candidate for investment in maritime logistics. However, current transportation constraints—such as limited truck access, flood-prone roadways, and at-grade rail crossings along Clark Road—must be addressed to unlock its full potential. Infrastructure upgrades, including road rehabilitation, grade separations, and intersection improvements, are essential to safely and efficiently move goods and support regional freight mobility. With strategic investment, Buffington Harbor can emerge as a high-capacity freight hub complementing Gary's broader multimodal network.

Gary/Chicago International Airport (GYI) serves as a critical anchor in Northwest Indiana's transportation and logistics system, offering unparalleled multimodal access for air cargo, general aviation, and potential commercial service. Located at the nexus of I-90, I-80/94, I-65, and Cline Avenue, and adjacent to major rail corridors and Buffington Harbor, the airport is ideally positioned to support regional and interregional freight movement. Over \$50 million in recent improvements—including a runway extension, new customs facility, and apron upgrades—have enhanced its operational capacity, while private investments by FBOs signal long-term confidence in the airport's role as a business aviation hub. Future expansion, including possible rail-to-air connectivity at the nearby South Shore Line Clark Road station, presents a unique opportunity to integrate air, rail, and road freight systems in one location. With continued planning and infrastructure investment, GYI can drive job creation and serve as a multimodal logistics gateway for the region.

Figure 46: Port and Airport



Transportation Features

- South Shore Station
- ++++ South Shore Line
- Roadways
- ++++ Active Rails
- ++++ Inactive Rails
- Gary/Chicago Airport

2025 CITY OF GARY SAFETY ACTION PLAN (SAFE STREETS FOR ALL)

The 2025 City of Gary Safety Action Plan (Safe Streets for All) is a data-driven roadmap to reduce roadway fatalities and serious injuries by 40% by 2042, with a long-term goal of elimination.

Using the Safe System Approach and community input, it identifies the High-Injury Network, addresses equity impacts, and provides targeted actions through six major strategies outlined here.

Traffic Safety Strategies

- 1** Implement a comprehensive traffic calming and speed management program.
- 2** Prioritize safety interventions and infrastructure investments along the City's High-Injury Network.
- 3** Develop and promote a "Gary Streets for Everyone" vision to make City streets more friendly for walking, biking, and taking transit.
- 4** Align City of Gary policies and processes with the Safe System Approach to foster a culture of urgency and transparency in addressing traffic safety.
- 5** Create opportunities for community-supported/-led placemaking efforts in the Downtown area.
- 6** Strengthen and modernize traffic enforcement and accountability programs.

Content provided courtesy of the City of Gary Safety Action Plan

Safe System Approach

The Safe System Approach, as outlined in the Safety Action Plan, designs transportation networks to anticipate human mistakes and prevent them from causing death or serious injury, emphasizing safe roads, safe speeds, safe vehicles, safe users, and effective post-crash care.

Safe System Approach Principles

The Safe System Approach is guided by six principles:

- 1 Deaths & serious injuries are unacceptable**
- 2 Humans make mistakes**
- 3 Humans are vulnerable**
- 4 Responsibility is shared**
- 5 Safety is proactive**
- 6 Redundancy is crucial**

COMMITMENT TO SAFER STREETS

Safe System Approach Objectives

As part of this holistic approach, these six principles inform the five objectives of the Safe System Approach:



SAFER ROADS

Design roads that encourage safe behavior, minimize the impact of human error, and protect the most vulnerable road users.



SAFER SPEEDS

Ensure speeds on roadways promote safe driving and are tied with proper education and enforcement.



SAFER PEOPLE

Nurture people to travel safely on all modes of transport.



SAFER VEHICLES

Encourage the use of vehicles that reduce the chances of harm for people in and outside of vehicles.

