

2. Economic Development

Introduction

As Allen County enters the 21st Century, its economy is in the midst of a fundamental, gradual and often painful transition moving from a long-standing dependence on its industrial base to the knowledge-based economy. This transition has many significant implications for the community, its workers and its residents. The relationship between comprehensive planning and economic development is certainly affected by this shift. Previous Plans have almost always equated economic development with industrial development, concentrating on planning for future industrial sites. We can no longer view the relationship in such narrow terms.

The economy of this century most assuredly will involve a new set of locational issues and infrastructure demands. Reorienting our thinking away from just industrial development to a more complex set of business development issues will not be easy or straightforward. We are moving into territory for which our community has relatively modest experience. As this chapter proceeds, the reader is encouraged to constantly remember the overriding importance of this shift and the imperative that successful economic development strategies must go far beyond those of “industrial development.”

What is economic development? Don Iannone of Donald T. Iannone and Associates – a consultant engaged to assist in the preparation of this chapter, defines economic development as follows:

“Economic development refers to those actions taken by local, regional, and state public and private sector organizations to encourage and foster high-quality industry, business, job, income, and tax base growth in the Allen County/Fort Wayne area. These activities include policies and services aimed at: 1) helping existing businesses grow and expand; 2) attracting new companies to the area; 3) assisting entrepreneurs to start new businesses; and 4) strengthening the local and regional climates to foster future economic development.”¹

An underlying principle has guided our community’s economic development efforts – the same principle used by nearly every community, region or state in their respective economic development activities. Generally referred to as economic base theory, this principle suggests that, with only a few exceptions, proactive efforts to incentivize economic activity should be aimed at businesses, jobs and development which increase the net collective wealth of the community. The *Economic Analysis of Allen County*, prepared by the Department of Planning Services in 1996, clearly states this principle:

“The Economic Base Theory asserts that any local economy is structured to include two broad classes of economic activity – the basic sector which produces and distributes goods and services for export outside the local area; and the nonbasic sector whose goods and services are consumed within the given local area. The underlying assumption in this theory is that only the basic sector of the local economy brings new money into the community and therefore creates net new growth.”²

¹ *Economic Development: Creating Competitive Community Economic Foundations*; working paper prepared by Donald T. Iannone and Associates; Cleveland, Ohio; August, 2005.

² *Executive Summary - An Economic Analysis of Allen County, Indiana*; Allen County Department of Planning Services; 1996, p 5.

From an economic development perspective, Allen County has traditionally viewed itself as one of many northeast Indiana counties competing for jobs and business investment, frequently in the manufacturing sector. Certainly Allen County is geographically larger and significantly more populous than other nearby counties, but there has been a traditional atmosphere of competition with these surrounding counties nevertheless. More recently, it has become much clearer that geographic and economic regions across the globe are in competition with each other and that communities throughout an individual region perform unique roles within their given region. Competition has shifted from community versus community to region versus region.

Fort Wayne and Allen County serve as the regional center for northeast Indiana. In many respects, we share in the economic opportunities and challenges of the entire northeast Indiana region. In other cases Fort Wayne's role as the regional center and as one of the 100-largest cities in the United States will be much different than that of any other community in northeast Indiana. The Comprehensive Plan must reflect both that regional perspective and the uniqueness of being the regional center.

In recent years, there has also been a growing recognition of the need for improved cooperation in delivering economic development services within Allen County. For many years this responsibility was split between the Greater Fort Wayne Chamber of Commerce, the City of Fort Wayne, Allen County government and several other municipalities throughout the County. Creation of the Fort Wayne-Allen County Economic Development Alliance in 1999 is perhaps the most tangible evidence of an improved level of cooperation and coordination. The adoption of a joint Allen County-Fort Wayne Comprehensive Plan will be yet another important step toward a better marshalling of our resources and aligning of our strategies to improve our economic opportunities.

Having defined again the activity known as "economic development"; restated economic base theory, the underlying principle that guides our local economic development efforts; reinforced the broader-than-industrial-development scope of economic development in today's world; and recognized the important duality of a regional perspective coupled with Allen County/Fort Wayne's role as regional hub, the current economic situation in Allen County and Fort Wayne can be explored.

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The information included in this chapter is more fully elaborated in the Economic Development Extended Report. A bibliography of the source material for this chapter and the citations contained within it is located in the Appendix to this Plan.

Overview

Allen County, northeast Indiana and the entire state have experienced a gradual but steady decline in their wealth creation capacity compared with national averages. Average annual wages in Allen County dropped from just over 95 percent of the United States average in 1997 to 88.5 percent of the United States average in 2004.³ This relative decline affects the community in many ways: the relative standard of living of our citizens suffers; the appreciation of housing values increases less rapidly compared with many other United States communities; and our collective ability to support the investments in our community that create "quality of place" weakens. As the United States economy continues its transition from a manufacturing focus to a service and knowledge-based economy, Allen County's competitive position in the global economy can no longer be taken for granted. We are going to have to work much harder to attract and retain outside investment and

³ Based on the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages prepared by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

quality employment opportunities for our citizens. How we plan for the future physical environment of Allen County will be an important component in meeting this competitive challenge. The Comprehensive Plan must not only seek to improve the quality of life for our current and future citizens, it must also be a tool to enhance the competitive position of the community in a worldwide economy.

This economic reality is recognized and understood by the residents of Allen County. In the Plan-it Allen! Survey released in August of 2005, 56 percent of the respondents stated that creating and keeping jobs was the issue that would have the most important impact on the quality of life in Fort Wayne and Allen County. That topic garnered more than five-times-higher the percentage of responses than any other issue.

A substantial amount of detail regarding economic conditions in Allen County was presented in the 1997 Allen County Department of Planning Services report entitled *An Economic Analysis of Allen County, Indiana*, and in the Economics section of *A Comprehensive Plan for Allen County and Fort Wayne – Existing Conditions Report*. An extensive review of regional economic conditions can be found in the *Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for 2003-2008* as prepared by the Region III-A Economic Development District and Regional Planning Commission, and in the “Overview of Northeast Indiana Strategic Skills Initiative Project” section of the report *Rebuilding Our Technological Heritage* recently prepared by the Northeast Indiana Workforce Investment Board.

This chapter outlines a series of recommendations for addressing those economic development issues related to land use and public infrastructure within Allen County and Fort Wayne. It is organized into the following sections:

- Policy Foundation of the Plan;
- Goal;
- Key Findings;
- Economic Development Opportunity Areas; and
- Objectives and Strategies.

Policy Foundation of the Plan

The current Comprehensive Plan for the City of Fort Wayne planning jurisdiction is *The Fort Wayne Comprehensive Plan*, adopted by the Fort Wayne Common Council in May of 1982. The current Comprehensive Plan for the jurisdiction of the Allen County Plan Commission is *The Comprehensive Plan of Allen County, Indiana*, adopted by the Board of Commissioners in April, 1975. Each jurisdiction has subsequently modified their respective Plans on several occasions. The most significant of those modifications relate to the areas surrounding the Fort Wayne International Airport, the General Motors Truck Assembly Plant and the Airport Expressway.

The Comprehensive Plan now being prepared has been informed by the body of public information and formal public policy that has evolved since the last Comprehensive Plans were adopted. Public policy related to land use, infrastructure and economic development normally develops in an incremental manner. Therefore, it is meaningful to briefly examine what has already been discussed and, in many cases, decided in the public arena.

Fort Wayne Urban Enterprise Zone

The delineation of Fort Wayne’s Urban Enterprise Zone, established in 1983 and with the subsequent boundary modifications that have occurred since its creation, represents a policy statement by the Fort Wayne Common Council in support of extraordinary steps to promote business and community revitalization within the designate, historic industrial core of Fort Wayne.

In 2005, the Fort Wayne Common Council adopted a resolution endorsing the continued existence of the Fort Wayne Urban Enterprise Zone through its current reauthorization period (December 31, 2013).⁴ Under current enabling legislation the Enterprise Zone there will be no further opportunity for subsequent extensions of the Fort Wayne Zone beyond 2013.

Allen County Overall Economic Development Plan

In 1985 Fort Wayne and Allen County prepared a complete update and revision of the *Overall Economic Development Plan* (OEDP) that had originally been adopted in 1977. This update had been suggested in the 1982 *Fort Wayne Comprehensive Plan*. That was, however, the last extensive and comprehensive revision to local economic development policies until preparation of the *Economic Development Action Plan for Fort Wayne and Northeast Indiana* in 2000. The 1985 OEDP was that last broad-based economic development strategy to be formally adopted as public policy in Allen County.

