



# THE 2016 ONE REGION INDICATORS REPORT

Quality of Place in Northwest Indiana

One Region  
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# ONE REGION

## LETTER FROM PRESIDENT & CEO

It is with great pleasure to introduce One Region's 2016 Quality of Place Indicators Report. This Report would not have been possible without the support of One Region's Board of Directors, Karnerblue Era LLC, and the Indicators Research Committee who graciously volunteered their time over the last year. Thank you to those who were involved in making the 2016 Indicators Report a reality.

As you may know, there are many iterations of this report as a new report is produced every four years. Over the years, One Region has done its best to be consistent with the indicators and data to allow for an "apples to apples" assessment of progression, status quo, or regression on the various indicators.

Together we have made progress within each indicator, yet it is evident that our region has opportunities that need to be addressed in a focused and collective manner. In the 2016 report, you'll see the use of the terms "Needs Improvement" or "Improving" to assess the direction of our region: Lake, Porter, and La Porte counties.

For your convenience, One Region printed an executive summary, and the full version and its chapters can be found on One Region's website: [www.oneregionnwi.org](http://www.oneregionnwi.org). Each chapter provides a success story from a local organization, an aspiration statement determined by the Research Committee, data and analysis, and regional action measures providing thoughts around action that could lead toward improvements.

It is the hope of One Region that this report provides value regionally to stimulate conversations, bring awareness to ongoing or new issues, and above all else to bring forth action to move the needle forward.

One Region continues to evolve to meet the needs of our region, and the indicators report has been a critical piece in helping prioritize the issues of the region. It is an absolute honor to serve as the leader of this great organization, and I am excited to see the impact we will make collectively to improve our quality of place, our home.

Sincerely,



Leah Konrady

President & CEO

# THE KEY FINDINGS

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This year's One Region Indicators Report, like previous ones before it, is a celebration of Northwest Indiana. Together, we are highlighting the many achievements of our region, the ongoing work towards further advancements and the collaborative spirit empowering us all forward. In the coming pages, you'll read first-hand success stories from partners and stakeholders throughout Lake, Porter and La Porte counties. These exceptional leaders and organizations are trailblazing new ways of working together to improve local quality of life.

Additionally, you'll find the latest statistical insights from your county to better understand where NWI stands today and where it is going tomorrow. These key indicators serve as a civic engagement tool, providing a framework to spark community conversations. As the information is presented, ask yourself, "What does this data mean to me? What issues does it represent? What action can be taken?"

Igniting proper dialogue is often the first step in transforming communities and inspiring change. Therefore, a brief snapshot of the report's major findings and trends are included below to serve as initial talking points, hopefully guiding residents as well as community and civic leaders towards future improvements. The outlook is positive for our region thanks to continual efforts towards sustainability. Readers are encouraged to delve deeper into each chapter for more information, and collectively celebrate Northwest Indiana's numerous strengths.

### PEOPLE

Northwest Indiana is the place to be as indicated from a 4 percent population growth, occurring primarily in Porter County, from 741,722 in 2000 to 768,748 in 2014. While this growth was slower than both the state and national rates, the region's landscape is changing. Non-traditional household types continue growing with the majority of homes either married without children or living alone in 2014. The medium age is 39.3-years-old, older than the state and national averages, with the region more diversified than Indiana as a whole and more reflective of the nation. However, this high level of diversity remains fairly concentrated along race and ethnicity by locale. Persons with disabilities represent 13 percent of the total regional population — that figure remaining unchanged between 2008 and 2014. Finally, more homes, 9.3 percent, are speaking a primary language other than English in 2014 compared to 8.5 percent of regional households in 2000.

- Northwest Indiana's net domestic migration remained negative with 1,908 people exiting the region in 2014 compared to 796 people in 2000. Porter County and La Porte County gained nearly 427 residents, while Lake County lost approximately 2,335 of them between 2000 – 2014.
- International migration remains strong. The region added nearly 652 people in 2014 compared to 282 people in 2000.

- Northwest Indiana’s population is projected to grow at a rate of 6 percent between 2015 and 2050 — representing half of the rate expected for Indiana and a quarter of the rate for the nation as a whole.
- By 2050, the total regional population is expected to reach over 832,000 people. Most of the population gain will occur in Porter County. Lake County will slightly grow its population, while La Porte County will experience a 5 percent loss.
- The 2014 composition of race in Northwest Indiana was 71 percent Caucasian, 18 percent Black/African American, 6 percent some other race alone and 5 percent as the balance of Asian, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander and two or more races.
- English as the primary language spoken at home slightly decreased from 91.5 percent in 2000 to 90.7 percent in 2014.
- 15 percent of Lake County households, 7.4 percent of Porter County households and 5.9 percent of La Porte County households spoke a primary language other than English at home.