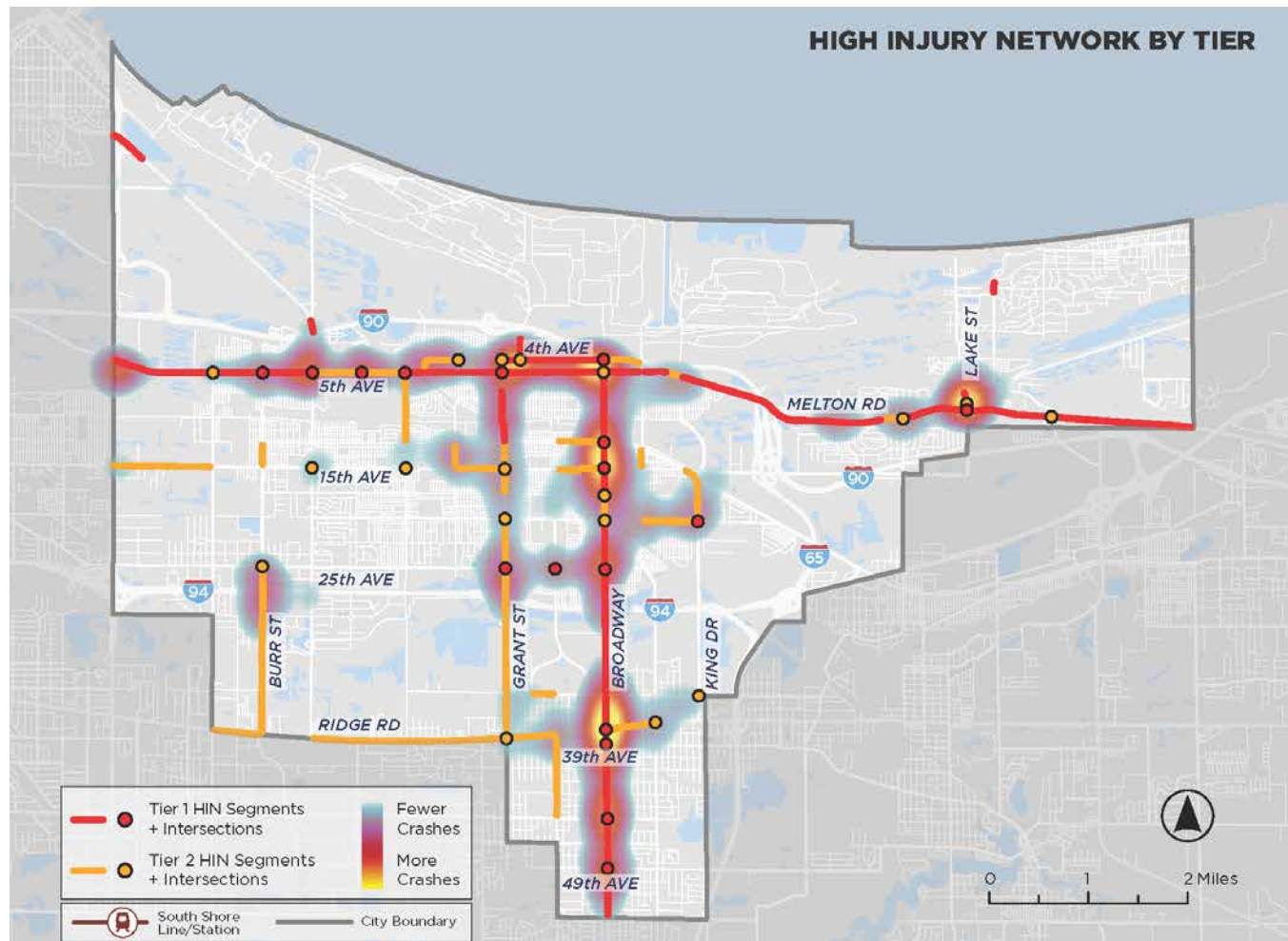


POST-CRASH CARE

Provide fast, reliable emergency services that helps increase the chances of survival for victims of crashes.

Content provided courtesy of the City of Gary Safety Action Plan

Figure 47: High Injury Network by Tier



Content provided courtesy of the City of Gary Safety Action Plan

High Injury Network Map

The High-Injury Network (HIN) maps the 6% of Gary's streets where half of all fatal and serious injury crashes happened between 2018 and 2022, mainly along corridors like Broadway, 5th Avenue, US 12/20, and Grant Street. It uses crash data, roadway characteristics, and equity analysis to rank locations by risk, helping the City focus safety improvements where they will save the most lives.