Southwest Allen County Land Use Study (1985)

At the time the Allen County Plan Commission recommended the rezoning of approximately 1,000 acres from an agricultural to an industrial classification for the General Motors Truck Assembly Plant project, it concurrently directed the staff to prepare an update to the *Comprehensive Plan of Allen County*. This update was intended to provide a long-range plan for the area surrounding the General Motors facility, the Baer Field airport, and the land between. It was recognition of the significant change the General Motors rezoning would have on the existing Comprehensive Plan. The City of Fort Wayne became a partner in this study and ultimately agreed to adopt identical modifications to the City's Comprehensive Plan. The resulting joint document was entitled the *Southwest Allen County Land Use Study*. It included numerous recommendations regarding land use regulation, public utility improvements, highway improvements and economic development policy.⁵

An Economic Analysis of Allen County, Indiana (1996)

In the mid-1990s the Allen County Department of Planning Services prepared an extensive examination of the local economy. This study was originally intended to set the foundation for preparation of a new economic development strategy for the community to replace the 1985 *Overall Economic Development Plan*. While the subsequent strategy did not materialize, the *Analysis* did document several insightful observations regarding the changing nature of the local economy:

“The five analyses undertaken by the County's economic development staff are related and have significant implications for the future development of the community. Common themes include the fact that most of the manufacturing employment growth will come from smaller operations. The community's major employers will not be significant job generators and certain major employers are in industries that are projected to decline in the future. Also, if the community is going to position itself to facilitate the location and expansion of smaller manufacturing operations, it must have a wide variety of ready-to-develop industrial parks and sites.”⁶

⁴ Fort Wayne Common Council Resolution R-05-09-06.

⁵ *Recommendations for Improving the Inventory of Industrial Sites in Allen County – Airport Area Presentation*; PowerPoint presentation prepared by the Fort Wayne-Allen County Economic Development Alliance; Winter 2000-01; pp. 8-9.

⁶ *An Economic Analysis of Allen County, Indiana*; Allen County Department of Planning Services; Fort Wayne, IN; 1996; page 15.

The Intergovernmental Memorandum of Understanding to Fund Infrastructure Improvements in Southwest Allen County (1996)

The 1977 *Allen County Comprehensive Plan* identifies the area surrounding Baer Field, now known as Fort Wayne International Airport, as one of the key potential industrial development locations in the community. In 1996, the City of Fort Wayne, Allen County and the Fort Wayne-Allen County Airport Authority entered into a Memorandum of Understanding⁷ to fund certain infrastructure improvements in the area adjacent to and surrounding the Fort Wayne International Airport. The preamble of that document notes the need for this community to take a more proactive approach to ensure an adequate supply of ready-to-develop industrial sites. Implementation of this MOU has resulted in over \$7 million in sanitary-sewer and public-water improvements serving 2,000 acres of industrially zoned land in close proximity to the airport.

Economic Research Associates Report and Recommendations (1997)

In the early 1990s a growing concern again emerged that our community was losing its competitive advantage because of a perceived lack of quality industrial sites. That concern was pushing local economic development practitioners toward recommending that the public sector become more involved in the ownership and preparation of industrial parks and sites. It was determined, however, that before such a recommendation could be properly substantiated, an objective analysis of our needs as perceived by the marketplace should be undertaken. In 1994, the Greater Fort Wayne Chamber of Commerce and the City of Fort Wayne jointly engaged Thorne Consultants, Inc. to perform a two-phase analysis of the industrial land needs in northeast Indiana, with a particular focus given to the needs in Allen County. Building upon the preliminary work undertaken by Thorne Consultants, Economic Research Associates (ERA) was subsequently engaged to identify a viable long-term industrial development strategy for the Fort Wayne metropolitan area. Their final report was released in 1997. The ERA report contained several recommendations relative to potential industrial/distribution/business sites.

Recommendations from *Improving the Inventory of Available Industrial Sites*

In 1997 the Allen County Department of Planning Services prepared an analysis of the existing stock of industrial sites in the community to assist in guiding the activities of the Allen County Redevelopment Commission. This report made a number of findings and recommendations regarding the current inventory and steps that could be taken to make improvements:

“Allen County is no longer competitive in the race to attract new industry. Other communities, many of them smaller, have surpassed Allen County. They have positioned themselves so they are able to provide ready-to-develop sites when industries want them. Their efforts show us what we have to do to put Allen County and its cities and towns back in a competitive position.”⁸

“Ready-to-develop property entails a complete package. Water and sewer service must be available at the edge of the site and adequate to handle the demands of a manufacturing facility. Electric and natural gas lines also must be near the site and of sufficient capacity. The road or roads providing access to the site must be of sufficient width and depth to handle large trucks with heavy loads in a safe manner. Some sites

⁷ “Intergovernmental Memorandum of Understanding to Fund Infrastructure Improvements in Southwest Allen County”; City of Fort Wayne, Allen County, and the Fort Wayne-Allen County Airport Authority; December, 1996.

⁸ *Improving the Inventory of Available Industrial Sites*; prepared by the Economic Development Division of the Allen County Department of Planning Services; December, 1997; p. 17.

must also be available with rail service. The property must be properly zoned for industrial use. Steps must also be taken in advance to address physical concerns of the property such as drainage and the presence of floodplain or wetland areas. Also, a sufficient amount of property must be assembled and in the hands of a willing seller. And finally, there must be professional marketing efforts of the land. Prospective industries must know that we have land available and its characteristics.”⁹

Significant Improvements in the Delivery of Economic Development Services

In the late 1990s, this community restructured the manner in which it is organized to nurture, retain, expand and attract jobs and investment. As was noted previously, the creation of the Fort Wayne-Allen County Economic Development Alliance was a collaborative effort on the part of the Greater Fort Wayne Chamber of Commerce, the City of Fort Wayne and Allen County to significantly upgrade and consolidate the job retention, expansion and attraction efforts. The creation of a single “point of contact” for existing and potential businesses has provided for a more focused use of our collective resources. It has also been the conduit for the allocation of additional resources aimed at enhancing our competitive efforts. By consolidating and increasing resources, the Alliance has provided a more sophisticated and aggressive approach to local attraction and retention efforts. The Alliance has also spearheaded local efforts to approach long-term economic development through a cluster-based strategy with the current focus being placed on seven sectors of economic activity: advanced manufacturing (including vehicle production); agriprocessing (food and nonfood products); aerospace and nonaerospace airport-related development; communications and defense contracting; financial services; life and materials sciences; and logistics.¹⁰ There is now synergy among all units of government and the private sector in Allen County supporting the Alliance’s efforts to package economic development incentives in the most competitive manner possible.

The late 1990s also witnessed the creation of the Northeast Indiana Innovation Center (NIIC). This organization was formed after several years of study by a Chamber of Commerce committee. Its purpose is to foster high-tech entrepreneurship to assist in advancing the region’s economy. In 2001, NIIC began operating an incubator in a surplus office building owned by Raytheon in the Interstate Business Park. The available space was quickly filled with startup endeavors. In 2003, ground was broken on the newly completed NIIC facility on Stellhorn Road. This facility was opened in the Fall of 2005.

In 1998, the Allen County Economic Development Income Tax rate was increased from 0.2 percent to 0.4 percent, with a substantial portion of the new revenues accruing to both the City of Fort Wayne and Allen County and allocated to a variety of economic development initiatives. This additional revenue has allowed for an increase in support of economic development organizations such as the Alliance and NIIC; for additional investment in infrastructure to support development sites; and in an enhanced ability to fund competitive incentive packages.

More recently, the State of Indiana has restructured its economic development activities under the newly created Indiana Economic Development Corporation (IEDC). This organization has established a regional office for northeast Indiana that is located in

⁹ Ibid., p. 17.

¹⁰ *2006 Operations and Marketing Manual*; Fort Wayne-Allen County Economic Development Alliance; p. 10.

downtown Fort Wayne. The IEDC staff works closely with the Alliance and with NIIC, as well as many other regional economic development organizations. The activities of the IEDC will be guided in the future by the recently released economic development strategy document entitled *Accelerating Growth*.¹¹

Lastly, efforts are currently underway to create a regional economic development marketing organization in northeast Indiana. This organization, established in 2006 as the Northeast Indiana Regional Marketing Partnership, will engage in external prospect development activities in support of all the local economic development organizations throughout the nine-county region.

