2.0 Planning Context

Source: www.epa.gov

Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore
Lake Michigan, Indiana

Source: Ted Cline, Michigan State University Extension
http://mnfi.anr.msu.edu/communities/community.cfm?id=10671

Great Lakes Marsh

2.1 Regional Setting

From U.S. Highway 12 on the southern coast of Lake Michigan and the nearby Town of Chesterton, south to the banks of the Kankakee River, SR 49 traverses the length of Porter County and beyond, to where it finally intersects with SR 14, just northeast of the Town of Rennsselaer; a distance of approximately 45 miles. 13 miles south of the Lake, SR 49 intersects with U.S. Highway 30 (the Lincoln Highway) and the southern edge of the City of Valparaiso, the southern boundary and general extent of the SR 49 corridor planning area.

Due to its proximity to the Chicago metropolitan area, the lakeshore region of Northwest Indiana, composed of Lake, LaPorte and Porter counties, has experienced a four percent growth rate over each of the last two decades. It is anticipated that this trend will continue, with an anticipated 170,000 new residents by 2040. Despite this growth trend, the distribution of population has followed a national pattern, where populations have shifted from once-thriving urban transects to surrounding communities and unincorporated areas. The City of Valparaiso has been steadily increasing in population, averaging more than 3,000 people per decade. However, most of the growth within Porter County has occurred within the unincorporated areas, with almost 19,000 persons added between 1980 and 2010.[1]

To accommodate this growth and the significant changes that may result, the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission facilitated a three-year, region-wide planning effort, that culminated in the *2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan: A Vision for Northwest Indiana*.[2] The SR 49 Corridor Plan has been informed by and attempts to advance key planning constructs embedded within this and other planning documents concerning economic development and resource management within Porter County.

2.1.1 NATURAL FEATURES

SR 49 passes across the southern terminus of the Valparaiso Moraine, a terminal moraine that wraps around the southern edge of the Lake Michigan basin. The moraine is a band of hilly terrain composed of glacial till and sand, formed from the receding glaciers that were part of the Wisconsin glaciation, approximately 10,000 to 50,000 years before present. From U.S. Highway 6, the corridor's northernmost boundary and approximate elevation 890 above sea level (asl), SR 49 descends approximately 100 feet before it reaches U.S. Highway 30, the corridor's southern boundary, which is around elevation 792 asl. The Valparaiso Moraine was named after the City of Valparaiso, Indiana because the moraine is narrower and higher in elevation than other parts of the moraine. This land formation is characterized by rolling hills, pothole lakes and wetlands. Valparaiso's geography makes it challenging to accommodate growth and development. While there is an abundant supply of developable land to accommodate growth and development, much of the land is difficult to access, except from county collector and arterial roadways. Further, referencing the old axiom, "prime farmland is also prime developable land," the City of Valparaiso does not want to despoil the very resources that help to distinguish it from other communities with less character.

The most heavily wooded areas within Porter County exist along Meridian Road, just west of Valparaiso, forming the western-most extent of the SR 49 corridor; north of Valparaiso, and eastern U.S. Highway 6. The ecology of numerous riparian and stream corridors traversing Porter County are both scenic and serve important ecological functions within the Lake Michigan and Salt Creek watersheds.[3]

Lake Michigan

Although Lake Michigan is well-outside the bounds of the corridor study area, it has and will continue to have a profound impact on the climate, natural environment and settlement patterns within the corridor. The Lake Michigan shoreline is a major asset to Porter County, in that it draws thousands of beach goers to its banks every year. The beaches that compose the Lake Michigan shoreline are some of the most pristine in the region. Lake Michigan has an average natural depth of 279 feet and holds 22 percent of the total volume of the Great Lakes—both of which suggest rich recreational opportunities, such as swimming, fishing and boating.[4]

Wetlands and Water Bodies

Porter County consists of two major watersheds - the Great Lakes watershed (which ultimately flows east to the Atlantic Ocean) and the Mississippi River watershed (which flows west and south to the Gulf of Mexico). Most of the Lake Michigan Watershed in Porter County flows through the Little Calumet River, which originates in LaPorte County and drains into Lake Michigan through Burns Ditch in northwest Porter County—its major tributary being Salt Creek.[5]

Part of the Lake Michigan Watershed, the Coffee Creek watershed lies in the northeastern portion of Porter County. The watershed covers approximately 15.7 square miles, including portions of Jackson, Liberty, Washington, and Westchester townships as well as a portion of the Town of Chesterton.[6] The southernmost portion of the Coffee Creek watershed is in the SR 49 corridor. Coffee Creek flows into the Little Calumet River north of the Penn Central Railroad, in the northeast corner of Chesterton; which then flows into Lake Michigan less than 10 miles west of its union with Coffee Creek, near Ogden Dunes.[7]

Unlike much of Porter County where agricultural land uses dominate the landscape, natural landscapes dominate the Coffee Creek watershed. Forested areas cover approximately 40 percent of the watershed; wetlands account for another 11-12 percent; grasslands account for another nine percent of the watershed area; old field habitat, fallow farmland or pasture exists on approximately 18 percent of the watershed—which developers often consider promising for commercial or residential development, especially north of Interstates 80/90 and east of SR 49.[8]

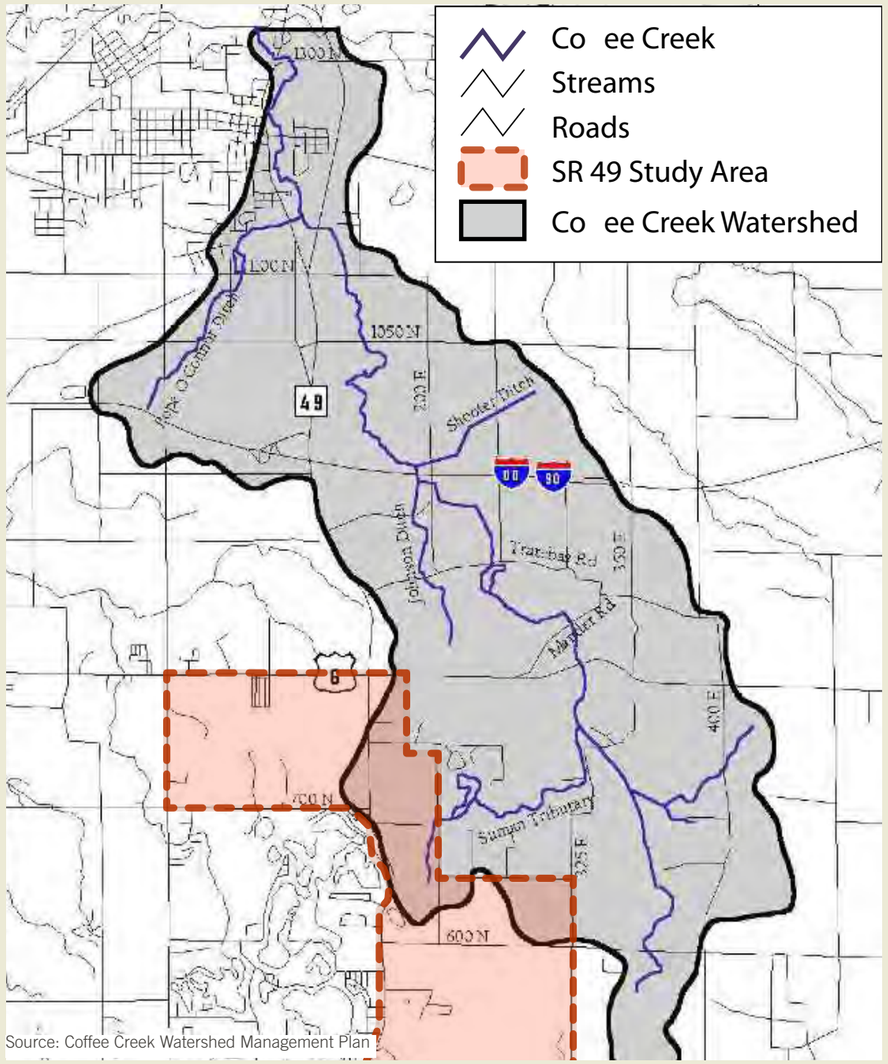
The central and southern parts of the county are drained primarily by numerous ditches and streams that flow into the Kankakee River; the natural drainage in this area has been altered by the installation of an extensive network of ditches and field tile, as well as the dredging and straightening of the Kankakee River in the early 1900's.[9]

Porter County has approximately 18,000 acres of wetlands and about 10,000 forested acres. Since the 1700's Porter County's wetland habitat acreage has decreased to approximately 6.6 percent—which could cause significant repercussions due to the fact that wetlands help maintain the quality of surface and ground water by removing pollutants, but also by providing valuable habitat for wetland flora and fauna, aesthetics, recreation, and reduction in peak flood levels. Within the SR 49 corridor study area there are approximately 105.6 acres of wetland areas.[10]

Valparaiso Chain of Lakes Watershed Area

The resulting topography of northern Porter County has provided some very interesting natural landforms, including the Valparaiso Chain of Lakes Watershed Area, which consists of nine natural lakes and one man-made lake, covering approximately four square miles within the central portion of the Valparaiso Moraine, immediately west of SR 49. The system of lakes provide area residents with significant recreational opportunities, including swimming, boating and fishing. The Valparaiso Lakes, include Canada Lake, Deep Lake, Flint Lake, Loomis Lake, Spectacle Lake, Long Lake, Mink Lake, Moss Lake, Spectacle Lake, and Wauhob Lake, are under the management jurisdiction of the Valparaiso Lakes Area Conservancy District (VLACD). The VLACD

Figure 2.1, Coffee Creek Watershed



Source: Coffee Creek Watershed Management Plan

was established in 1975 primarily to purchase and maintain the small water utility in that area that was on the verge of bankruptcy. Today, VLACD's services include providing water supply, providing collection and disposal of sewage produced within the district, improving drainage, preventing the loss of topsoil from injurious water erosion, and flood control and prevention.[11] The one man-made lake, Flint Lake, serves as Valparaiso's back-up source of potable water.

Moraine Nature Preserve

Immediately to the northeast of the SR 49 corridor is the Moraine Nature Preserve. This preserve is owned and operated by the Indiana Department of Natural Resources. It is 474 acres in area and represents in microcosm the many unique land forms associated with the Valparaiso Moraine, including rolling ridges, steep hills, muck pockets, pot holes, and a shallow pond. Mature beech-maple forest is found on some of the uplands and ravines. Buttonbush and black willow surround a number of pot holes and ponds. Several upland areas are in various stages of succession[12]. The Moraine Nature Preserve composes the SR 49 corridor's northeastern boundary.