FACILITY TYPES

High-Risk Intersections & Street Segments

Certain intersection and street features can impact the risk of crashes and help guide Gary officials to understand what types of locations should be prioritized for future investment. An analysis of these features in Gary (based on crash history) helps uncover which features are above average risk and need particular attention.

Intersections



SIGNALIZED

ARTERIAL INTERSECTIONS

Signalized intersections along arterials have the highest relative risk among intersection types.

Signalized arterial intersections have the highest relative risk for **all crashes** and **KSI crashes**

Angle crashes and **speeding crashes** see the highest relative risks at signalized arterial intersections

ARTERIAL-COLLECTOR INTERSECTIONS

Pedestrian KSI crashes have the highest relative risk at signalized intersections **where arterials meet collectors**



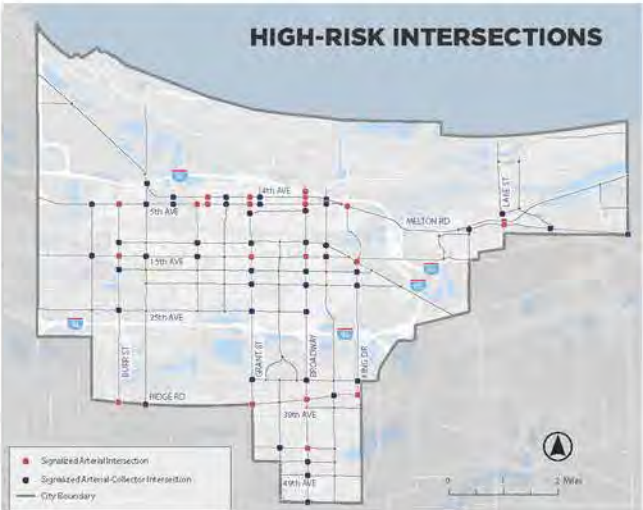
UNSIGNALIZED

Ran off road crashes have the highest relative risk at unsignalized arterial intersections

Signalized Arterial Intersection: 5th Avenue and Broadway



HIGH-RISK INTERSECTIONS



Street Segments



MORE THAN 3 LANES

With few exceptions, roads with more than 3 lanes have a higher relative risk than roads with 3 or fewer lanes.

STATE OWNED ARTERIALS

Across all crash types, crash risk is highest on state roads with more than 3 lanes.

More than double the relative average risk for **all crashes** and **KSI crashes**.

More than triple the relative average risk for **pedestrian KSI crashes**.

COUNTY OWNED ARTERIALS

Cyclist KSI crashes have a higher relative risk on county arterials with more than 3 lanes.

State Owned Arterial - Broadway



HIGH-RISK STREETS



Relative Risk

Relative risk is a metric developed to compare the frequency of crashes across types of roadways and intersections. Larger values indicate a larger number of crashes for each typology, with values above one indicating an above average number of crashes and below one indicating a below average number of crashes. For example, signalized arterial intersections have a relative risk score of 1.54, meaning that severe crashes are 50% more common at these locations than the typical intersection in Gary.

06

IMPLEMENTATION





IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

HOW TO USE THIS SECTION

The following implementation priorities are organized by Mayor Melton's key focus areas and a relative timeline (short 0-3, medium 3-5+ years). These priorities should be reviewed annually and updated as needed to reflect evolving community needs, changing conditions, and completed projects.

MANIFESTING THE VISION

MELTON ADMINISTRATION KEY PRIORITIES:

Stabilization

- Strengthen City Finances
- Retain Current Population
- Improve Neighborhood Infrastructure (Stabilization)
- Eliminate Blight



Growth

- Our Population & Tax Base
- Small Businesses
- Quality Housing Stock
- Job/Training Opportunities Build Tourism, Arts, & Culture



Quality of Life

- Improve Public Safety
- Support Youth, Families, & Seniors
- Support for the Homeless
- Address Food Insecurities
- Enhance Animal Control

Planning for the Future

- Improve Environmental Practices
- Comprehensive Citywide Plan
- Revise Zoning Code
- Major Infrastructure Improvements