Economic Development Action Plan for Fort Wayne and Northeast Indiana

A new comprehensive economic development strategy for the community was prepared in 2000 under the direction of the “Steering Committee on Economic Development,” appointed by Fort Wayne Mayor Graham Richard. The Steering Committee oversaw the work of nine, subject-area task forces, that in turn recommended approximately 40 action plans aimed at accomplishing the goal of “increasing the wages and salaries per job in northeast Indiana to above the national average.” The resulting product of this process was the *Economic Development Action Plan for Fort Wayne and Northeast Indiana*, released in September of 2000. This plan had an entire task force devoted to actions necessary to ensure that the community has a competitive inventory of industrial and business sites. These recommendations are contained in the Economic Development Extended Report. In 2005, the City of Fort Wayne and the Fort Wayne-Allen County Economic Development Alliance engaged the Center for Community and Economic Development at Ball State University to prepare an update of the 2000 *Action Plan*.¹²

Goal

The following goal for economic development was developed by the Comprehensive Plan Committee based upon citizen input:

A vibrant, innovative and diverse economy that balances existing business growth and new business attraction in a manner that produces secure, well-paying jobs, provides infrastructure improvements needed for economic development, promotes downtown revitalization, fosters operational efficiencies and increases utilization of the airports.

The economic development vision for this community, as expressed in the *2005 Update to the Fort Wayne Economic Development Action Plan*, is:

“In 2015 the many high-wage, high-growth companies that have located and or expanded here form the foundation of our regional innovation economy. The high skill levels and educational attainment rates of our workforce continue to draw businesses to the region. The Fort Wayne region is a model for quality, community-based economic development.

¹¹ *Accelerating Growth: Indiana’s Strategic Economic Development Plan*; Indiana Economic Development Corporation; April, 2006.

¹² *Fort Wayne Economic Development Action Plan: Update 2005*; prepared by the Ball State Center for Economic and Community Development for the Fort Wayne-Allen County Economic Development Alliance and funded by the City of Fort Wayne; 2005

Our high quality of life, including our excellent schools, has attracted workers and their families. With a safe and healthy environment, the economy of Fort Wayne and northeast Indiana has blossomed over the past 15 years.”¹³

Five basic economic development objectives were recommended by Don Iannone in the report *Economic Development: Creating Competitive Community Economic Foundations*.¹⁴

1. **Quality Jobs:** create the next generation of well-paying and secure jobs for local citizens in both existing and new industries;
2. **Balanced and Sustainable Growth:** balance future economic growth across existing and new industries and businesses, but work steadily toward creating a more diverse local economy with stronger roots in the global economy;
3. **Innovation, Entrepreneurship and Creativity:** stimulate increased local economic vitality through business innovation and entrepreneurship, especially in new industries and business sectors with bright economic futures; strengthen the “creative sector” of the local economy by coupling the arts, cultural resources and entertainment with economic development;
4. **Strategic Infrastructure and Services:** invest in strategic infrastructure and public services to support and guide future local economic development within the City and across the County; increase utilization of the airports and provide efficient permitting services; and
5. **Competitive Development Areas and Business Sites:** develop competitive business locations and sites (downtown, neighborhoods, and commercial and industrial development areas) for existing business expansion, new business attraction, entrepreneurial development, and entertainment and tourism growth.

The last two of these five objectives are most directly related to the land use and public infrastructure planning that is at the heart of the policy recommendations normally contained in a Comprehensive Plan.

Key Findings

Early in the process of preparing this Comprehensive Plan, Donald T. Iannone and Associates prepared a section of the Existing Conditions Report¹⁵ examining the economy of Allen County. A brief summary of the findings from that report is presented below to properly frame the remainder of this element of the Plan. For a more detailed explanation of each finding, see the Economics Chapter of the Existing Conditions Report.

“A major conclusion of the *Existing Economic Conditions Report* is that the economic bases of Fort Wayne and Allen County have experienced sweeping changes over the past quarter century or more. The major drivers of these changes are industry and corporate restructuring, major demographic shifts, globalization, accelerated technological change, and changing local (Fort Wayne/Allen County) and regional (northeast Indiana) residential and business location patterns. While many of these issues are driven by external factors outside the Fort Wayne/Allen County area, they still must be dealt with by local leaders and citizens, as best they can.”¹⁶

¹³ *Ibid.*; p. 5.

¹⁴ *Economic Development: Creating Competitive Community Economic Foundations*; p. 3.

¹⁵ *Existing Conditions Report, A Comprehensive Plan for Allen County and Fort Wayne*; prepared by ACP – Visioning & Planning, LTD. And Donald T. Iannone & Associates; Columbus, Ohio and Cleveland, Ohio; 2004, Economics section.

¹⁶ *Economic Development: Creating Competitive Community Economic Foundations*, p. 2.

Iannone's 10 Key Findings in the Review of Local Economic Conditions

- 1. Strengthening the Regional Business/Economic Center Role.** “Fort Wayne/Allen County is the central hub of the northeast Indiana economy and will remain the region’s chief business and economic center in the foreseeable future.”¹⁷ In 2003, 27,260 Allen County workers resided in another county and commuted into Allen County to work. This represented 11.7 percent of Allen County’s total workforce.¹⁸
- 2. Coping with External Drivers of Local Economic Change.** “The major local economic change drivers for Fort Wayne/Allen County are external forces, such as globalization and industry restructuring, which have a major defining impact on the area’s business and industry growth patterns.”¹⁹
- 3. Counteracting the Area’s Slow Industry Growth Mix.** “Fort Wayne/Allen County’s economic base growth is slowing, especially as a result of plant closings and business cutbacks and the slow pace of new business investment in the area to replace these losses.”²⁰ “Manufacturing employment declined from 22.5 percent of the Fort Wayne metro area’s total jobs in 1990 to 17 percent of the area’s total in 2004. This decline reflects again the drag that manufacturing places on local employment base growth. These losses also reduce local incomes by removing good-paying jobs from the local economy.”²¹
- 4. Manufacturing Competitiveness.** “The manufacturing sector continues to lose ground from a local employment standpoint, but it remains vitally important to the area’s economic base. Many of the area’s better paying jobs are in manufacturing companies and industries. The area’s current mix of manufacturing industries is dominated by slow-growth industries such as automotive, machinery, and other old-line industries. Allen County’s manufacturing sector is expected to see a 1.8 percent decline during the 2004-2013 period, according to industry forecast data prepared by Economy.com for this project.”²²
- 5. Long-Term Economic Diversification.** “In light of the current structure and growth of the area economy, economic base diversification must be treated as a top priority. Area leaders should promote and assist the creation of a new local industry mix over time that includes increased representation by faster-growing manufacturing and service industries.”²³ “The Fort Wayne-Allen County Economic Development Alliance and the Northeast Indiana Corporate Council have advocated for the adoption of an industry cluster-based strategy to guide future economic development efforts across Allen County and northeast Indiana. If done properly, a cluster-based strategy could help contribute to the long-term diversification of the economies in Allen County and northeast Indiana.”²⁴ “The Comprehensive Plan could play a helpful role in fostering the growth of these clusters by ensuring that there are competitive locations within the City and County where businesses in these clusters can locate and operate.”²⁵
- 6. Spread of Business and Economic Growth across the Region.** “Economic growth is spreading across the northeast Indiana region, which is an aspect of the larger regional development process. The major issue in this regard for Fort Wayne and Allen County is to

¹⁷ Ibid.; p. 3.

¹⁸ Ibid.; p. 5.

¹⁹ Ibid.; p. 5.

²⁰ Ibid.; p. 6.

²¹ Ibid., p. 6.

²² Ibid., p. 7.

²³ Ibid.; p. 9.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 9.