## **ECONOMY**

### **Overall Trend: Needs Improvement**

The region is making more money as evident with per capita personal income (PCPI) rising 41 percent from \$28,027 to \$39,580 between 2000 – 2014. Further, in 2014, the 12 largest industries in Northwest Indiana employed 114,398 workers as well as generated \$8.3 billion in income and \$48.7 billion in output. This performance resulted in \$976,452 of income per worker and \$8 million in productivity. Between 2001 and 2014, industries increased average wages by 39 percent while losing 2 percent of total jobs. Northwest Indiana’s labor force grew 2 percent from 356,702 workers in 2000 to 363,529 workers in 2014. However, during that period, the number of unemployed more than doubled from 12,919 persons in 2000 to 27,097 persons in 2014, while the number of employed declined by 7,351 or 2 percent to 336,432 workers. Locally, the unemployment rate rose from 3.6 percent in 2000 to 7.5 percent in 2014, surpassing both the state and national rates that year. Poverty also remains a persistent regional challenge, increasing steadily from 9 percent in 2000 to 15 percent in 2014, on par with the state during the same period.

The Gross Regional Product (GRP) for Northwest Indiana grew 18 percent from \$28.1 billion in 2010 to \$33.1 billion in 2014. Compared to its big-city neighbor, Northwest Indiana’s economic well-being measure of 95.1 outperformed Chicago’s at 94.3, and fell just below the state at 96.2. With an Innovation Index of 83.7, areas for improvement include Northwest Indiana measuring less innovative compared to the Chicago MSA at 96.8, Indianapolis at 97.1 and state at 90.5. The nation overall ranked 100.

- In 2014, Lake County’s PCPI increased from \$27,060 in 2000 to \$38,386 in 2014. La Porte County’s PCPI went from \$25,237 in 2000 to \$35,882 in 2014. Porter County’s PCPI rose from \$31,785 in 2000 to \$44,472 in 2014.
- Porter County’s PCPI maintained the highest level of personal income over the 14-year period, and its 2014 PCPI of \$44,472 exceeded the state’s PCPI of \$39,578 by \$4,894.
- In 2014, the top industry in Lake County by employment was iron and steel mills with nearly 12,000 employees followed by hospitals at approximately 11,500. Porter County’s top industry

by employment was iron and steel mills with nearly 4,800 employees followed by wholesale trade at approximately 3,780. La Porte County's top industry by employment was hospitals with just over 2,000 employees followed by physicians at approximately 1,500.

- Average wages rose from \$31,552 to \$44,013. Jobs declined from 107,118 to 104,659. In 2014, industries' average wages were \$46,902 in Lake County, \$44,811 in Porter County and \$40,325 in La Porte County.
- The 2014 unemployment rate was 8.1 percent in Lake County, 7.7 percent in La Porte County and 6.3 in Porter County.
- The GRP of Lake County was \$22.7 billion, Porter County's at \$6.3 billion and La Porte County's at \$3.9 billion in 2014.

## **ENVIRONMENT**

### **Overall Trend: Improving**

Multiple Northwest Indiana environmental factors continue to progress. First, the air quality index between 2000 and 2014 shows overall significant improvement. The number of good days totaled 209 and number of moderate days totaled 148 in 2014. Additionally, one of the region's greatest natural assets, Northwest Indiana's 31 beaches saw a rise in the percentage of beach season days not under a closure or advisory action, referred to as "beach action days" with 89 percent of the season without action in 2014. Environmental protection remains strong as roughly 15 miles, or 24 percent, of the 65 miles of regional Lake Michigan shoreline is protected. While 140 miles, or 6 percent, of the 2,496 miles of area rivers and streams are protected and approximately 780 miles, or 31 percent, are managed. Inland lakes represent 10,508 acres with 828 acres, or 8 percent, protected and 3,335 miles, or 32 percent, managed. Finally, solid and hazardous waste disposal significantly increased between 2000 – 2014, rising from 1.8 tons per capita in 2000 to 4.95 tons in 2014.