Together, the Moraine Nature Preserve and the Valparaiso Chain of Lakes Watershed Area provide a northern, semi-wilderness, open space buffer for the City of Valparaiso, ultimately preventing significant development to the north of the City and enabling it to maintain its status as a free-standing city. It is between these two resources that the SR 49 corridor passes, en route to southern destinations, such as the Porter County Regional Airport and further south to the Porter County Expo Center and Fairgrounds.

Soils

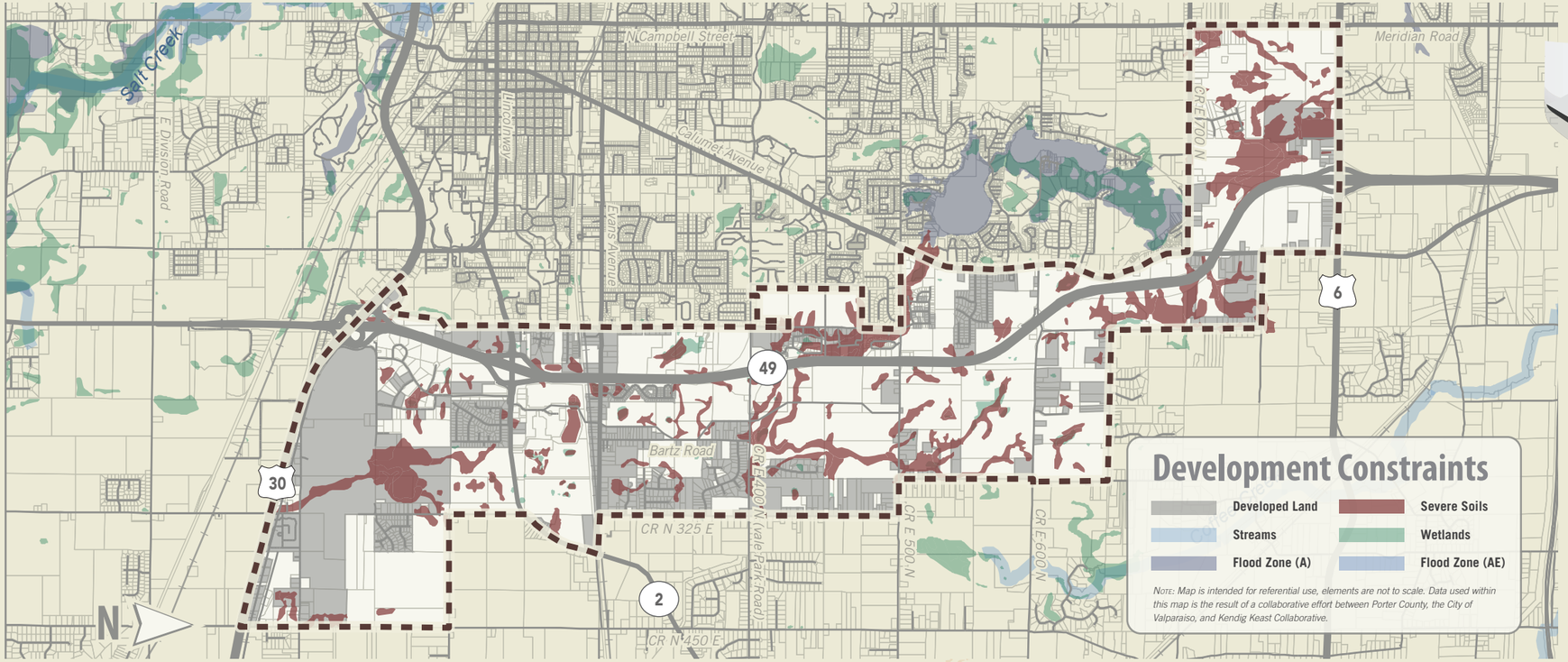
Most of the soils contained within the SR 49 corridor area have moderate to severe conditions associated with any kind of substantial development and transportation infrastructure; the largest and most severe soil series found within the SR 49 corridor include Flavaquents, Riddles loam, and Washtenaw silt loam.

Flavaquents soils are nearly level soils on bottom lands that are characterized by barely discernible swales and swells. Flavaquents are poorly drained and are poorly suited for sanitary facilities and building site developments. Flooding and wetness remain significant limitations, and the pollution of ground water by effluent from waste disposal facilities is possible because of the sandy underlying material that comprises this soil type.

Riddles loam consists of deep, well-drained soils on till plains and moraines. Within the corridor, slopes that present limitations

Valparaiso Chain of Lakes Watershed Area

Moraine Nature Preserve



Map 2.1, Development Constraints

Development constraints impacting lands within the SR 49 corridor include severe soils (unsuitable for septic tank absorption, thoroughfare loads, or building construction); steep slopes, streams, water bodies, and wetlands; 100 year floodplain; and developed properties. This map delineates each constraint (in color) to reveal the parcels that are uninhibited or minimally impacted by such constraints and therefore are the most desirable for new or future development sites. Valparaiso soils are the prevailing constraint limiting ideal development sites, however in some places soil constraints can be mitigated by implementing special construction methods.

to development range from 12 to 18 percent and have moderate permeability. Extensive earth moving is required for construction. Riddles loam is highly erosive and methods to remediate this likelihood are necessary (i.e., structural retaining wall systems, retaining vegetative cover, use of bioengineering techniques for embankment stabilization, etc.). This soil also has severe limitations for local roads and streets because of extreme slopes, which require extensive road cuts and strengthening of the base material with sand and gravel to support vehicular traffic.

Washtenaw silt loam is a nearly level, deep, very poorly drained soil that is found in depressional areas on moraines, till plains, and outwash plains. It is frequently ponded with surface runoff from adjacent higher lying areas making it unsuitable for building sites. Washtenaw silt loam also has severe limitations for local roads and streets because of ponding and frost action. Implementing a system of drainage ditches along roadways can help to lower the water table and reduce the frost action potential.

Soils-related development constraints are generally depicted on **Map 2.1, *Development Constraints***.

2.2 Land Use and Development Patterns

As described within *Section 1.5, Corridor Segmentation*, the SR 49 corridor embodies the full spectrum of land uses and development

Landscape and Community Character

From the natural landscapes found around U.S. Highway 6 to the automobile-oriented development associated with U.S. Highway 30, at its terminus, the SR 49 corridor provides a fairly even gradation in landscape and community character, relative to density and built environment.

Natural. The natural community character category applies to the least developed areas. Natural areas are generally large expanses of undisturbed open space, often publicly controlled, with environmentally sensitive features. Significant natural areas northeast of the City of Valparaiso include the Moraine Nature Preserve and the Valparaiso Lakes Area Conservancy District (VCLAD).

Rural. The rural character category consists of lands that are sparsely developed, with mainly agricultural and very low-density residential as the primary uses. This category provides its residents with the choice of seclusion within the countryside, and away from a suburban or urban setting. CR E 600 N, east of SR 49 is sparsely populated amidst large expanses of agriculture, and represents a landscape of rural character.

Countryside. This category represents a transition between the rural and suburban character types and is formed by informal, usually unplatted groupings of very large-lot residential properties. The style and arrangement of these large lots result in a separation of units, creating a mostly rural setting while accommodating low density development. Although it is a fairly recent development, the large-lot, St. Andre Drive subdivision just north of the intersection of CR E 600 N and CR N 400 E represents a countryside landscape character.

Suburban. The suburban character class represents the bridge between rural and urban areas; development within this category is designed to thoughtfully transition from the least dense natural and rural areas to the forms of development that are more dense and of greater intensity and scale. The residential development along Bartz Road represents a good example of suburban development.

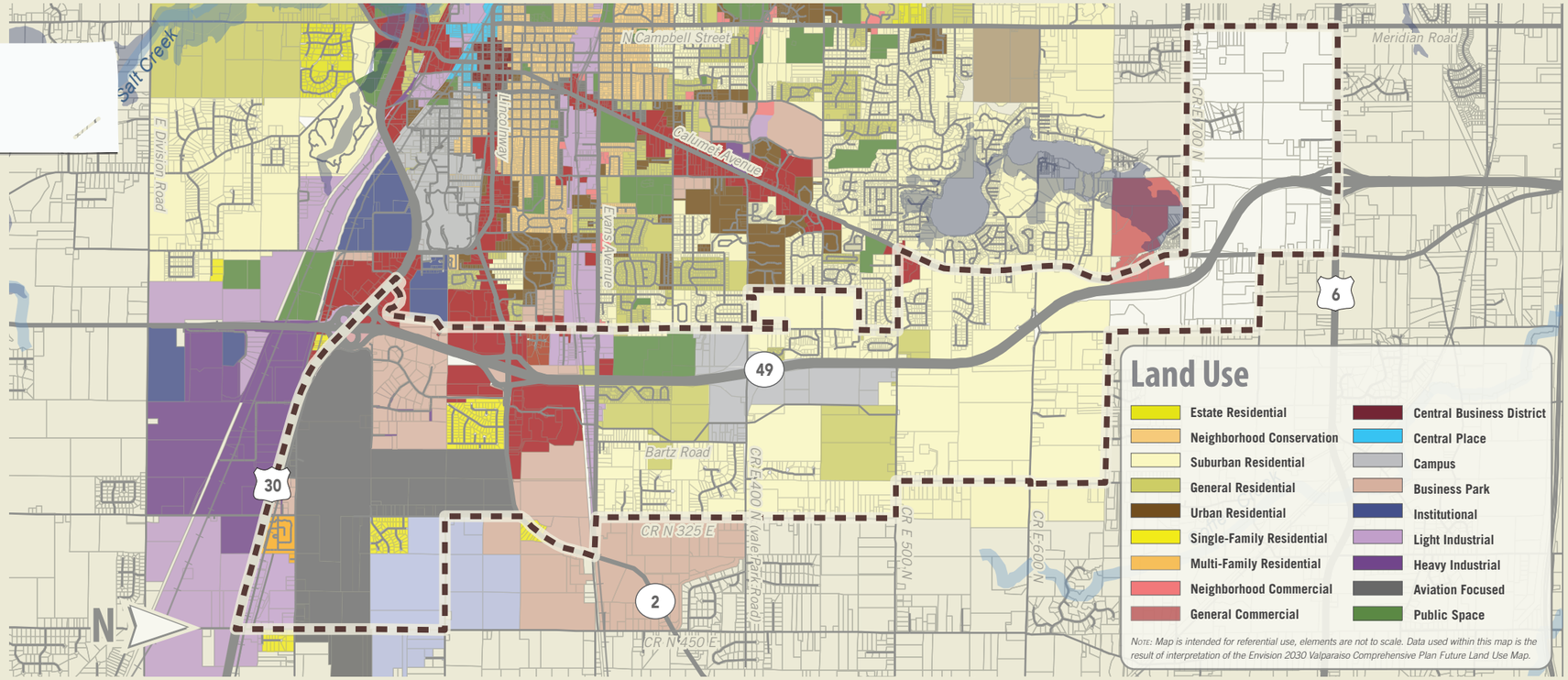
Auto-Urban. Development patterns in the auto-urban category are characterized by roads, driveways, and at-grade parking areas that commonly exceed the area of the building(s) as a percent of ground cover. The strip-commercial areas along the original highway entrances, described in the previous section, compose the most visually significant “auto-urban commercial” areas in the City. The Pine Creek Road subdivision is a good example of a residential area that is auto-urban in character.