²⁵ Ibid.; p. 10.

encourage productive and sustainable growth that is fiscally sound. To succeed in this regard, Fort Wayne and Allen County officials should communicate with officials in surrounding northeast Indiana counties about the recommendations of the new Comprehensive Plan and their implications for regional development.”²⁶ “While local government must ensure that business comply with applicable rules and regulations, it is also important for Fort Wayne and Allen County to work at maintaining reasonable costs of doing business compared to competing locations within the region.”²⁷

- 7. Accessing and Developing the Local/Regional Workforce.** “Fort Wayne/Allen County’s labor market is regionalizing, which means people are traveling longer distances on a daily basis to reach their jobs. In-commuting to Allen County from surrounding counties is the primary trend line at this point in time. This could change if more high-quality jobs take root in surrounding counties. The strategy to avoid greater worker out-commuting from Allen County is to encourage high-quality jobs to develop in the targeted industry clusters.”²⁸
- 8. Commercial & Industrial Site and Area Competitiveness.** “While Fort Wayne and Allen County have many “commercial and industrial development areas,” a number of these areas currently lack the competitive advantages to make them attractive to expanding local businesses and out-of-town businesses searching for locations for new business facilities.”²⁹ “The Land Use Element of the Plan projects that Allen County will need an additional 8,000 acres of commercial land and 2,400 acres of industrial land to accommodate the growth of the County’s commercial and industrial sectors between 2000 and 2025.”³⁰
- 9. Crucial Economic Role of Downtown Fort Wayne.** “While Downtown Fort Wayne has experienced its share of economic decline over time, it is revitalizing in many ways and remains a major economic generator for Fort Wayne and Allen County.”³¹ “Several plans and studies have been developed for Downtown Fort Wayne – all point to the economic and social importance of the downtown area as an economic generator. The *Blueprint for the Future* and the *Blueprint for the Future Plus*, the *Downtown Destination Projects Initiative*, and *Downtown 2020* identify numerous strategies to tap this potential.”³² “Some progress has been made toward implementation of these plans, but more is needed. The Comprehensive Plan should give an added boost to these efforts. There is no shortage of ideas about what needs to be done. Sustained public- and private-sector investment in the right catalytic projects coupled with an ongoing focus on market-building is crucial to moving Fort Wayne’s downtown forward.”³³
- 10. Gearing Up for the Talent and Technology Economy.** “Because of the pronounced role of human talent and technology in propelling business and economic growth locally and nationwide, the Comprehensive Plan should contain policies and strategies that promote and assist the increased use of talent and technology as future economic growth engines for the area.”³⁴ “The growth of knowledge workers and knowledge-based jobs should be a major priority for Fort Wayne/Allen County. Fort Wayne metro level data on knowledge jobs

²⁶ Ibid.; pp. 10-11.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 11.

²⁸ Ibid.; pp. 11-12.

²⁹ Ibid.; p. 12.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 12.

³¹ Ibid.; p. 13.

³² Ibid., p. 13.

³³ Ibid., p. 13.

³⁴ Ibid.; p. 13.

(management, professional, and technical occupations) indicates that knowledge jobs actually declined from 61,600 in 1999 to 60,469 in 2003.”³⁵ “Communities must increase the capacity to grow and use human talent and technology. Ensuring that Allen County communities are adequately served by advanced-information technology (IT) infrastructure is one step in this direction. Another is ensuring the right knowledge skills exist in the local labor market. A third need is to strengthen the area’s network of resources to connect people in the new technology-based global economy.”³⁶

Geographic Concentrations of Industrial and Business Sites for Future Development

The Economic Development Extended Report examined the evolution of several centers of existing and potential employment throughout Allen County. Several of the findings and observations of this analysis are presented below:

- Perhaps the most dramatic influence on the location of industrial and office activity in our community occurred with the construction of Interstate 69 in the early 1960s and the increasing dependence upon the trucking of goods rather than dependence on rail transport that was occurring at the same time.
- The completion of Interstate 469 has the long-term potential to rebalance development by providing substantially improved automobile and truck accessibility to the eastern side of Allen County. The upgrading of U.S. Highway 24 (the Fort-to-Port project) may also assist in reopening eastern Allen County to new development.
- Allen County has a significant amount of acreage zoned for industrial use and a number of relatively small industrial parks. The quality of this inventory of sites has been examined, analyzed and critiqued by several studies over the past 30 years.³⁷ These studies have pointed to some of the assets that this inventory offers to the community. They have also noted some of the serious deficiencies when the inventory is viewed from a national competitive perspective, including a lack of identity, a lack of control over ownership of many sites, poor accessibility and visibility from the interstate highway system, a lack of supportive infrastructure, and a lack of “development readiness” in many instances.³⁸
- As a community we have had a long-standing philosophical debate regarding the appropriate and acceptable roles for the public, the not-for-profit, and the private sectors in the ownership and development of industrial parks and sites. Too frequently, we have been more concerned with philosophy than with results. The reality is that for significant periods we have found ourselves limited in economic competitiveness by a lack of adequate “product.” As competition for quality jobs becomes more intense, this issue becomes even more critical.³⁹
- We have tended to view our site inventory as a disparate collection of individual parcels and small industrial parks. We have seldom seen this inventory as a collection of unique clusters positioned to serve segments of the overall market. The fragmented approach has not been

³⁵ Ibid., p. 14.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 14

³⁷ See *Industrial Sites in Allen County: An Overview* prepared by the Allen County Plan Commission in 1980; *Executive Summary: Industrial Site Analysis for Allen County, Indiana* prepared by the Fantus Company for the Allen County Redevelopment Commission in 1986; and the *Fort Wayne Regional Industrial Development Strategy* prepared by Economic Research Associates in 1997.

³⁸ Substantial portions of this text are taken from a July 12, 2001 memorandum prepared for the Fort Wayne-Allen County Economic Development Alliance; p. 1.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 1.

conducive to coordinated marketing efforts; rather, at least until the Fort Wayne-Allen County Economic Development Alliance was created. Historically, marketing of industrial sites has been left almost entirely to the individual owners and their respective real estate brokers. Our product needed, and needs, simplification, clarification and image upgrading.⁴⁰

- We have too frequently not viewed potential industrial or office sites as prime community resources important to our long-term economic well-being. On several occasions we have allowed incompatible land uses to locate in the immediate vicinity of our industrial inventory. Our comprehensive planning should consider the best of these site “clusters” as unique community resources. The recent planning work for the Airport Expressway Corridor, as undertaken by the Allen County Department of Planning Services, is a good example of this later approach.⁴¹

Economic Development Opportunity Areas

Downtown Fort Wayne

Downtown Fort Wayne is the historical economic, cultural and civic core of the Allen County community. It has served many significant roles for the community over the past two hundred years – retail hub, manufacturing center, office center, entertainment destination and residential location. While its role and purpose have changed several times over many decades, the downtown continues to play an important economic role and, in many respects, it serves as the psychological barometer of the community. The health of a downtown is frequently used by both locals and those from outside the community as a measuring stick of both a respective community’s economic vibrancy and its collective civic pride. This relationship extends beyond the Fort Wayne community to the entire region. It takes a healthy regional economy to support a vibrant downtown in its regional center. Conversely, a strong and active downtown is the gauge by which many will judge the vitality of the entire northeast Indiana region.

Fort Wayne’s Older Industrial Railroad Corridor

Much of the industrial development in Allen County which occurred prior to the completion of Interstate 69 was concentrated in a crescent across the midsection of the community closely following the major rail lines. This industrial corridor was generally anchored by the General Electric complex on the west and the East End Industrial Area on the east. Industries which once played very significant roles in the local economy, such as Tokheim, Fruehauf, Wayne Pump, and the Falstaff brewery, were all located along this corridor. In the past 40 years many of the firms closed business operations or have dramatically reduced their local employment levels. As a result, the community has been left with many obsolete facilities and underutilized industrial sites. In response to this situation, the City of Fort Wayne initiated a Brownfield Revitalization Program in the mid-1990s, providing support and incentives to clean up these abandoned sites and to encourage new development thereon.

This older industrial corridor will continue to present significant rehabilitation challenges to the community in the years ahead, particularly to the immediately adjacent residential areas. There are no easy solutions to create viable reuses for many of these sites and buildings. Local and state government will be called upon continually to find vehicles for regulatory flexibility, financially feasible environmental cleanup, continued infrastructure reinvestment, and tax incentives to deal with this challenge. Indiana Enterprise Zone legislation, which has now been in place for more than 20

⁴⁰ Ibid., pp. 1-2.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 2.

years, was intended to be such a tool. We now recognize that the market forces leading to the massive disinvestment that has continued within the zone are indeed extraordinarily strong.

Cook Road (Northwest) Industrial Area

The area has relatively good accessibility to Interstate 69 at both the Lima Road and the U.S. Highway 30 interchanges. Much of the basic infrastructure needed to support additional industrial development is already in place. Much of the area has been designed as either an urban renewal or economic development area which would allow future tax increment to be utilized to fund additional infrastructure improvements as needed. There are a substantial number of ready-to-development industrial park lots available in the area in both private industrial parks and in Summit Park II.

Conversely, there are a number of uses throughout the area that are not compatible with high-quality industrial and business activity. In addition, the area does not have good interstate visibility and lacks some road improvements that would improve accessibility.

U.S. Highway 30 West Corridor

U.S. Highway 30 between Merrillville and Fort Wayne may represent one of the stronger economic development corridors in Indiana. Certainly the orthopedic industry cluster in Warsaw and the opening of the Steel Dynamics (SDI) mini-mill in Whitley County represent two jewels of economic vitality along this corridor. There has been considerable discussion regarding the role that the portion of the corridor located in Allen County, between the Whitley County line on the west and Interstate 69 on the east, may play in the future.