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

STABILIZATION

Short-Term (0-3 Years)

- Update zoning and development standards in-house (Fall 2025).
- Use this plan and appendices to attract developers, investors, and the philanthropic community to Gary, along with regional and state partners (Gary Housing Authority, Northwest Indiana RDA, Indiana Economic Development Corporation, and non-profits).
- Finish demolition and cleanup efforts downtown and citywide to get sites ready for new development.
- Install temporary signage at key sites to show progress and highlight redevelopment opportunities.
- Start the process (RFQs) for redeveloping City- and GHA-owned properties.
- Evaluate infrastructure and environmental conditions on key sites.
- Improve lighting and crosswalks on dangerous streets.
- Remove outdated restrictions (e.g., US Steel covenants) on City-owned land.

Medium-Term (3-5+ Years)

- Expand the Transit Development District (TDD) boundaries to support more reinvestment.
- Keep acquiring, assembling, and marketing properties to attract redevelopment.
- Continue upgrading infrastructure to support neighborhood stabilization. Start with the highest-need areas and expand improvements to more neighborhoods over time as funding and capacity allow.
- Identify creative ways to fund construction of, program, and maintain critical infrastructure, parks, and trails to unlock potential economic development and revitalization opportunities.

GROWTH

Short-Term (0-3 Years)

- Advance Gary Metro Station replacement through Gary Metro Station Authority.
- Use the plan to attract developers, investors, and grants.
- Promote Gary at national conferences and investment summits.
- Engage developers and site selectors experienced in TOD development, community-scale redevelopment and stabilization, and creating a tax base.

Medium-Term (3-5+ Years)

- Build new transit-oriented development (TOD) near NICTD commuter rail stations.
- Add sidewalks, lights, and crosswalks near new development and transit.
- Support growth of tech and advanced industry through regional initiatives like the Quantum Corridor and Ignite the Region.
- Identify and address transportation constraints such as limited truck access, flood-prone roadways, and at-grade rail crossings to unlock the full potential of sites to support economic development and freight mobility.
- Continue to position the Gary/Chicago International Airport as a major regional cargo hub, identify opportunities for intermodal co-location, and future investments.

QUALITY OF LIFE

Short-Term (0-3 Years)

- Begin work on the Safe Streets for All initiative to improve pedestrian and traffic safety.
- Improve crosswalks and slow down traffic in neighborhoods.
- Update zoning to support quality housing options for both existing residents and new families.
- Continue pop-ups such as food trucks or temporary activities to bring life to downtown and neighborhoods and demonstrate potential.
- Support growing the “Friends of” partnerships citywide to program and maintain public and semi-public space.
- Establish the Gary Youth Climate Leadership Program (Spring 2026).
- Develop 2 Climate-Resilient Community Green Spaces (End of Spring 2026).
- Launch a Green Workforce & Climate Justice Academy (Summer 2026).

Medium-Term (3-5+ Years)

- Revitalize core neighborhoods through infrastructure improvements and strategic redevelopment.
- Start to increase green space throughout the city.
- Work to improve indoor and outdoor air quality.
- Work on increasing access to local healthy food within the city.

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

Short-Term (0-3 Years)

- Use this Comprehensive Plan to guide city growth and investment decisions.
- Coordinate with NIRPC and INDOT to align local projects with regional transportation and trail funding (TIP).
- Invest in branding and wayfinding for major assets like Downtown, Miller Station, Marquette Park, and Indiana Dunes National Park (with tourism partners, NPS, and NICTD).

Medium-Term (3-5+ Years)

- Start priority projects from the Green Infrastructure Plan, Climate Action Plan, and Parks Master Plan.
- Use TDDs and other tools to fund infrastructure and public space improvements.
- Build out the Complete Streets network and extend trail and multimodal connections citywide.
- Invest in infrastructure, preserve industrial land, and align economic development efforts around strategic assets (Buffington Harbor, Gary/Chicago International Airport, US Steel, FedEx, and other strategic sites).
- Start to promote workforce development and encourage entrepreneurship and small-business incubation.

MKSK