Auto-Urban Residential


Suburban Residential

Map 2.2, Land Use

As depicted in the City of Valparaiso Land Use map, the portions of the SR 49 corridor that are within the City limits include a variety of land uses ranging from aviation, business park and campus focused development, to general commercial and residential development. The southern portion of the SR 49 corridor is largely built-out, while the northern portions of the corridor, which are primarily in Porter County, remain in agricultural production.



patterns, ranging from remote semi-wilderness reserves in the rural reach of the corridor to bustling industrial development around the Porter County Regional Airport, within the corridor's urban reach. Between these contrasting land uses exists varying densities of residential development, commercial and retail development and office park development.

2.2.1 FARMLAND / AGRICULTURE

Agricultural land composes much of the middle and rural reaches of the SR 49 corridor. Much of the farmland within the corridor is designated by the Porter County Soils Survey as "prime farmland," which has led to a development pattern in Valparaiso that is typical of many smaller farm communities found in predominantly agricultural areas, whereby agricultural bottom land is developed into single family detached subdivisions of varying densities. The principal agricultural rotation of crops that are raised within the SR 49 corridor include corn, soybeans and wheat. The yields for these crops range with the amount of annual rainfall but a Porter County farmer can typically expect to grow and harvest the following annual yield:

- Corn: 145 bushels (bu.) – 190 bu. per acre
- Soybeans: 45 bu. – 50 bu. per acre
- Wheat: 55 bu.- 70 bu. per acre

In 2002, there were 606 farms that utilized nearly 146,000 acres within Porter County. This is 54 percent of all land within the county. The market value of all agricultural production was over $37 million.[13]

2.2.2 DEVELOPMENT AND LAND USE

The project corridor is located in an urbanized (suburban) section of Porter County. The surrounding land use is a mix of residential, commercial, light industrial, and agriculture. Though the majority of land along SR 49 is zoned and classified as "suburban residential" or "rural residential," these lands are in fact large enough to be considered agricultural and do in fact produce limited harvests within the study area. While much of the land consists of larger parcels, there are some caches of suburban residential development that have been built along the corridor and within the study area.

As automobile-oriented development began to take precedence along the highways, frontage roads were constructed and significant nodes of commercial and industrial development have occurred at many of the major intersections (including U.S. Highway 30/SR 49, and SR 49/LaPorte Avenue). At the intersection of SR 49 and U.S. Highway 30 are concentrated nodes of heavy/light industrial uses, general commercial uses, and business parks. At the same intersection, at the southernmost boundaries of the study area is the Porter County Regional Airport and associated surrounding industrial properties.

2.2.3 RECREATIONAL AMENITIES

Valparaiso boasts hundreds of acres of parkland that has been carefully preserved in and around the larger Valparaiso community, providing many passive and active recreational options. Lush nature parks, hike and bike trails, activities, and organized sports are enjoyed by the City's residents; for example, the TalTree Arboretum & Gardens, Valparaiso Country Club, The Golf Course at Aberdeen, LLC, Valparaiso Family YMCA, various outdoor sports facilities and complexes, Rogers-Lakewood Park, Seven Peaks Waterpark Duneland, etc.[14] Refer to **Map 2.3, *Parks and Managed Lands***, on page 26.

A significant recreational attraction is the Sunset Hill Farm County Park. This park is located on meridian Road, just south of U.S. Highway 6, within the northeastern edge of the SR 49 corridor. The Park is 238 acres in area and includes several habitats accessible by trail, including; prairie lands, ponds and woods. Built around the Colonel Murray farm, the open meadows are used for festivals and events.

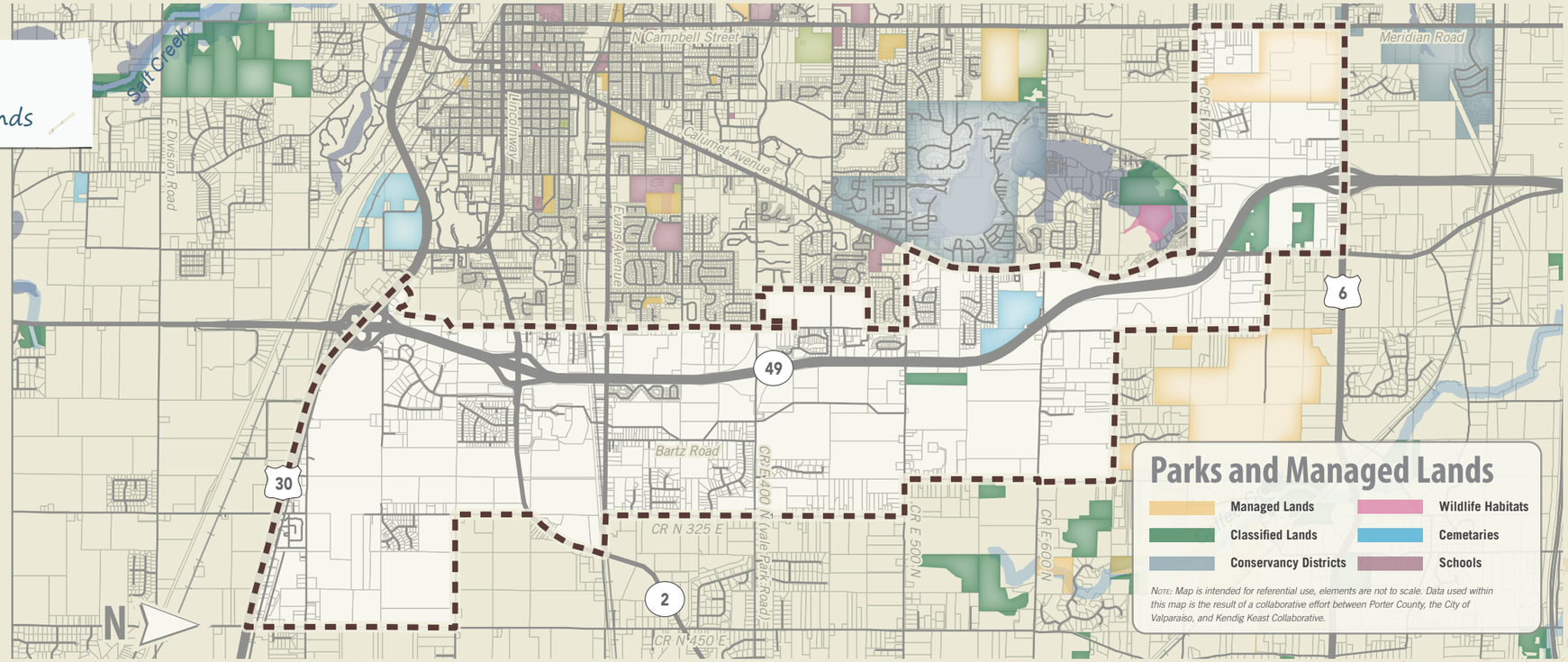
Even with positive and steady growth, Valparaiso continues to successfully retain its small town ambiance which boasts a vibrant live theater culture, a dynamic parks and recreation system, drive-in theater, u-pick farms, championship golf (public and private), art and history museums, snow skiing, and college sports. Also located at this critical intersection is the Porter County Regional Airport and associated properties, which is clearly illustrated in **Map 2.2, *Land Use.***

Over the next decade, the Porter County government will focus its resources, leverage its location, take advantage of its diverse assets and build partnerships between local government and private business in order to make the county the leading location for job opportunities in Indiana and the Chicago marketplace.

– Mission Statement, County of Porter Jobs Cabinet, December 2012

Map 2.3,
Parks and Managed Lands

The City of Valparaiso operates and maintains 14 parks within the City limits, although none of the parks are located within the SR 49 corridor. Opened in 2004, Angel Crest Cemetery is a large, 64 acre privately owned and managed cemetery, located at the intersection of SR 49 and CR E 600 N. The cemetery is open to the public. Porter County operates the Sunset Hill Farm County Park, which is located on Meridian Road and is within the SR 49 corridor. The Porter County Parks and Recreation Department has expressed interest in the development of a community park to the east of SR 49. Additional managed lands in proximity to the SR 49 corridor include the Moraine Nature Preserve and the Valparaiso Chain of Lakes Watershed Area.



2.3 Economic Development Drivers

Several regional and local economic and other factors drive development within and around the SR 49 corridor. The City of Valparaiso is the second largest municipality in Porter County, and provides a significant employment base and services. The Porter County Regional Airport is positioning itself to become a multi-modal transportation hub and will promote industrial development within the 15 square mile district it is within. The development of the Porter County Regional Hospital complex as well as the Valparaiso Health Center has established a health care services-oriented trajectory that will draw residents from the three-county region of Northern Indiana, as well as from communities south of the SR 49 corridor. It cannot be underscored that the key economic driver that sustains businesses and industry within Porter County is its proximity to Lake Michigan and its port, as well as the multiple east-west transportation corridors, which together, provide effective outlets for the transportation of goods.

In 2012, over a period of ten months, the County of Porter Jobs Cabinet conducted a series of 18 focus groups in communities throughout Porter County and interviewed over 120 business and community leaders to inventory and analyze Porter County's economic strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. The Cabinet's report to the Commissioners of the Porter County Council included several recommendations for positioning the county to take full advantage of several significant economic development-related initiatives that area either incubating or currently underway. Several of the County of Porter Jobs Cabinet recommendations have been included within this report, relating to growing healthcare and information technologies sectors, and transportation and utilities infrastructure development.

2.3.1 CITY OF VALPARAISO

The City of Valparaiso is situated in central Porter County and is approximately 50 miles southeast of Chicago. The City lies within close proximity to Interstates 65, 80, 90 and 94, by way of SR 49 and U.S. Highway 30, both of which flank the City. Unlike many communities that are situated closer to Chicago that blend together to form a composite community, Valparaiso is a free-standing city, surrounded by farmland and natural areas that allow it to maintain a distinctive edge and visual identity.

Establishment of the Grand Trunk Railroad's Chicago-Detroit Line in 1859 resulted in the creation of an industrial corridor situated eight blocks north of Downtown. This area remains to this day although in a state that would benefit from redevelopment. It was after World War II that highway-oriented manufacturing sites and industrial parks began to contribute to the success of the City.