Sites along the U.S. Highway 30 West Corridor offer good visibility and easy access to Interstate 69. Utility capacity west of the SIRVA facility is a significant barrier to further development moving westward. There is potential for development also to occur along U.S. Highway 30 immediately east of the Allen/Whitley County line and just east of the SDI mini-mill if sewer utility service limitations can be overcome. Extending sanitary sewer interceptors from Fort Wayne out to this area would involve a very substantial financial investment.

Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne/IVY Tech Community College Northeast/Northeast Indiana Innovation Center/Certified Technology Park Complex

The concentration of the Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne and IVY Tech campuses, the NIIC facility and the Certified Technology Park designation form the basic elements around which an Allen County education-technology center can emerge. The need to improve both visual and physical connectedness is critical to the continued development of this center. So also is the ability to attract the public and private financial resources necessary to enhance the capital facilities already in place. Lastly, typical university-related support amenities are needed to serve these campuses.

Allen County has significant work ahead to make this location a truly competitive technology center compared with efforts which have been underway in many other communities. We can look to Kalamazoo's Business Technology and Research Park⁴² and the Michigan Automation Alley Smart Zone and Technology Center⁴³ as two examples of sustained community and state efforts along these lines.

⁴² See http://www.kalamazoocity.org/portal/econdev.php?page_id=262 for information regarding the Kalamazoo Business Technology and Research Park

⁴³ See <http://www.automationalley.com/autoalley/Automation+Alley> for information regarding the Michigan Automation Alley SmartZone and Technology Center

Continued development of these entrepreneurial and educational support centers is critical to Allen County's ability to transition to the knowledge-based economy. The area needs a focused identity, improved access and improved connectivity. Many of the most important physical assets are already in place – land for expansion and utility capacity. Extension of the Indiana I-Light ultrahigh-capacity broadband network would be a valued addition to the asset base.

East End Industrial Area

This industrial complex, originally nestled between the communities of Fort Wayne and New Haven (with portions of the area now located within the corporate boundaries of each of these municipalities due to annexation) was, at its zenith, one of the strongest economic engines in the state of Indiana. The complex was initiated with, and for most of its history anchored by, the International Harvester truck plant.

A number of both local and national trends were in play post World War II that greatly impacted the location of economic activity in Allen County. Changes in industrial production techniques favored newer one-story facilities and a shift from rail to truck for the movement of production inputs and outputs gave significant advantages to proximity to the interstate highway system. The completion of Interstate 69 on the western side of Fort Wayne in the early 1960s was the most important single factor in influencing manufacturing development trends in Allen County even before the pavement had cured. The local economic dominance of the East End Industrial Area would soon begin to erode. The closing of International Harvester's heavy truck and Scout production facilities in the early 1980s was to be the most dramatic visualization of this decline, but it is by no means the only East End facility to reduce, relocate or end operations. We continue to see these forces at work today – witness the recent sale of the Phelps Dodge operations. The ever-changing nature of economic-activity location within and throughout our community does indeed have very significant ramifications for both our citizens and the governmental institutions supported by the property tax.

Given the very different locational dynamics in play today compared with those at work when the East End Industrial Area was at its apex, retaining employment and investment activity in this section of the community will continue to be an ongoing challenge for the community and the governments of Fort Wayne, New Haven and Allen County.

Dupont Road/Interstate 69 Complex

The area surrounding the Interstate 69/Dupont Road interchange has represented an economic development opportunity for the community since the interchange opened in the 1960s. The 1977 Comprehensive Plan of Allen County recommended that the area be developed as low-density residential. By the late 1980s interest in the area as a site for uses other than residential and highway-related commercial began to grow. The northeast quadrant was rezoned for a mixed-use development, including office uses.

In the early 2000s significant effort was expended to create a high-tech business park on the east side of Interstate 69 between Dupont and Union Chapel Roads. The park – preliminarily identified as Greenwing – was to be a “haven for technology companies and for the local technology community.”⁴⁴ Unfortunately, the anchor and first tenant of the park ultimately decided not to expand its facility and the land eventually was withdrawn for other uses related to the medical industry.

⁴⁴ “Teaming up on tech park”; Fort Wayne Journal Gazette; August 12, 2001.

While this area remains attractive to a relatively wide range of office/medical/service employers, there are few large tracts of land remaining that can support a large-scale technology park that is relatively close to the interchange.

Hursh Road/Interstate 69 Proposed Interchange

The *2030 Transportation Plan* for the Fort Wayne-New Haven- Allen County-Whitley County-Huntington County Metropolitan Planning Area proposes that a new interchange on Interstate 69 be constructed at Hursh Road. The new interchange is intended to provide relief to the Interstate 69/Dupont Road interchange. The *2030 Plan* suggests that the new interchange be completed in the 2010-2019 timeframe,⁴⁵ although project funding has not yet been identified.

Given the relative lack of developable land at other Interstate 69 interchanges in Allen County, this area may offer a new opportunity to develop a business/technology area with both Interstate 69 visibility and accessibility. There is already some land speculation occurring in the area in anticipation of the new interchange. However, development of the area may be limited due to environmental considerations related to the protection of the Cedar Creek watershed. Metes and bounds development occurring in the area has also left limited areas for right-of-way and widening of existing roads.

All prior and current infrastructure and land use plans indicate that this area will continue to remain low-density residential. Therefore, it will require some serious consideration in this Plan to suggest a major change in policy to identify this future interchange area for business/technology use.

State Road 37/Interstate 469 Interchange

The State Road 37/Interstate 469 interchange has developed with mostly retail uses on the west of the interchange. Large tracts of undeveloped land exist on the east side of the interchange. Issues at this interchange include availability and capacity of public utilities, interstate elevations which make it difficult for certain types of development to occur on the east side of the interchange, and the impact of development on the nearby Amish population. This interchange serves as a gateway to the northeast quadrant of the City and therefore land use decisions should be made carefully to set a positive community image.

Industrial Area East of Interstate 469 between U.S. Highway 24 and U.S. Highway 30

The *New Haven Comprehensive Land Use and Strategic Economic Plan* includes the following commentary regarding portions of this area:

“Casad Depot contains a tremendous amount of land that is classified as industrial uses as shown in the Final Land Use Map. Once the home of the military, the land is now being reclaimed by the local jurisdictions. This area provides more than enough industrial land to last the City several decades, more than the time frame of this Plan. The City and County have made significant investments in infrastructure to prepare the site for future development. This site is currently outside the planning jurisdiction of the City, and in the future, a strategy should be developed for incremental annexation into the City to recover some of the costs of upgrading infrastructure. Additionally, the City, working jointly with the County, should look at establishing an industrial park for the specific location of these uses. This will protect this area from the development of residential uses. Primary industries that

⁴⁵ *2030 Transportation Plan for the Fort Wayne-New Haven-Allen County-Whitley County-Huntington County Metropolitan Planning Area*; Northeast Indiana Regional Coordinating Council; April, 2005.

should be targeted for this area include heavy industrial uses, manufacturing and processing, warehousing, open storage, and distribution.”⁴⁶

In 1997 the Allen County Redevelopment Commission designated 106 acres as the Casad East Economic Development Area. The plan prepared in conjunction with that designation noted both the opportunities the area offers and some of the infrastructure issues that must be addressed if substantial development is to occur:

“The new interstate (Interstate 469) has opened up several areas of Allen County for development. One of the areas made more attractive for potential development by Interstate 469 is located east of New Haven near the New Haven Depot (former known as the Casad Depot). This area is ideally suited for industrial growth as it has interstate access, rail service is available, the land is largely undeveloped, and much of this area has been zoned industrial for many years. Certain other features make this area attractive, such as its location near U.S. 24 and U.S. 30 (where the Interstate 469) interchanges are located.”

Fort-to-Port Corridor

The Fort-to-Port road project will provide a more efficient connection between Fort Wayne and Toledo. By improving U.S. Highway 24, more development could occur along this corridor. Many issues must be resolved before development can occur. Right-of-way must first be acquired not only for the road but also for the three planned interchanges. Interchange construction is critical before additional commercial and industrial development can occur. The State Road 101 corridor will become a more recognized north-south corridor, anticipating increased traffic. There is potential for additional development in the Woodburn Industrial Park as it is in close proximity to the proposed State Road 101/U.S. Highway 24 interchange.