- During 2014, Lake County's air quality comprised of 35 percent or 128 good days, 62 percent or 226 moderate days and 3 percent or 11 days unhealthy for sensitive groups.
- Porter County's air quality consisted of 53 percent or 194 good days, 47 percent or 170 moderate days and less than zero percent or one day unhealthy for sensitive groups.
- La Porte County's air quality registered 85 percent or 306 good days, 14 percent or 49 moderate days and one percent or 3 days unhealthy for sensitive groups.
- The total acres desired for green infrastructure is 367,902 or 38 percent of total land mass. Of that amount, 38 percent of Lake County or 121,207 acres are desired. In Porter County, 34 percent of the land mass or 91,035 acres are desired. In La Porte County, 40 percent of the land mass or 155,660 acres are desired for green infrastructure uses.
- Of those desired green infrastructure acres, 42,341 or 4 percent are currently managed lands under ownership by public or nonprofit entities.
- Of these managed lands, nearly 1,356 acres are not publicly-accessible today including 288 acres in Lake County, 75 in Porter County and 993 in La Porte County.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

### **Overall Trend: Needs Improvement**

Northwest Indiana is on-the-go with more commuters traveling from their Lake-, Porter- and La Porte-county homes to-work at 91,509 people or 58 percent compared to commuters traveling from another county or state into the region to work at 66,584 people or 42 percent in 2014. Little change in travel means to work occurred regionally between 2000 and 2014. A majority of commuters still drove alone, fewer carpooled, more worked from home and about the same took public transit. Regional average travel times to work of 25.7 minutes was on par with the national average and two minutes longer than the state's average. Lake County commuters took longer to travel at 27.7 minutes compared to Porter County at 26.8 minutes and La Porte County at 22.6 minutes. Overall trends indicate further improvements needed locally to diversity public transportation options.

- Commuter rail service maintained 3.6 million passengers in 2014. Regionally bus transit ridership fell 49 percent between 2000 and 2014 to 1.3 million riders. Demand response ridership also declined 55 percent over the same period to 185, 757 riders. System changes account for much of the shift in ridership that has occurred.
- The operational efficiency of local bus and commuter transit systems varies by system. In 2014, rural demand response systems and the City of Valparaiso small fixed route system outperformed statewide peers on fare recovery. The City of Gary and Michigan City transit systems operated well but at fare recovery below the statewide average. NICTD continued its strong performance.
- Northwest Indiana enjoys over 100 miles of regional off-road bike trails. Over the past 14 years, 52 miles were added to the bike trail system.

## **EDUCATION**

### **Overall Trend: Improving**

The level of educational attainment in Northwest Indiana continues to improve with more people graduating from high school. Additionally, ISTEP performance in math and language arts improved between 2006 – 2014. Test-takers in the fourth and eighth grades passed ISTEP on average at 80 percent and 71 percent in 2014. Student enrollment was more diverse in 2014 than in 2000. The 2014 student population was 52 percent Caucasian, 23 percent African-American, 19 percent Hispanic/Latino, 4 percent multi-racial, 1 percent Asian/Pacific Islander and less than 1 percent Native-American. The percentage of students qualifying for a free and reduced lunch continues to increase regionally and statewide. On average, 48 percent of NWI students qualified for free and reduced lunch in 2014. Poverty is a determining factor influencing a student's academic success and school performance with 47 percent of Northwest Indiana's children under age 5 living in poverty in 2014. Further, access to and ability to pay for high-quality childcare or early learning is a significant problem facing many families with working parents.

- In 2014, the percentage of people with a high school diploma was 36 percent, some college at 24 percent, bachelor's degree at 14 percent, associate's degree at 8 percent and graduate degree or higher at 7.1 percent.
- Those with a high school diploma in 2014 was 36 percent in Lake County, 35 percent in Porter County and 39 percent in La Porte County.

- Those with a bachelor’s degree in 2014 was 14 percent in Lake County, 17 percent in Porter County and 11 percent in La Porte County.
- Regionally, 90 percent of high schoolers graduated within four years, up 17 points from 77 percent in 2006.
- The percentage of fourth-graders passing ISTEP in 2014 was 74 percent in Lake County, 86 percent in Porter County and 80 percent in La Porte County.
- Eighth-graders passing ISTEP in 2014 reached 62 percent in Lake County, 81 percent in Porter County and 68 percent in La Porte County.
- Students qualifying for free and reduced lunch was 54 percent in Lake County, 35 percent in Porter County and 54 percent of La Porte County in 2014.
- Average cost of childcare is \$7,494 in Lake County, \$8,509 in Porter County and \$7,046 in La Porte County. The average cost of childcare as a percent of income is 14 percent in Lake and La Porte counties and 11 percent in Porter County.
- In terms of enrollment in designated high-quality childcare programs, 43 percent of children in Porter County have access, while only 30 percent and 34 percent of children in Lake and Porter counties respectively have access.