Residential development radiated outward from Downtown after 1900, maintaining the gridiron pattern but having larger and often irregularly-sized blocks. Growth was constrained to the south by the two diagonal railroad lines that flank the edge of the Moraine, along with a small finger of the Salt Creek and the hilly terrain around it. Development northward and eastward has continued in both grid and curvilinear street patterns with the latter occurring mostly along the northern edges of the City of Valparaiso. The earliest commercial and institutional development took place in downtown and in isolated locations on East Lincolnway, as well as along Calumet Avenue. Development along these corridors gradually created the commercial "strips" that can be recognized today.

The most significant stage of development has occurred more recently with the construction of SR 49 and U.S. Highway 30 (Morthland Road) along the eastern and southern edges, respectively, of the city limits. These major transportation arteries opened up a considerable amount of land for new development. Beginning in the 1960s and 1970s, much of the development along U.S. Highway 30 occurred in individually platted lots with direct access to the road. As automobile-oriented development began to take precedence along these highways, frontage roads were constructed and significant nodes of commercial and industrial development have occurred at many of the major intersections including U.S. Highway 30, SR 2/LaPorte Avenue and U.S. Highway 6.

In the past, commercial growth along U.S. Highway 30 and SR 49 have drawn development outside of the City, which has essentially left behind underutilized buildings and parking lots that have begun to decline. The City is working to remediate these effects by upgrading roads and infrastructure, establishing flexible design standards appropriate to specific locations, and, in some cases, providing incentives for rebuilding. Today, Downtown and the Eastgate commercial district are undergoing redevelopment projects, like the Eastgate Corridor Redevelopment Project, to include bands of commercial development along East Lincolnway to create a more vibrant and complete pattern of roadside development. As discussed within the *Envision 2030 Comprehensive Plan* Valparaiso's rural setting, as viewed from SR 49, is an important contributor to its community character.[15]

2.3.2 PORTER COUNTY REGIONAL AIRPORT

The Porter County Regional Airport is a public use airport located one mile southeast of the central business district of Valparaiso. It is owned by the Porter County Municipal Airport Authority. For a period ending September 23, 2010, the airport had 69,888 aircraft operations, an average of 191 per day: 96.9 percent general aviation, 2.0 percent air taxi and 1.1 percent military. At that time there were 168 aircraft based at this airport: 82 percent single-engine, 9 percent multi-engine, 6 percent jet, and 3 percent

helicopter.[16] The airport is considering expanding the runway from 5,000 feet to 7,000 feet like its existing east-west runway to attract more airlines.

As summarized within the 2012 County of Porter Jobs Cabinet report, the Porter County Regional Airport is a public asset that is over-developed and underutilized. "It has the capability to differentiate Porter County as the place to locate a business, whether a manufacturing center or a major corporate headquarters. Placed at the intersection of two major four-lane divided highways and just one hour from downtown Chicago, it is capable of being a major driver of economic activity. However, the area surrounding the airport is underdeveloped and there is no land use strategy in place to guide development. As a result, there is residential and commercial development occurring that has no connection to the airport. It is imperative that the county take steps to manage the development around the airport to support commercial rather than residential use. This is critical to ensure that this asset is able to reach its maximum potential as a driver of economic development and most importantly, jobs."[17]

The Porter County Municipal Airport, the City of Valparaiso, Porter County and the Valparaiso Economic Development Corporation have commissioned the development of a plan to guide the most appropriate land use, infrastructure and development initiatives, and to further promote and maximize the economic development potential of a fifteen square mile area surrounding the Porter County Municipal Airport.[18]

2.3.3 PORTER COUNTY REGIONAL HOSPITAL

Located on 104 acres, Porter Regional Hospital is an accredited facility with 301 beds that serves Porter, Jasper, Lake, LaPorte, Newton, and Starke counties. A new facility was opened in August of 2012 and boasts all-private patient rooms, advanced imaging equipment and new medical and communication technologies. Porter's comprehensive services include inpatient, outpatient, and emergency care; medical and surgical services, including robot-assisted surgery; diagnostic imaging; and rehabilitation, to name a few. With more than 350 physicians from over 50 medical specialties, Porter Health Care System is a leader in technology, innovation, and overall patient care.[19]

As anticipated and described within the Northern Indiana Regional Planning Commission *2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan*, the land immediately to the west of the Porter County Regional Hospital is currently being developed for a major medical services campus. Landscape site work and installation of utilities infrastructure is currently underway.

What are Economic Development Drivers?

Economic growth is a complex phenomenon that depends on many factors. The NIRPC *2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan* suggests that a key economic indicator driving northern Indiana's growth is a general demographic outmigration trend away from the Chicago Metropolitan area. The services sector follows this pattern, and if the initial development conditions are favorable, with respect to readily available multi-modal transportation and utilities infrastructure, developable sites and properties, and a viable labor force, investment will likely occur and will drive economic growth and development. Investment has to be understood broadly as building factories, buying equipment, improving education and healthcare, learning, etc. Innovation and technology, particularly in the medical sector will also drive economic growth and development. However, the institutional environment within different counties provides different incentives to investment. Those counties with institutions that favor investment display high investment rates and higher growth rates. According to real-estate services firm Jones Lang LaSalle, high-tech start-ups, powered by significant venture capitalist funding, continue to spread to promising new cities and regions in an effort to tap the highly-skilled talent pools in those regions.[20]

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)

In 2010, the Northwest Indiana Economic Development District (NWIEDD) received funding form the Economic Development Administration of the U.S. Department of Commerce to develop a regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for Northwest Indiana in order to identify the region's competitive strengths, economic goals and priorities. Key plan recommendations that are relevant to the SR 49 corridor include:

- the development of biomed/biotech (life sciences) economic sectors;
- strategic land assembly to create more "shovel-ready" sites in master-planned business park settings that are appropriately zoned, publicly controlled, and served with necessary infrastructure;
- partnerships with higher education to provide customized job skills training, to support the biomed/biotech economic sector (including Valparaiso University and Ivy Tech);
- support the development of a regional teaching hospital to support the healthcare industry in Northwest Indiana;
- attract technology oriented industries including the creation and expansion of technology centers and state certified technology parks.


Source: www.vpz.org

Porter County Regional Airport


Source: www.comhs.org

Valparaiso Health Center

Vale Park Road Transportation Improvements


Source: www.usnews.com/education

Valparaiso University

Porter Regional Hospital

Is your Site Shovel Ready?

The Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs' Shovel Ready program helps local communities identify and prepare sites and existing buildings for economic development; certifies sites and existing buildings to expedite the location and permitting processes for business development; and expedites state and local permits necessary for a specific site. For a site to qualify under the Shovel Ready program, a community must meet the following minimum standards:

- demonstrate that there is official executive-level local government support for developing the site;
- proof of clear title or development option (50-year title search);
- letter from property owner/option holder stating that site is for sale/lease;
- topographical and aerial maps showing the lot layout;
- Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) performed by a certified professional within the prior six months (Phase I Report and supporting information based on ASTM standards E 1527-00 or E 1527-05.);
- wetland delineation demonstrating that impacts to waters of the state will be avoided or mitigation plan approved by the Indiana Department of Environmental Management;
- water, wastewater, natural gas and electric infrastructure to property line or demonstrate the ability to construct and pay for the infrastructure up to property line; with capacity clearly defined;
- transportation infrastructure to property line or demonstrate the ability to construct and pay for the infrastructure up to property line;
- high speed communications infrastructure to property line or demonstrate the ability to construct and pay for infrastructure up to property line; with capacity clearly identified.

2.3.4 VALPARAISO HEALTH CENTER

LaPorte and Porter County residents have quality services at St. Mary Medical Center's new $17 million, 55,000 square-foot Valparaiso Health Center.[21] Patients have access to primary care physicians in family and internal medicine, as well as specialists in obstetrics and gynecology, cardiology, neurology, general surgery, oncology, plastic surgery, pain management, weight-loss and bariatric medicine, as well as integrative medicine; a clinical laboratory, advanced diagnostic imaging (the latest MRI, CT, digital x-ray and ultrasound) as well as outpatient rehabilitation top-off the scope of medical services offered by the Valparaiso Health Center facility.[22] In addition to the array of medical services offered by the health center, the building will also offer two community rooms for educational presentations and support group meetings, as well as a useful resource center, a Garden Café, and a healing garden.[23]

The Valparaiso Health Center represents the first phase of a significant medical center services campus planned for development on land flanking the eastern side of the SR 49 thoroughfare, between Vale Park Road (CR E 400 N) and Burlington Beach Road (CR E 500 N).

2.3.5 VALPARAISO UNIVERSITY EXPANSION

Valparaiso University's 2008 Campus Master Plan, *Our Common Pursuit,* envisions an increase in student population from approximately 4,000 students today to 6,000 students in less than a decade. Faculty and staff levels will also increase to support a larger student body. Campus facilities will expand and improve to support this growth. This will be accomplished in part through a densification of academic facilities within and around the campus core. According to the Valparaiso University Campus Master Plan Executive Summary, as the campus grows, it will become more pedestrian-focused and scaled to people rather than vehicles. Parking is accommodated but kept to the campus edges. Harre Union and the Chapel of the Resurrection represent the heart of campus. But currently this is paved and used for vehicular parking. This space has the potential to be the campus's focal point. The University Master Plan envisions that this central gathering space should be designed and redeveloped to support both formal and informal activities.

With the purchase of the Porter County Hospital property the University's athletic facilities will be consolidated, expanded and improved. Competition fields and courts will be within easy walking distance from on-campus residences. The increased focus on the campus' core and the relocation of several of the University's athletic facilities enables the University to consider redevelopment opportunities for a very large parcel on the eastern edge of the campus.

Valparaiso University's (VU) main campus is situated in the City's southeastern quadrant, with auxiliary campus property located along SR 49. The original campus plat was limited within the City limits due to the steep slopes of the moraine, which hindered smaller lot development; the larger area along SR 49 was better-suited for planned, pastoral campus-style development.

Flanked by Silhavy Road to the east and south, Sturdy Road to the west and the Home Depot commercial center to the north, this property has the potential to either advance the academic pursuits of the University, or be redeveloped in another fashion. With student population and campus growth Valparaiso University seeks to strengthen the affiliation among students, faculty, staff, alumni, and engage with the broader community. As a significant property flanking the SR 49 corridor, and because Valparaiso University represents a significant stakeholder and beloved partner in the future of the community every consideration should be made to link this parcel with the larger network of recreational trails that is part of this SR 49 Corridor Plan as well as the City of Valparaiso *Pathways and Greenways Master Plan Update*.