Adams Township Industrial Area

The area between the State Road 930 and Interstate 469 along the Adams Center Road corridor offers several opportunities for general industrial and transportation-related development. The 1997 ERA report noted both the potential for and some current limitations for future development of this corridor:

“Heavy industrial development appears well-suited for the area just inside of Interstate 469 in the area bounded by Paulding and Adams Center Roads. Although this area has rail service and proximity to a Chemical Waste Management Facility, the area would need to have sewer and water service extended to facilitate development.”⁴⁷

The Adams Center Hazardous Waste Landfill represented a focal point of significant conflict in this community for nearly 20 years. Landfill operations were suspended in 1998, with the facility subsequently being closed. The facility was capped under U.S. Environmental Protection Agency regulations. In March of 2004, 328 acres of land held in ownership by Chemical Waste Management, Inc. (CWMI) which had not been used for landfill operations were formally donated to the Fort Wayne Redevelopment Commission for use as an industrial area. The Fort Wayne-Allen County Economic Development Alliance markets the property for industrial purposes on behalf of the Redevelopment Commission. In 2005, Watkins Motor Lines began construction of a regional

⁴⁶ *New Haven Comprehensive Land Use and Strategic Economic Plan*; pp. 82-83.

⁴⁷ *Fort Wayne Regional Industrial Development Strategy: Final Report*; p. 16.

trucking terminal as the first project on the Redevelopment Commission property, and its development will serve to open more of the area to the availability of public infrastructure.

The proposed 1.25-mile extension of Maplecrest Road south across the Maumee River and connecting with Adams Center Road would significantly improve highway accessibility to and from this area. It is currently anticipated that construction on this improvement will not begin until at least 2008.

Bluffton Road Corridor

The Bluffton Road Corridor has good accessibility to both Interstate 469 and the Fort Wayne International Airport. Sites along the corridor are flat in topography; and many are in large acreage parcels, and are therefore relatively easy to develop. The area is adequately served with both public water (a looped system) and sanitary sewer. Much of the area has already been zoned for industrial use and has been designated as an Economic Development Area by the Allen County Redevelopment Commission.

General Motors Area

Perhaps no single economic development project has had a greater impact on the landscape of Allen County since the current Fort Wayne and Allen County Comprehensive Plans were adopted than the location of the General Motors Truck Assembly Plant in rural Lafayette Township. The recently announced, new facility for Vera Bradley Designs on the southwest quadrant of the Interstate 69/Interstate 469 interchange represents a significant change for this area and an important economic development opportunity for Allen County. In addition, it places another “landmark” business in a highly visible location both with respect to this specific industrial/business area and for the entire community.

The *Southwest Allen County Land Use Study*⁴⁸ prepared in 1985 after the rezoning approval for the General Motors Truck Assembly Plant, and in response to the changed planning conditions that it represented, contained several policy statements regarding land use in the immediate vicinity of the plant. As was noted previously, the recommendations contained in this study would ultimately be formally amended into both the Allen County and City of Fort Wayne Comprehensive Plans. With the exception of the Interstate 69/Airport Expressway interchange (formerly identified as the Interstate 69/Lower Huntington Road interchange) which is covered by the 2001 Airport Expressway amendment to the Allen County Comprehensive Plan, the policies outlined above are still in effect as part of the amended Comprehensive Plan.

Air Trade Center Area

In February 1992, the Allen County Plan Commission initiated the rezoning of approximately 593 acres to the I-2(P) category. In July 1992, the Board of Allen County Commissioners gave final approval to the rezoning. During consideration of this rezoning the Board of Commissioners and the Fort Wayne-Allen County Airport Authority reached an informal agreement that sites in the Air Trade Center be reserved for airport-related projects; including: 1) air cargo, aircraft maintenance, aircraft manufacturing; 2) transportation-related businesses; 3) aeronautical-related companies; and 4) light manufacturing with a need for air transportation.

⁴⁸ *Southwest Allen County Land Use Study*; Allen County Plan Commission, Fort Wayne Division of Community Development and Planning, and the Northeast Indiana Regional Coordinating Council; Fort Wayne, Indiana; 1985.

Ground was broken on the Air Trade Center in October 1996, and American International Freight (AIF) located an air cargo operations facility in the Trade Center in May 1997. That facility is now home to the Kitty Hawk Fort Wayne facility. To date, it is the only project in the Trade Center.

In conjunction with the AIF project, the Air Trade Center was designated as an Airport Development Zone in 1998. This designation provides some tax increment financing options to the Airport Authority (as of 2006, TIF has not been implemented at the Trade Center) and certain tax credits to businesses located within the Zone. Allen County assisted in the project by upgrading Coverdale Road and thereby improving access from the Trade Center to the Airport Expressway.

Economic Research Associates urged local officials to place emphasis on both the Air Trade Center and other industrially zoned properties surrounding the Fort Wayne International Airport in its 1997 report:

“South of Fort Wayne, the Baer Field industrial area and the newly developed Air Trade Center also have vacant land available for development, with funding mechanisms in place (TIF) to help offset sewer and other infrastructure costs. The Baer Field area has attracted several high profile users, who have made significant investments in the existing park area. The Air Trade Center, a 450-acre airport-related industrial park, has recently attracted its first tenant, an air cargo firm. City and County officials should encourage maximal industrial development in the existing Baer Field development area as well as the Air Trade Center, particularly over the short term.”⁴⁹

The 2000 *Economic Development Action Plan* recommended that, “The community needs to leverage the public investments made by the City and County in the area surrounding the Fort Wayne International Airport, by attracting private industrial park developers which would complement the regionally unique assets that the airport area offers.”⁵⁰

Airport Expressway

The previously mentioned *Southwest Allen County Land Use Study* contained a strong endorsement for the construction of a new highway connecting the Interstate 69/Lower Huntington Road interchange (constructed as part of the infrastructure to support the General Motors Truck Assembly plant) with Dalman Road near the Baer Field airport. The “Dalman Road” roadway extension was ultimately completed in 2001. At the time the Airport Expressway, as it was ultimately named, was opened to traffic, it became clear that it was also time to reexamine the land use policies guiding future development decisions along the corridor. The report on industrial development prepared by Economic Research Associates in 1997 foreshadowed this rethinking even before the road was completed:

“The light industrial/distribution project could be planned for the area surrounding the Fort Wayne International Airport, possibly incorporating land north and south of Dalman Road (now known as the Airport Expressway) moving west toward the interstate from the Coca Cola bottling facility.”⁵¹

Upon the completion of the Airport Expressway (formerly referred to as Dalman Road Extended), the Allen County Department of Planning Services initiate a new subarea plan for the corridor. That plan was prepared in 2001 and a series of policies arising from the plan were

⁴⁹Fort Wayne Regional Industrial Development Strategy: Final Report: p. 17.

⁵⁰ Economic Development Action Plan for Fort Wayne and Northeast Indiana; p. 12.

⁵¹Fort Wayne Regional Industrial Development Strategy: Final Report; p. 16.

subsequently adopted as a formal amendment to the *Comprehensive Plan of Allen County* in August 2001 by the Board of Allen County Commissioners. The formal amendment includes the following policy (more detailed specific policies related to the Expressway are also included in this amendment and are presented in the Economic Development Extended Report):

General Policy: Planning for the development along the Airport Expressway has four goals: 1) maximize the economic benefit to the community; 2) establish a well designed “gateway” to Fort Wayne and the International Airport; 3) showcase high-quality development; and 4) protect the residents of this traditionally rural residential and agricultural area from the impacts of development along the corridor.

The Airport Expressway Corridor certainly offers great access to both the Fort Wayne International Airport and to Interstate 69. There is sewer and water capacities located at both ends of the corridor, but some limitation with capacity in the middle due to the current capacity of the Robinson Creek lift station and the lack of water distribution lines. The area is not encumbered with existing incompatible land uses and there are several parcels of significant size available for development. However, much of the corridor is not presently zoned for industrial or office use, most prime potential sites are currently in private ownership and the willingness of the current owners to sell is unknown

Area North of the Fort Wayne International Airport

At the eastern end of the new portion of the Airport Expressway sits over 400 acres of industrially zoned land, most of which has ready access to basic public infrastructure such as sanitary sewer and water. Completion of the Airport Expressway now affords these sites the direct access to Interstate 69 that had long been a key missing ingredient for their development. The 1997 ERA study identified the area surrounding the international airport as “the primary near-term opportunity development area in the Fort Wayne Region.”⁵²

The area includes several industrial parks, including the Airport Business Park and land being developed by the Fort Wayne-Allen County Airport Authority (the Northwest Quad project).