2.3.6 VALE PARK ROAD TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENTS

With the recent construction of the new interchange at Vale Park Road (CR E 400 N) and SR 49, including new on- and off-ramps, bridge, opposing roundabouts, and a recreational trail, it is anticipated that land to the east and west of SR 49 will now be accessible for development.

2.4 Regulatory Drivers

The principal mechanisms regulating the use and development of land within the City of Valparaiso and Porter County include Valparaiso's *Envision 2030 Comprehensive Plan*, the Valparaiso Unified Development Ordinance and the Porter County Unified Development Ordinance.

2.4.1 VALPARAISO ENVISION 2030 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Adopted in March 2013, the *Envision 2030 Comprehensive Plan* update spans two and a half years and covers important local issues such as housing, economic development, redevelopment, transportation / mobility, and sustainability. These issues are addressed in the plan, in addition to typical planning considerations of future land use planning and growth strategies.

The Comprehensive Plan's *Chapter 2.0, Land Use and Community Character*, assesses the community's long-range development outlook in order to establish the necessary policy guidance that will be used in making decisions about the compatibility and appropriateness of individual developments within the context of the larger community. The Land Use Plan serves as the City's policy for directing ongoing development and managing future growth, preserving valued areas and lands, and protecting the integrity of

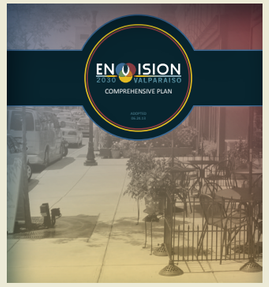
Vale Park Road Transportation Improvements

A good illustration of the difficulties in expanding current transportation infrastructure within the SR 49 corridor: Vale Park Road (CR E 400 N) east of SR 49 currently has a 33 foot wide right-of-way, which includes the thoroughfare, electrical and communications easements. There is a very steep embankment descending from the north side of the county road, while the south side of the road rises steeply. In many areas, several large trees exist just outside of the right-of-way. How can these county roads be expanded without dramatically changing the existing rural character of the landscape?

Programs & Plans

The SR 49 Corridor Plan was not developed within a vacuum. Several regional and local programs and plans provided direction in the development of guiding principles, goals and objectives, including:

- *Comprehensive Regional Plan 2040* for Northwest Indiana, produced by the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC) in 2011;
- *Porter County Corridor Plan*, commissioned by Porter County and adopted in 2009;
- *Porter County Land Use and Thoroughfare Plan*, commissioned by Porter County and adopted May 2001;
- *In Plane View: A Clear Vision for the Future*, a long-range plan for the Porter County Regional Airport, commissioned by the City of Valparaiso, the Valparaiso Economic Development Corporation, Porter County and the Porter County Regional Airport in 2013;
- *Valparaiso Envision 2030 Comprehensive Plan* was commissioned and adopted by the Valparaiso City Council in 2013.
- *City of Valparaiso Pathways and Greenways Master Plan Update*, commissioned by the Valparaiso Department of Parks and Recreation, December 2010.
- *County of Porter Jobs Cabinet: Recommendations to the County Commissioners*, County Council and People of Porter County, Indiana, December, 2012.
- *Porter County, Indiana Landscape Standards and Guidelines*
- *Valparaiso Lakes Watershed Management Plan*, Porter County, Indiana; prepared for the Valparaiso Lakes Area Conservancy District; City of Valparaiso Stormwater Management Board; and City of Valparaiso Parks Department; January 2006.
- *Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)*, produced by the Northwest Indiana Economic Development District (NWI EDD), on behalf of the Economic Development Administration of the U.S. Dept. of Commerce, 2010.



Valparaiso Envision 2030 Comprehensive Plan

Adopted July 26, 2013

neighborhoods, while also safeguarding and enhancing community aesthetics. Focus Areas within this chapter include the University Fringe, Downtown, and Central Place, Infill/Redevelopment Opportunities, U.S. Highway 30, and the Airport Influence Area. Key recommendations within this chapter that should influence development within the SR 49 corridor plan include:

- Consider increasing the current 30' landscape buffer that is required along SR 49 to at least 60' for the entire length of the frontage. Within the buffer, consider requiring maintenance of existing hardwood trees unless special permission is granted to remove them.

Chapter 3.0, Sustainability, evaluates and recommends enhancements to the community's quality of life amenities that are consistent with the City's growth expectations and other physical planning elements in this Comprehensive Plan. The chapter also discusses the area's environmental quality and biodiversity and the opportunities to preserve natural features and open space, particularly along corridors, adjacent to natural and manmade water features, at community gateways, and in other key areas. Key recommendations within this chapter that should influence development within the SR 49 corridor plan include:

- Encouraging compact development that maximizes investment in infrastructure and minimizes the need to drive;
- Encouraging more intense development oriented around public transit;
- Guiding development to areas with existing or readily available infrastructure and minimize development in outlying, undeveloped areas;
- Maintaining a well-defined "edge" around the community that is permanently protected from development;
- Promoting regional and local designs that respect the regional ecosystems and natural functions which support human communities;
- Designing local streets that encourage pedestrian and bicycle use and discourage high speed traffic;
- Providing funding for open space acquisition in strategic or critical areas; and
- Preserve wilderness areas;
- Encourage development patterns that respect natural systems, such as watersheds and wildlife corridors; and
- Adopt appropriate development and population growth policies linked to carrying capacity of natural systems and community facilities.

Chapter 4, Opportunity, identifies economic development strategies to support and retain existing businesses, attract and grow new job creating businesses, and train the community's workforce. The chapter lays out recommended policies and action steps to attract economic development in a way that will preserve community character. Economic development-related policy recommendations that could influence development within the SR 49 corridor include:

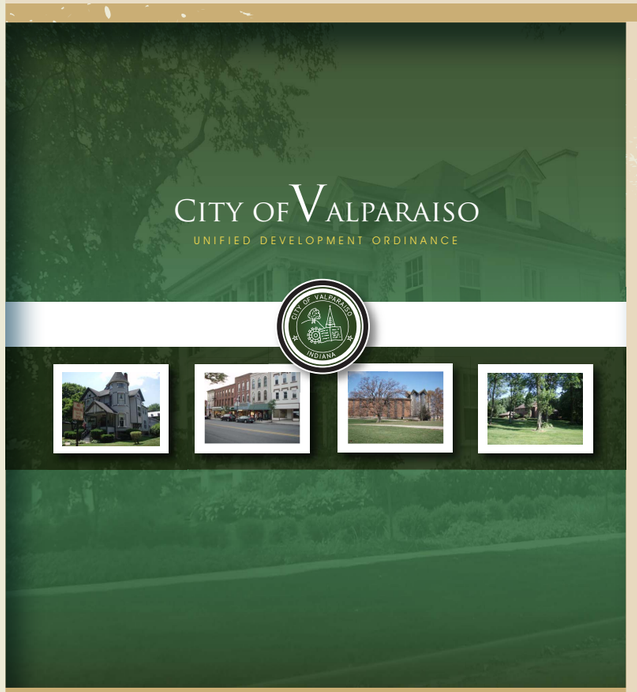
- Pursuing aggressive annexation of prime commercial and industrial sites near existing major infrastructure particulary in the SR 49 and U.S. 30 corridors and around the airport;
- Invoking extra-territorial planning authority and pre-annexation agreements and waivers of remonstrance to control strategic sites that may be at risk of being marginally developed;
- Continuing to use TIF creatively to maximize redevelopment opportunities;
- Work with regional organizations and service-providers to extend high capacity fiber-optic throughout the region and "last-mile" service in the City;
- Constantly refreshing the City's web presence including frequently updated information on available properties; economic development/workforce development programs; demographic, housing/labor market information and utility rates. Make sure the City site is linked to regional economic development sites;
- Using zoning, pre-annexation agreements and possible City purchase, to reserve key sites for their highest and best use;
- Encouraging VU and Ivy Tech to align educational programming more closely around emerging regional economic specializations; particularly in targeted technology and medical spheres. Encourage VU partnerships with regional research institutions especially in the areas of patent law and business planning/entrepreneurship training and supply-chain management; and
- Protecting opportunities for modern office and technology parks on the 49 corridor through aggressive exercise of extra-territorial control and annexation; careful land regulations; facilitated land assembly/transfer; extension of high capacity fiber-optic and active developer/institution recruitment.

The purpose of *Chapter 5, Mobility*, is to ensure orderly development of the City's transportation system, considering facilities for multiple modes of transportation, such as pedestrian and bicycle circulation (and safety), freight movement, public transportation, air transportation, and their associated needs. Recommendations incorporate context sensitive design principles that address mobility improvements while accounting for safety, neighborhood integrity, community design, and historical and environmental considerations. Mobility-related policy recommendations that could influence development within the SR 49 corridor include:

- Pedestrian crossing improvements should be limited to stop or signalized intersection locations. Such improvements should include crosswalk delineation via reflective paint or pavement texturing, American's with Disabilities Act (ADA) improvements, pedestrian and bicycle actuated signals, pavement markings, and signage. Mid-block crossings should only be installed pursuant to traffic and pedestrian safety studies, where feasible;
- An eight-foot wide trail section should be incorporated on one side of all principal and minor arterial streets. The side that will receive the larger sidewalk should be determined by the City Engineer on a case-by-case basis unless a sidewalk master plan has been adopted that identifies the side of the road where the wide sidewalk will be located;

The people of Valparaiso seek to be part of D TXDOLW\ FRPPXQLW\ WKDW LV GH political or geographical boundaries ,but rather by its "can do" spirit. Valparaiso will continue to be a community of cultur-al, ethnic, political, and economic diversity where each person has the opportunity to live, learn, work, play and excel in a safe and friendly environment. By welcoming the future and honoring the past, Valpara-iso will welcome positive change, solve its local challenges and, when appropriate, ac-WLYHO\ FRRSHUDWH LQ ¿QGLQJ VR gional problems.

– Vision Statement, City of Valparaiso Envision 2030 Comprehensive Plan



&LW\ RI 9DOSDUDLVR 8QL¿HG 'HYHORSPHQW Ordinance

- Conduct traffic engineering and design studies (to include analysis for the potential installation of round-abouts) at the following interchanges ; CR E 500 N / SR 49; Evans Avenue / SR 49; SR 2 / SR 49; and
- Integration of "signature" gateways at the entries to the community, including earthen berms or mounding, monumentation, landscaping, and lighting improvements;

The objective of Chapter 6, *Housing and Neighborhoods*, is to develop strategies to ensure that there is an adequate supply of housing to accommodate the needs of a growing residential population. A Key focus area of this chapter is to create and maintain livable neighborhood environments.

Chapter 7, *Growth Capacity*, sets out the City's policies as to the locations, timing, and sequencing of growth, including strategies for reinvesting in established areas and facilitating infill and redevelopment.

- Establishment of a new arterial or collector street paralleling SR 49 to the east, in general alignment with Porter's Vale Boulevard northward to CR E 500 N;
- Encourage new commercial or medical-related development east of SR 49, taking advantage of the diamond interchange at the highway's intersection with Vale Park Road (CR E 400 N);
- Extend annexation to the east, squaring off the borders and accommodating future residential and commercial development that is proposed in this area;
- Preserve the community's rich and valued open spaces and environmental resources while forging more sustainable development practices;
- Preserve the natural appearance of frontage along the SR 49 by maintaining current land use, setback, and buffering restrictions; and

Coordinate with Porter County to achieve uniform development standards for future growth in the peripheral unincorporated areas.

2.4.2 CITY OF VALPARAISO UNIFIED DEVELOPMENT ORDINANCE

The City of Valparaiso's existing land development regulations have recently been comprehensively redrafted into a single Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) in order to:

1. organize and integrate the various provisions of the code;
2. provide new approaches to preserving and protecting community character;
3. increase flexibility for developers;
4. improve natural resource protection standards; and
5. provide standards for the improvement of existing homes in established neighborhoods so that variances were not required for common requests (e.g., decks and small additions).

Many of the provisions in the UDO were developed in anticipation of the *Envision 2030 Comprehensive Plan*. A new set of zoning districts was established to reflect community character types rather than traditional land use classifications; and provisions relating to land development standards and natural resource protection standards were updated to reflect best practices and current community desires. Key changes to the City's zoning provisions include:

- monitoring the effectiveness of the UDO's redevelopment standards, which were revised to promote the compatibility of new structures and home additions in established neighborhoods;
- rezoning areas that are currently zoned Heavy Industrial (INH) to Light Industrial (INL) in the rail corridors; specifically, the corridor that runs along Evans Avenue and the diagonal corridor between U.S. Highway 30 and Lincolnway;
- adding provisions to the UDO that accommodate the increasing trend for urban agriculture and the expansion of local food supply, incentivize rainwater harvesting, protect local aquifer recharge areas, and assist in the implementation of stormwater best management practices;
- amending the zoning map as needed, to "pre-zone" industrial parks and other strategic economic development areas, in accordance with the Land Use Plan;
- determining the appropriate zoning of potential infill development tracts and initiate zoning map amendments, as appropriate.

2.4.3 PORTER COUNTY UNIFIED DEVELOPMENT ORDINANCE

Over the course of 2006 and into 2007, the Porter County Planning Commission, with assistance through the US EPA-NOAA Smart Growth Implementation Assistance program has streamlined all of their zoning codes, subdivision regulations and development standards into a Unified Development Ordinance (UDO). Using the UDO, developers and county officials can quickly reference requirements and find all the necessary information for development in Porter County. With the development of the UDO, the Planning Commission has ensured that land use regulations support the preservation of open space, natural and cultural resources, while encouraging smart growth and development in and adjacent to established towns and community centers such as Chesterton and Valparaiso, as outlined in the Porter County Land Use and Thoroughfare Plan. The UDO encourages a mixture of uses, compact neighborhoods, and walkable streets with ample and convenient amenities for residents -- something that the previous codes and ordinances did not support. Specifically, the County was interested in how the UDO could promote traditional neighborhood development (TND) – a planning approach at the neighborhood level that aims to reduce traffic and eliminate sprawl by placing homes, businesses, schools, parks, and other important services within easy walking distances.[24]

Accordingly, the County developed the UDO to articulate the goals and objectives of traditional neighborhood development (TND) and include design guidelines to support its implementation. The following list outlines some smart growth elements that are contained throughout the Porter County UDO:

- mixed land uses;
- compact building design;
- range of housing opportunities;
- walkable waterfronts and public access;
- distinctive, disaster-resilient communities;
- preservation of open space;
- variety of transportation choices;
- consistent policies and coordinated permitting; and
- stakeholder collaboration in decisions.

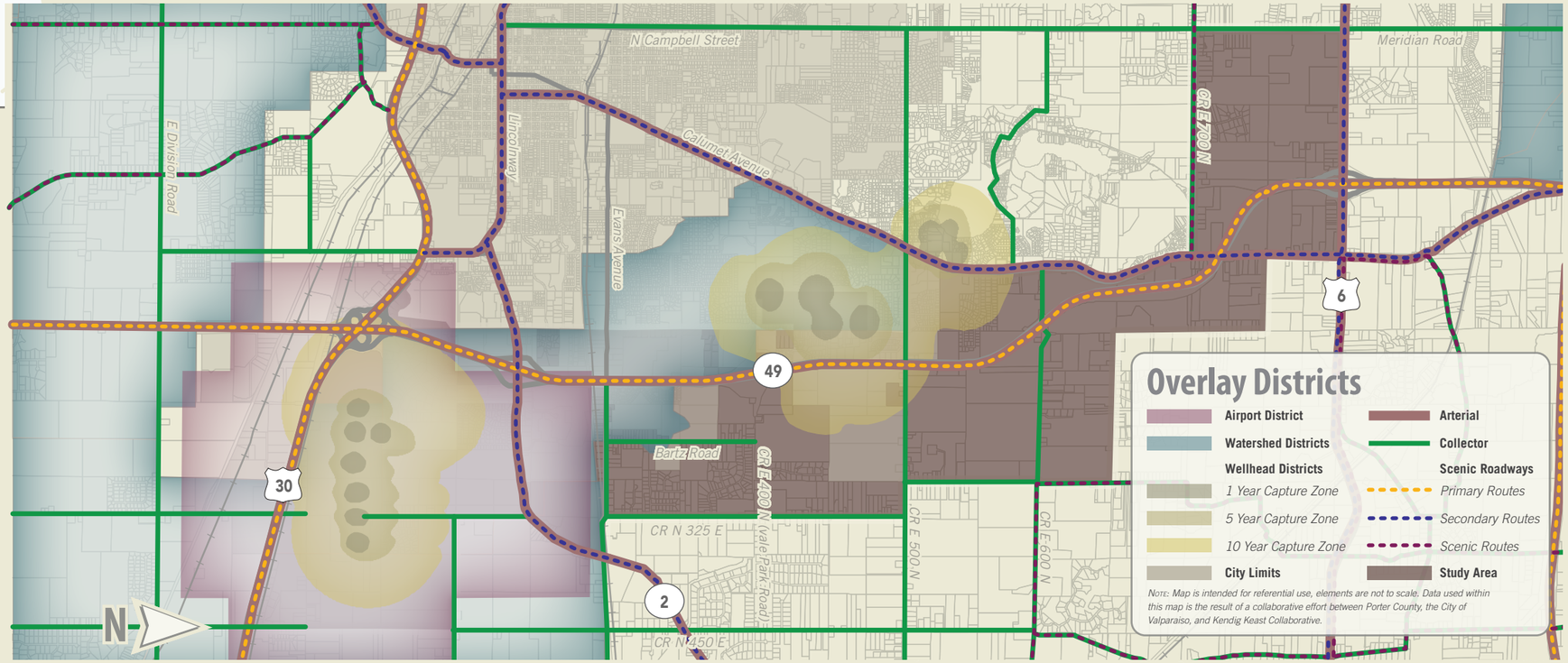
In addition to supporting increased pedestrianization, traditional neighborhood development and smart growth initiatives, the Porter County UDO contains five overlay districts: Airport Overlay (APO) District, Arterial Roadway Overlay (ARO) District, Scenic Roadway Overlay (SRO) District, Watershed Overlay (WSO) District, and Wellhead Protection Overlay (WPO) District (refer to **Map 2.4, *Overlay Districts***, page 31).

Field Reconnaissance

The Corridor Plan's goals and objectives, development covenants and guidelines were also informed by extensive aerial photo interpretation, use of geographic information systems (GIS) and other spatial data pertaining to environmental resources and patterns, field reconnaissance and photodocumentation performed by the Consultant Team.

Map 2.4, Overlay Districts

The Porter County Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) consists of five distinct overlay districts: the Airport Overlay (APO) District, Watershed Overlay (WSO) District, Wellhead Overlay (WPO) District, Arterial Roadway Overlay (ARO) District and Scenic Roadway Overlay (SRO) District. The APO is intended to protect the Porter County Regional Airport from outside encroachment and implement development standards that address safety, noise and lighting variables, and Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regulations. The WSO seeks to protect water bodies and wetlands from soil erosion, siltation, point/non-point source pollution, flooding, and habitat degradation. The WPO is intended to be used to protect the community public water supply system from public wells within or outside the County. The ARO is intended to promote a plan for rational, aesthetically pleasing and cohesive development in the areas along the major arterial roads of the County. The SRO is intended to preserve the rural and scenic nature for aesthetics and maintain quality of life, and to encourage agricultural and rural activity.



Airport Overlay (APO) District

According to the Porter County UDO, the Airport Overlay (APO) District is to be used to protect various zones associated with the Porter County Regional Airport. To summarize some of the APO District's key regulations:

Within the APO no use may be made of land within any base zoning district that:

- creates electrical interference with navigational signals;
- creates electrical interference with radio communication between the airport and aircraft;
- makes it difficult for pilots to distinguish between airport lights and other lights;
- results in glare in the eyes of pilots using the airport;
- impairs visibility in the vicinity of the airport;
- or in any way creates a hazard or endangers the landing, takeoff, or maneuvering of aircraft intending to use the airport;
- land uses that attract migratory birds and other wildlife, such as commercial or municipal compost operations, golf courses, recreational or retention ponds, solid waste landfills; within 5,000 feet of airports serving piston-powered aircraft; and 10,000 feet of airports serving turbine-powered aircraft; and
- land uses that attract large gatherings shall not be established within 4,000 feet of the runway centerline, extended one mile from each end of the runway.

Arterial Roadway Overlay (ARO) District

The Arterial Roadway Overlay (ARO) District is intended to promote a plan for rational, aesthetically pleasing and cohesive development in the areas along primary and secondary arterial corridors within Porter County, and to preclude small, freestanding buildings and uses, unless they are part of a cohesive "campus plan." For primary arterial thoroughfares, the ARO District extends 400 feet from the right-of-way line on each side of the designated road. For secondary arterial thoroughfares, the ARO District extends 200 feet from the right-of-way line on each side of the designated road.