Lincoln Industrial Area

This industrial area is located just west of Interstate 69 and north of Illinois Road, on both the east and west sides of Hadley Road in northern Aboite Township. There are approximately 75 acres located on the west side of the Lincoln Industrial Area that is part of the Lincoln Industrial Park West plat. This property is zoned for industrial uses, has access to rail service, has adequate public water and sewer service, is available for sale, and has easy access to an interstate highway. The City of Fort Wayne has extended water service and constructed an elevated storage tank to serve the area. The Allen County Redevelopment Commission has designated a portion of the Lincoln Industrial Park as an Economic Development Area and made some drainage and road improvements. Access to the area from Interstate 69 is relatively immediate but is limited at times by rail traffic at the at-grade crossing on Hadley Road. This area is well served by rail.

Industrial Parks in Grabill, Hometown, Monroeville and Woodburn

The communities of Woodburn, Monroeville, Hometown and Grabill have taken proactive steps over the past fifteen years to create quality industrial parks and sites within their jurisdictions providing employment opportunities for their residents and increasing their respective tax bases. The ability of these communities to continue to attract industrial development is an important component in their strategies to remain diversified, freestanding, economically strong communities. The

⁵² *Fort Wayne Regional Industrial Development Strategy*; p. 16.

“Woodburn spur” of the Norfolk Southern railroad offers an excellent opportunity to provide outstanding rail access to sites in the Woodburn area.

General Observations Regarding the Geographic Analysis

The analysis of these selected geographic areas (with more complete information presented in the Economic Development Extended Report) offers the ability to make some general observations regarding the stock of current industrial and business sites in the community:

- We have an abundance of adequate but not outstanding sites. Many of the prime locations remain in the hands of property owners that may or may not be willing to sell for a competitive price per acre. Interstate visibility and great accessibility are too often lacking.
- We have so many adequate but not outstanding sites that we have great difficulty focusing on what product to most aggressively market.
- We lack proactive developer involvement. Few speculative industrial buildings have been constructed. Many of the private-sector parks lack the range of amenities that make them truly outstanding locations from a national or Midwest perspective.
- Our inventory of industrial/business sites is, in most cases, oriented to the past (an industrial economy) rather than to the future (a knowledge-based economy).
- Economic development has not always been a priority factor in our long-term planning endeavors, particularly with regard to protecting potential development sites from incompatible nearby land uses. It is recognized that this is not easily done if only land use regulatory tools are available.

Objectives and Strategies

Objectives and strategies, based on the economic development goal and designed to support the integrated goals of the entire Comprehensive Plan, are outlined below.

OBJECTIVE ED1.

PLAN, INVEST AND DEVELOP COMPETITIVE LOCATIONS AND SITES FOR EXISTING BUSINESS EXPANSION, NEW BUSINESS ATTRACTION AND ENTREPRENEURIAL DEVELOPMENT.

ED1.A Make process improvements to better coordinate policies for improving the industrial/business site inventory.

While the community has many “industrial development areas,” some of these areas may lack the competitive advantages to make them attractive to expanding local and nonlocal businesses searching for new business facilities. Local community leaders must set clear priorities to determine which areas will receive future public improvement investments.

This community needs a consistent, ongoing effort to ensure that we have an adequate site inventory in place. We need to eliminate the peaks and valleys such as those we have experienced over the past 30 years in the availability of an adequate inventory of sites meeting differing demand characteristics. This effort must be lead by an entity that: 1) can ensure a long-term focus on this goal; 2) is provided the adequate resources to accomplish its mission; and 3) has the organizational capacity, legal authority and community mandate to do the job correctly. As this work is undertaken we must be sure to focus on the site-inventory needs of the future and not be caught attempting to make up for the lost opportunities of the past.⁵³

⁵³ July 12, 2001 Fort Wayne-Allen County Economic Development Alliance memorandum; p. 2.

ED1.B Adopt an integrated planning framework for each industrial development area.

A subcommittee of, or supporting organization to, the Fort Wayne-Allen County Economic Development Alliance would be a logical entity to be assigned this mission. To be successful, however, it would need the full support of its public-sector partners. Increased importance should be placed on the coordination among: 1) the planning and zoning functions of the Fort Wayne and Allen County Plan Commissions; 2) the tax increment financing abilities of the Fort Wayne and Allen County Redevelopment Commissions to fund supportive infrastructure; 3) the public infrastructure capabilities of the Fort Wayne Board of Public Works and the Board of Allen County Commissioners; and 4) the marketing role of the Fort Wayne-Allen County Economic Development Alliance. This entity should become the ongoing forum for organizing collaborative infrastructure efforts such as the Memorandums of Understanding for Southwest and Northwest Allen County, for discussing joint land use policies for industrial and business development, and for refining a shared philosophy on the use of tax increment financing for on- and off-site infrastructure.⁵⁴

ED1.C Create a process for identifying “Class 1 Business and Industrial Sites.”

As was noted in the General Observations regarding the current inventory of industrial and business sites, we have an abundance of adequate sites but few truly outstanding sites. It is simply not economically feasible or physically possible to bring all of our sites up to an outstanding level. One method for improving the focus and quality of our site inventory would be to select a limited number, perhaps between five and ten sites, to be considered “Class 1 Sites.” Particular focus should be placed upon these selected sites to bring them up to “shovel-ready” status (as that term is being defined by the Indiana Development Finance Authority). Subsequent actions should include assurances that all necessary supporting infrastructure is place in advance of development opportunities. Land use planning and regulatory actions should be taken to: 1) resolve as many regulatory issues as possible prior to development; and 2) ensure land-use decisions recognize the importance of preventing incompatible uses nearby. Lastly, proactive efforts should be taken to make certain that land-control issues are resolved in advance of development opportunities. If such a process is recommended, then it will be necessary to determine with whom and how this selection can be undertaken.

ED1.D Protect the Fort Wayne International Airport from future nearby incompatible land uses.

The Fort Wayne International Airport represents an economic development asset that is not duplicated elsewhere in northeast Indiana. The amount of sunken community investment in this facility is enormous and every reasonable effort should be taken to protect that investment. Toward that end, zoning policies should seek to reduce the potential for development of uses incompatible with aircraft operations in the vicinity of the airport.

ED1.E Prepare a Small Area Development Plan for the Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne/IVY Tech Community College Northeast/Northeast Indiana Innovation Center Education-Technology Complex.

The academic and entrepreneurial support activities concentrated in the Coliseum Boulevard/ Crescent Avenue area represent the highest concentration of technology-related facilities anywhere in northeast Indiana. Currently these facilities are more of a grouping of facilities in close proximity rather than a collaborative complex. The only Certified Technology Park in northeast Indiana is also

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 2.

located in this activity cluster.⁵⁵ The City of Fort Wayne should work with IPFW, IVY Tech and the NIIC to plan and implement the off-site transportation, information-technology and signage improvements that can help create the image for the area as the Technology Complex of Northeast Indiana.

ED1.F Encourage either the public or private sectors to develop a high-technology business park as was recommended in the 2000 Action Plan.

The recommendation for creating high-quality industrial park facilities can be traced back at least to the 1982 study prepared for this community by The Fantus Company:

“Fort Wayne is at a stage in its development where it requires a master-planned, high-quality industrial park. It is likely that a future emphasis of the community’s industrial promotion program will be on high-technology-oriented industry. These types of operations generally prefer a location in an attractive and environmentally controlled setting. At the present time, Fort Wayne does not offer such an alternative.”⁵⁶

ED1.G Plan and invest in creating competitive business areas and sites that can accommodate the growth of a balanced mix of existing and new business.

We must recognize the growing importance of the office park as the employment center of the 21st Century. We need to preserve quality sites with great interstate (Interstate 69 and Interstate 469) visibility and accessibility for future development.

ED1.H Plan and invest in specialized facilities and resources, including incubator facilities, which can add a competitive advantage for developing new advanced technology industries.

The Northeast Indiana Innovation Center is a start toward implementing this objective, not an end. Plans for constructing additional technology-oriented incubators should begin in the very near future.

ED1.I Land bank key office/technology park locations.

The number of potential business sites with exceptional accessibility and visibility to the interstate highway system in Allen County is very limited. Yet these sites may be critical to the future attraction of the service and knowledge-based businesses of the “new economy.” Efforts should be taken to land bank one or more of these sites preserving opportunities that may yield the highest economic return to the entire community.

ED1.J Support the development of a logistics/distribution complex near the Fort Wayne International Airport.