Architectural design standards include, but are not limited to the following considerations:

- Compatibility
- Façade Treatment (colors, wall planes, building corners)
- Entries definition
- Roof articulation
- Mechanical and Utility Equipment, Dumpster and Storage Area Screening
- Density and Intensity Standards
- Building Setback and Height Standards
- Landscape / Open Space Standards (for residential districts)
- Lighting
- Outdoor Storage Standards
- Vehicular Circulation and Parking Standards
- Sign Standards
- Pedestrian Circulation Standards

Scenic Roadway Overlay District

The Scenic Roadway Overlay (SRO) District is intended to preserve the rural and scenic nature of Porter County for aesthetics and quality of life, and to encourage agricultural and rural activity. The SRO District extends 400 feet from the right-of-way line on each side of the designated road. Key provisions of the SRO District include:

- Architectural Design Standards
- Landscaping Standards
- Setback Standards
- Sign Standards
- Perimeter Landscaping Standards (for commercial districts)

Watershed Overlay District

The purpose of the Watershed Overlay (WSO) District is to:

- reduce soil and nutrient loss by slowing surface runoff;
- maintain the quality of water by reducing erosion and minimizing siltation;
- provide a buffer to reduce sedimentation and nutrient pollution of streams and rivers from non-point sources;
- help moderate floods by establishing vegetation that will absorb some of the water's energy, thereby slowing the flow of floodwaters;
- protect wetlands;
- provide critical habitat for wildlife;
- provide wildlife corridors to connect natural areas that would otherwise be isolated; and
- shade streams in order to help provide good spawning sites for fish and other aquatic animals.

The WRO District shall be administered according to levels of priority, with respect to the size of the drainageway. The WRO District also provides landscaping standards, with respect to the development of riparian buffers and protection of forest canopy, within a range of ecological zones (streamside, middle and outer).

Wellhead Protection Overlay District

The Wellhead Protection Overlay (WPO) District is intended to be used to protect the community public water supply system (CPWSS), more specifically the water supply from public wells within or outside Porter County.

For additional information regarding relevant development regulations, refer to Porter County UDO *Chapter 02: Zoning Districts, Chapter 05: Zoning District Development Standards*, and *Chapter 07: Subdivision, Development Plan and PUD Standards* for those standards applicable to the base zoning districts.

Portions of the SR 49 corridor that are outside of the City of Valparaiso's corporate limits fall under the jurisdiction of Porter County's UDO. Each of these districts is relevant to maintaining the existing character of the SR 49 corridor and will be discussed in greater detail in *Chapter 4.0, Implementation*.

2.5 Issues Analysis

Analysis of regional and local programs and plans, meetings and workshops conducted with stakeholders and extensive field reconnaissance has revealed several significant issues related to residential and commercial growth trends, economic development, transportation and utilities infrastructure, natural resources management and preservation of landscape character. The following is a summary of the key issues to be addressed through this corridor planning initiative.

2.5.1 GROWTH TRENDS AND RESULTING DEVELOPMENT PRESSURES

As discussed in the NIRPC *2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan,* improved national economic conditions and the search of a higher quality of life has enabled people to consider living further distances from their places of work. As a result, there has been significant outmigration from the Chicago metropolitan area into Lake, Porter and LaPorte Counties. While the City of Valparaiso continues to experience a one percent annual growth rate, the majority of residential growth and development has occurred within Porter County's unincorporated areas. If left unchecked, this continuing pattern of growth can lead to degraded and inefficient provision of utilities and transportation infrastructure, mismanagement of natural resources and sensitive lands, and an erosion of landscape character.

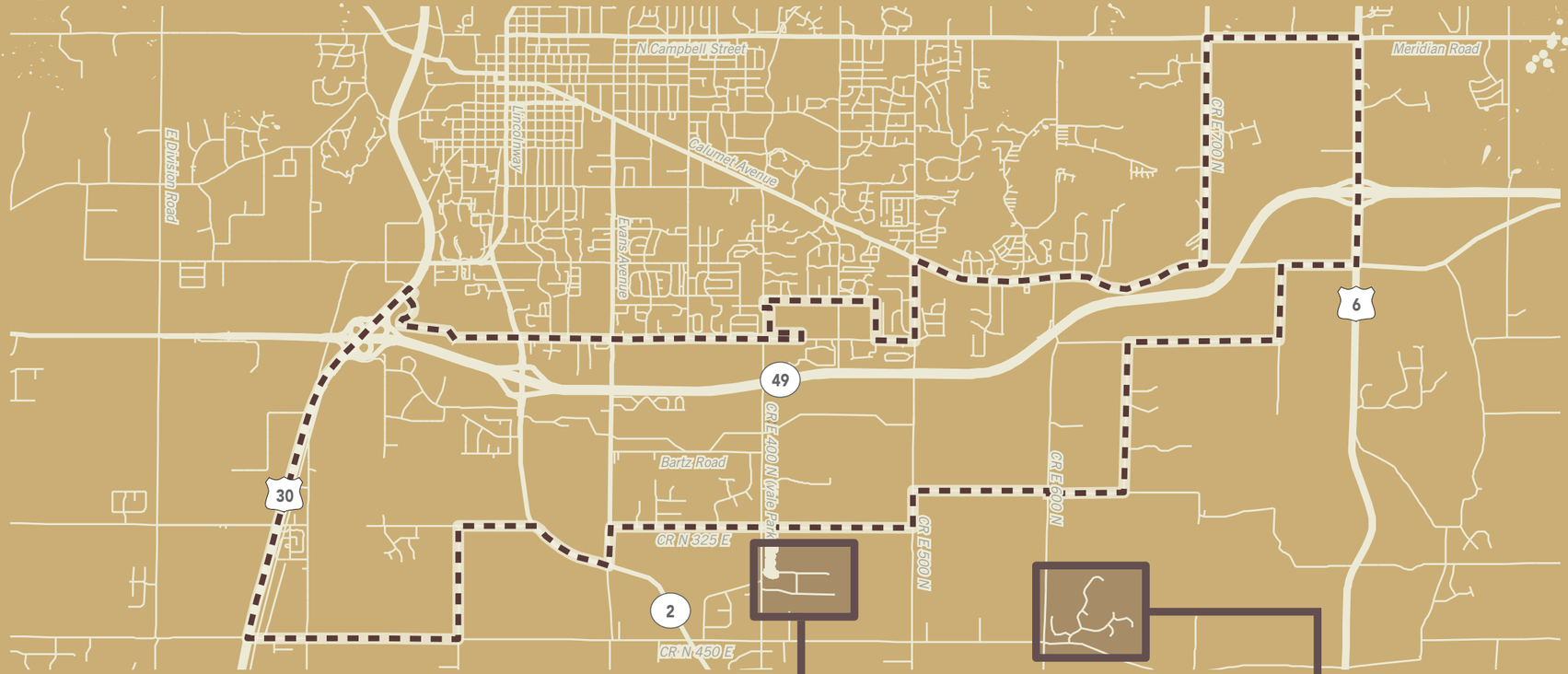


Figure 2.2, Development Pattern

The lack of planned development in Porter County's unincorporated areas is fostering a pattern of rural, linear residential subdivision and development that accesses a county road, but provides no connectivity to other county roads, resulting in long, linear cul-de-sacs. Throughout Porter County, not to mention within the SR 49 corridor, there are multiple examples of where a large property owner has constructed a shared private drive that provides access to a series of linear residential parcels, the dwellings of which each maintain a septic system. While this pattern of development minimizes the number of access points along a county road and can effectively conceal a fairly large residential subdivision from a main thoroughfare, it does not ensure that development will be clustered, and as a result, tends to destroy wildlife corridors and degrade sensitive natural areas, which is of special importance and concern regarding the lands bordering the Moraine Nature Preserve and within the Coffee Creek watershed. Additionally, most access roads are not in conformance with Porter County UDO, *Section 7.05, Access Road Standards (AC)* and as a result, creates difficulties for fire and other rescue vehicles to access buildings, not to mention the logistical issues associated with emergency vehicle egress. It also promotes the development of septic fields, in soils that lack the requisite permeability to adequately function, resulting in potential pollution of surface and subsurface water resources.

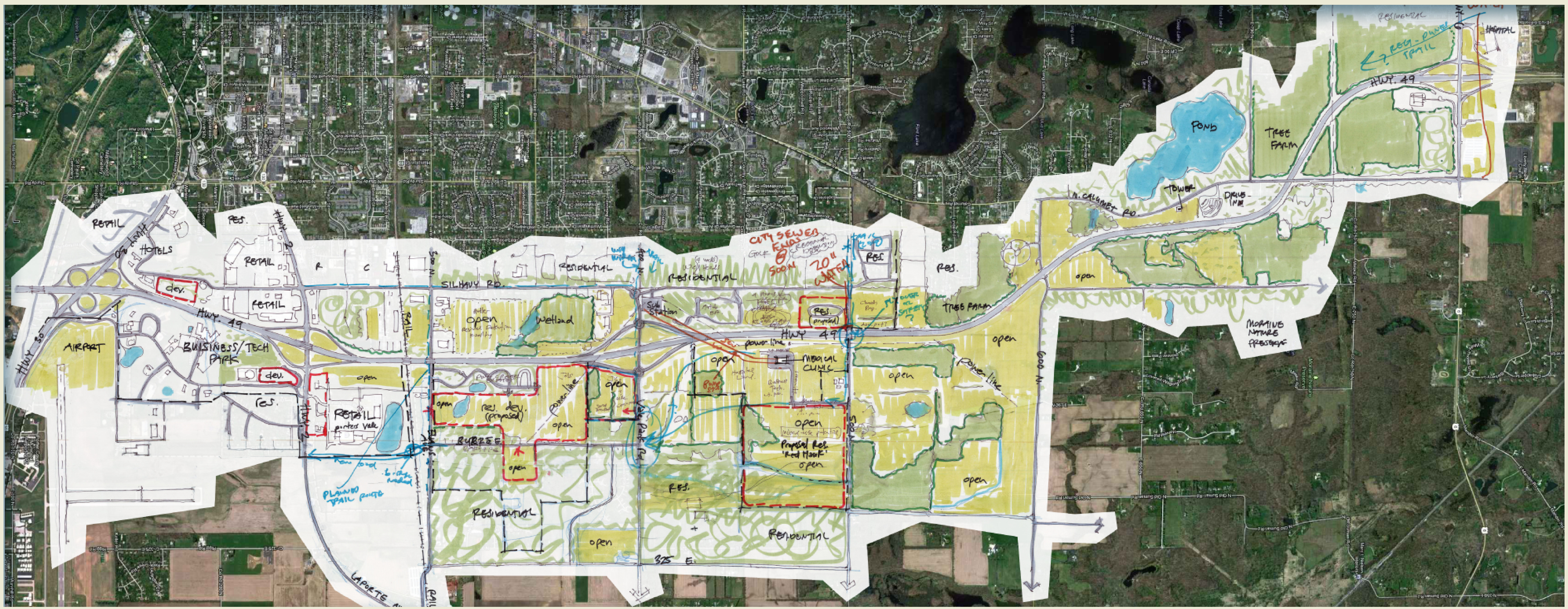
Public Participation

The Corridor Plan's strategic perspectives, with respect to the formulation of a vision for the SR 49 Corridor, as well as realistic and achievable goals, were developed in conjunction with the Corridor Advisory Committee (CAC); and were informed by a series of interviews with property owners, developers, community leaders, elected and appointed officials - the corridor's stakeholders - to identify the issues and challenges associated with managing the diverse and often competing land uses found within the corridor. The team also conducted a two-day charrette program which culminated in a community open house. Attendees participated in a series of exercises, including a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) and visual preference survey (VPS), the latter of which focused on:

- business parks;
- buildings;
- residential development;
- recreational trails;
- small-scale commercial;
- gateways and entrances;
- signage;
- screening and buffering; and
- wildlife corridors.

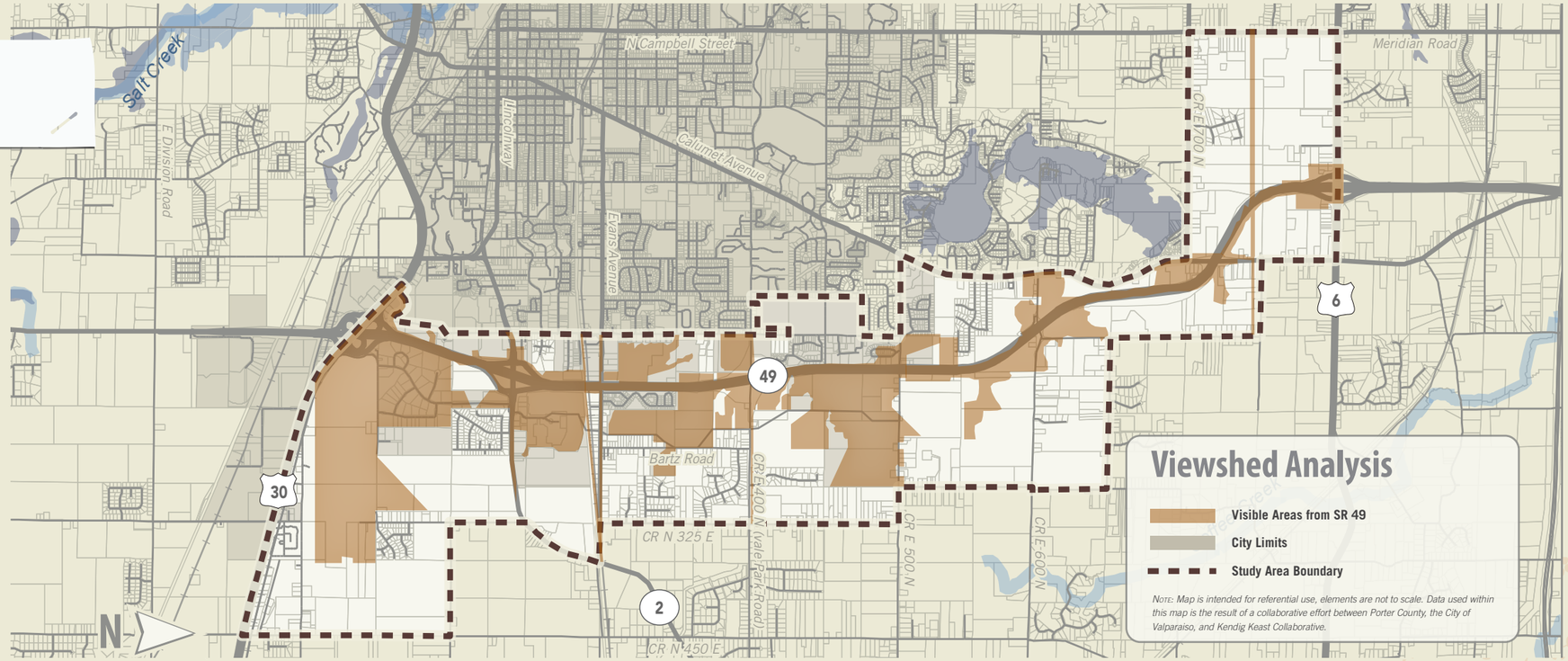
Participants were shown a series of slides depicting a range of design alternatives and applications for the above-mentioned themes and were asked to rank them according to their applicability within the SR 49 corridor, with respect to structure (style / design), materials, and size / scale. Participants were also asked (yes or no) whether the image displayed, "fit within the SR 49 corridor," and "contributed to the character of the SR 49 corridor."

The map below represents the Consultant Team's visual notes, drafted during their first reconnaissance of the SR 49 corridor.



Map 2.5, Viewshed Analysis

Depicted within this map is the extent to which the landscape that can be discerned from a vehicle traveling northbound or southbound. This viewshed analysis illustrates how the visual character of the SR 49 corridor changes incrementally over the span of six miles, and provides additional rationale for defining the various segments, as illustrated in Map 1.1, *Corridor Segmentation* (page 10).



Connectivity: Regional Linkages

The SR 49 thoroughfare will always remain a critical regional link between the Porter County Regional Airport and its adjacent industrial activity, and the Port of Indiana-Burns Harbor on the shore of Lake Michigan. In 2011, the SR 49 thoroughfare (U.S. Highway 30 to U.S. Highway 6) level of service (LOS) rating was C. In 2012, the annual average daily traffic count was 28,609 vehicles per day (refer to *Table 1.1, SR 49 Road Classification*). In anticipation of increased vehicular traffic the SR 49 thoroughfare must improve its LOS. The presence of a signaled intersection at CR E 500 N and the complete lack of signalization at the interchange of SR 49 and CR E 600 N contribute to this low LOS rating. Reducing the thoroughfare's net use by providing increased connectivity within the network of county roads combined with new thoroughfares will increase the SR 49's capacity to provide through access to northern and southern destinations.

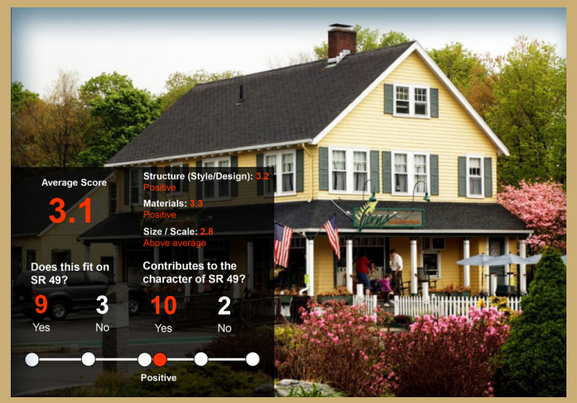
Another regional initiative that will have an impact on the SR 49 corridor is the proposed Dunes to Kankakee Trail; the alignment of which will weave its way through the corridor. *Map 3.5, Proposed Recreational Trails*, depicts a potential alignment that utilizes existing and programmed trail segments, while avoiding the SR 49 thoroughfare.

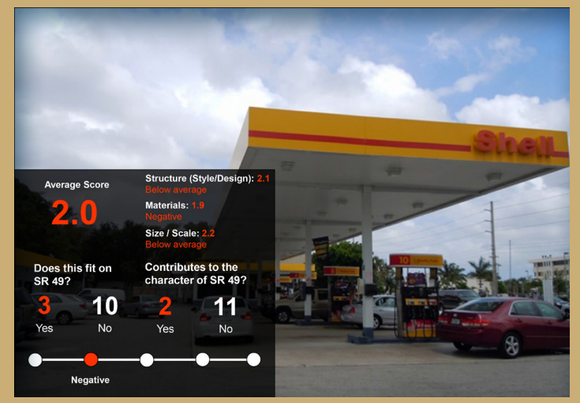
2.5.2 SR 49 CORRIDOR IS NOT DEVELOPMENT-READY

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

Connectivity: Local Access

Classified as an Urban Principal Arterial thoroughfare, SR 49 is a limited access highway, and cannot provide direct access to developable land adjacent to the thoroughfare. Access to adjacent parcels must be provided by the several county roads that intersect and run parallel to the SR 49 thoroughfare. As a result, much land adjacent to SR 49 is either inaccessible or must be accessed from the east, which increases traffic on county roads which are already functioning either at or beyond their level of service. Increased development interests will create additional traffic on key county roads within the SR 49 corridor, including SR 2 / LaPorte Avenue, Vale Park Road (CR E 400 N), and Burlington Beach Road (CR E 500 N); which will result in required roadway expansion and improvements.





Visual Preference Survey: Neighborhood Commercial Character

The two comparative slides from the VPS illustrate variations in character of proposed neighborhood commercial development along Memorial Drive Extended (refer to Figure 3.11 and 3.12, *Neighborhood Commercial, Plan and Perspective,* respectively). VPS results influenced the character of recommended neighborhood commercial improvements within the SR 49 corridor.

Utilities Infrastructure Improvements

As discussed in Chapter 1.0, currently water service to the east side of SR 49 is provided by four water main crossings extending from the Silhavy water main. As most of the existing water lines are cast iron and as a result, multiple breaks have been reported within the SR 49 corridor. The Silhavy water main does not extend north of CR E 500 N. While the existing sanitary sewer infrastructure, including the Sturdy Road Lift Station appears adequate to serve future development to the east of SR 49, there are areas that show significant levels of inflow / infiltration during storm events. Further, very little infrastructure has been extended east of SR 49. Electrical service can be provided to properties east of SR 49 from the NIPSCO electrical substation, located on Vale Park Road, west of SR 49. Public-private partnerships with the development community will support, in part, the expansion of utilities and communications infrastructure, though much of the heavy lifting, with respect to extending trunk lines to the east side of SR 49 will be the responsibility of the public sector.

Multi-modal Transportation Infrastructure Improvements

With the increase in student population at Valparaiso University, the general population increase within Porter County's unincorporated areas, and the County's interest in promoting smart growth principles and traditional neighborhood development practices there will be demand for a network of safe trails for non-motorized vehicles.

Recreational Amenities

To accommodate the demand for increased recreational resources, preserve open space, and protect sensitive lands, the Porter County Parks Department is interested in identifying the location for a locally accessible, 30 acre community park, east of SR 49.

Preserving Landscape Character

Changes in land use can often result in changes in landscape character. It is therefore critical to have the tools and mechanisms in place to guide and direct the nature of change in conformance with the regional community's overarching vision of the future. For example, in many cases, required thoroughfare improvements will require land acquisition, significant clearing (of mature trees), grading and drainage improvements and often complete reconstruction of the roadway to conform to current Indiana Department of Transportation (IDOT) specifications.

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Hwy 49
Evans Avenue
Railroad

Goals and Strategies