Several studies of our industrial site inventory have noted that the area surrounding the Fort Wayne International Airport has many of the attributes necessary to support advanced logistics and distribution-related development: good rail, air cargo and interstate highway accessibility; supportive public infrastructure; an abundance of available open land; and the centrality of location offered by a northern Indiana site. However, to date only the 800,000 square-foot facility originally occupied by Nestlé has located in the area. There has been some speculation that the lack of a developer of

⁵⁵ For more information about Indiana Certified Technology Parks I.C. 5-28-10

⁵⁶ *Recommended Strategies for the Fort Wayne Economic Development Program*; The Fantus Company; Chicago, IL; May 21, 1982; pp. 9-10.

national scope is the missing ingredient. Consideration should be given to entering a public-private partnership with a national developer to share the initial risk involved with creating a logistics complex of significant magnitude.

ED1.K Discourage the “next adjacent parcel” syndrome.

It has not been unusual for the community to spend significant public-sector resources to provide adequate highway access and utilities to make a site “development-ready,” only to discover the asking price of that site has increased dramatically. As a result, prospects have, at times, sought to locate at another nearby site which does not have these supporting facilities, but does have a significantly lower price per acre. The public sector is then expected to, at public expense, provide the needed infrastructure. This is poor land use management, poor use of limited public dollars and poor planning. A willingness to “write down” land costs as part of an incentive package would greatly reduce this situation from reoccurring.

ED1.L Downzone industrial sites that no longer have realistic potential for development and/or are not consistent with the land use section of this Comprehensive Plan.

One example of a way to implement this strategy would be to encourage the Allen County Plan Commission to review the zoning classifications on unused, rural, industrially zoned land along the Maumee River in Maumee Township.

OBJECTIVE ED2.

INVEST IN STRATEGIC INFRASTRUCTURE AND PUBLIC SERVICES TO SUPPORT AND GUIDE FUTURE HIGH-QUALITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

ED2.A Use both tax increment financing and County Economic Development Income Tax revenues for public infrastructure supporting quality industrial/business sites.

Continue to utilize tax increment financing and County Economic Development Income Tax revenues to ensure a full range of infrastructure is available to a selected number of targeted industrial and business sites. Target a greater share of Fort Wayne’s and Allen County’s short- and long-term infrastructure improvement funds toward supporting the economic development priorities in the Comprehensive Plan.

ED2.B Complete the infrastructure projects outlined in the *Intergovernmental Memorandum of Understanding to Fund Infrastructure Improvements in Northwest Allen County*.

Several highway and utility projects outlined in the Memorandum are yet to be implemented. They are important to fully supporting the Cook Road/Northwest Industrial Area.

ED2.C Undertake detailed assessments of infrastructure needs in advance of development opportunities.

Work with local economic development officials to conduct a thorough assessment of the infrastructure needs of the industry clusters selected for future development attention. The Fort Wayne-Allen County Economic Development Alliance Industrial Site Committee should take the lead in this activity with the support of their respective local government partners.

ED2.D Prepare a unified City-County Annual Capital Improvement Program.

Coordinate the annual Capital Improvement Program prepared by the City of Fort Wayne with a similar program to be prepared by Allen County government.

ED2.E Seek additional public-sector funding for proactive infrastructure investments to support economic development.

Explore the value of implementing a Countywide infrastructure funding mechanism.

ED2.F Use public sector resources to induce the development of a business/technology complex.

Create and implement a bold, aggressive development plan with publicly financed infrastructure for a new business center: 1) along the Airport Expressway; 2) on the east side of Interstate 469 at the State Road 37 interchange; or 3) at the proposed Interstate 69/Hursh Road interchange. Explore the Noblesville Corporate Campus as one model for such an initiative.

OBJECTIVE ED3.

COORDINATE AND WORK WITH THE FORT WAYNE-ALLEN COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ALLIANCE, THE NORTHEAST INDIANA CORPORATE COUNCIL, THE NEW ALLEN ALLIANCE, AND OTHER LOCAL AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS TO GROW COMPETITIVE BUSINESSES.

Economic growth is spreading across the northeast Indiana region, which is an aspect of the larger regional development process. The Allen County community must encourage productive and sustainable growth that is fiscally sound. To succeed in this objective, local public officials from Allen County must communicate and interact with their counterparts in the other counties of northeast Indiana. In 2000, researchers from the Community Research Institute at IPFW examined growth trends throughout northeast Indiana between 1970 and 2000. This analysis points to the major role of the transportation system, especially Interstate 69, in spawning regional growth.

ED3.A Support “cluster-based economic development” initiatives.

We should support efforts by the Fort Wayne-Allen County Economic Development Alliance, the Northeast Indiana Corporate Council, the Northeast Indiana Workforce Investment Board and the proposed new regional marketing partnership to identify and grow competitive industry clusters that will create more skilled and knowledge-based jobs in northeast Indiana. The Fort Wayne-Allen County Economic Development Alliance should be the lead organization involved in cluster-based strategies impacting Allen County. Fort Wayne and Allen County should assist these efforts with targeted, supportive infrastructure investments as identified by respective cluster-industry participants.

OBJECTIVE ED4.

ENCOURAGE EXISTING BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION, AS WELL AS THE REUSE AND REVITALIZATION OF EXISTING INDUSTRIAL PROPERTIES AND AREAS.

Given the more competitive nature of economic development, both within and beyond northeast Indiana, we must continue to evaluate our planning and review processes and procedures for their ability to be efficient and responsible to those seeking to make basic-sector investments in our community. Recognizing that there must be a balance among and between the many objectives contained in this Plan, procedures that create uncertainty and unnecessary delay in the development approval process do not improve our competitive position. Conversely, development that lowers our “quality of place” also detracts from our long-term competitive position. The Comprehensive Plan

should create a better understanding within the development community about what types of development will be encouraged and “what incentives under what circumstances” local governments will provide to accomplish this desired goal.

ED4.A An efficient and consistent regulatory system supports development efforts.

The regulatory process should strive to balance the needs of flexibility, equitable treatment, efficiency and consistency in the review of development proposals.

ED4.B Maintain existing infrastructure investments.

Public sector infrastructure such as roads located within or serving our existing industrial parks must be properly maintained, and periodic reinvestment must occur to reduce the potential for the decline of these areas.

ED4.C Continue support of the Fort Wayne Urban Enterprise Zone.

We should support revitalization of the “industrial crescent” through programs such as the continuation of the Urban Enterprise Zone. The Fort Wayne Urban Enterprise Zone should prepare a new strategic plan to guide its long-term activities, now that the Zone has been reauthorized through 2013 and re-endorsed by the Fort Wayne Common Council.

ED4.D Develop a reuse plan for the General Electric industrial complex.

The community should prepare a reuse plan for the General Electric complex of multistory industrial buildings as current use of the facilities has been, and continues to be, phased out. The size and location of the complex on Broadway north of Taylor Street, and its potential impact on surrounding neighborhoods, is significant. A proactive plan for its reuse and redevelopment could serve to reduce negative impacts and to find productive reuse of these assets. Residential and business incubation are two potential uses of the site.

ED4.E The visibility of the Fort Wayne Brownfield Program should be elevated.

Take maximum possible advantage of state programs that support reinvestment in brownfields and previously developed industrial areas.

OBJECTIVE ED5.

TREAT DOWNTOWN FORT WAYNE AS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT LOCATIONS.

Given the relatively current nature of the *Blueprint for the Future* planning process and recent completion of the *BlueprintPLUS* action plan; it would be redundant to repeat the recommendations contained in these two downtown plans here. Rather, it is assumed that they will be incorporated into the final Comprehensive Plan.

ED5.A Aggressively pursue the strategies recently presented in the *BlueprintPLUS* Final Report and Action Plan.

Every effort should be made to act upon the recommendations outlined in the *BlueprintPLUS* in a timely manner.

ED5.B Support the initiatives of the Downtown Improvement District.

Fort Wayne and Allen County governments must be proactive partners with the Downtown Improvement District in providing the sustained leadership necessary for the successful implementation of the *BlueprintPLUS* action plan.

OBJECTIVE ED6.

PLAN FOR THE FUTURE GROWTH OF ALL ALLEN COUNTY COMMUNITIES.

Employment opportunities are critical to the continued ability of the smaller communities in Allen County to be self-sufficient. They also represent a development asset, as numerous businesses seek locations near, but not within, the urbanized area of a larger, central city such as Fort Wayne.

ED6.A Ensure industrial sites are adequately served with public infrastructure.

Industrial areas within the smaller, incorporated communities in Allen County must be provided adequate public-sector utility capacity and highway access to make them viable development options.

ED6.B Aggressively market development opportunities in smaller communities.

The industrial sites and their supporting infrastructure located within smaller communities in Allen County represent important economic development assets. These assets must be included in local, regional and state site-marketing initiatives.