## HEALTH

### Overall Trend: Needs Improvement

According to county health rankings, Northwest Indiana tended to be less healthy than the rest of Indiana and below national benchmarks between 2010 and 2014. By a number of measures, Lake and La Porte counties were among the least healthy counties in Indiana, even though the region saw improvements in health during this period. Social and economic factors influencing health outcomes include regional counties having lower rates of high school graduation, higher unemployment, greater number of children living in poverty, more families without adequate social or emotional support and a greater risk of crime when compared to national benchmarks. In terms of physical environment, NWI and the state had less access to recreational facilities and healthy food options, but more fast food restaurants in 2013. A contributing factor perhaps includes over one-third of workers on average driving more than 30 minutes to work each day. Although not meeting the national benchmark, the region is improving on air pollution, yet drinking water violations have fluctuated by county and year in each county — potentially exposing residents to water exceeding a violation limit.

- Between 2010 and 2014, mortality or premature death rates — death before the age of 75 — were higher in both Northwest Indiana and the state than in the nation overall. On the measure of morbidity, which includes the amount of time spent in poor mental or physical health, Northwest Indiana performed worse than national benchmarks with little change between 2000 and 2014. The region also performed worse than the national benchmark for the percentage of babies with low birth weight.
- On measures of health behaviors such as smoking, excessive drinking, adult obesity, teen birth and sexually transmitted infections, the region and the state performed poorly compared to national benchmarks on average between 2010 and 2014. With the exception of sexually transmitted infections, changes were minor.
- A greater percentage of region and state residents lack medical insurance and there are more preventable hospital stays.

## **PUBLIC SAFETY**

### **Overall Trend: Improving**

Positively speaking, the region was relatively safer in 2014 than it was in 2000. The majority of the reported crime rates had dropped at the regional level between 2000 and 2014. In short, crime is very localized. According to data, children were generally safer from neglect and abuse in 2014 than in 2000.

- The region's murder rate dropped by 32 percent from 13 to 9 murders per 100,000 people. Lake County continued to have the highest murder rate in the region, at 12 murders per 100,000, which had fallen from 19 in 2000.
- The robbery rate dropped 31 percent from 144 to 100 robberies per 100,000 people.
- The aggravated assault rate fell 4 percent from 186 to 178 per 100,000 people.
- The reported rate of rapes dropped by 23 percent from 22 to 17 rapes per 100,000.
- Thefts of personal property dropped over the decade. After peaking at 846 in 2011, burglaries dropped 23 percent between 2000 and 2014 from 605 to 468 burglaries per 100,000 people. Larceny theft declined 15 percent from 2,199 to 1,869 per 100,000 people. Similarly, vehicle theft dropped 57 percent from 488 to 209 per 100,000 people.
- The number of juvenile delinquency case filings dropped by 33 percent from 2,739 in 2010 to 1,825 in 2014.
- Substantiated child neglect cases in Northwest Indiana decreased 1 percent overall from 2000 – 2014, but increased by 7 percent from 2010 – 2014. Lake County cases increased by 69 percent during the 14-year period. Despite decreasing 40 percent between 2000 – 2014, La Porte County experienced a 44 percent increase in child neglect cases over the past four years. Regionally, physical abuse cases dropped 64 percent from 2000 – 2014. However, Porter County substantiated physical abuse cases increased by 67 percent from 2010 – 2014. Regionally, child sexual abuse also declined by 34 percent from 2000 – 2014.

## **HOUSING**

### **Overall Trend: Needs Improvement**

Housing in Northwest Indiana remains steady with homes increasing in value throughout the region. The average median home value was up 37 percent to \$142,700 in 2014 from \$103,867 in 2000. Regionally, the rate of increase slowed following the national recession, but began to stabilize mid-decade with the exception of Lake County. Rents have also increased with the average regional median rent rising, primarily in Lake County, by 49 percent between 2000 and 2014 from \$555 to \$798. As property values and rents have increased, homeowners and renters are having a more difficult time affording housing, yet the number of households who struggle has improved following a 2010 – 2011 peak. Post housing crisis and recession, Northwest Indiana continues to be burdened by a hefty number of vacant homes. Construction of new housing declined sharply from 2006 to 2011. However, since 2012, the annual number of housing starts has risen slightly, indicating the market may have stabilized.

- In Northwest Indiana, 22 percent of households struggled to make mortgage payments in 2014, compared to 17.4 percent in 2000. Still, this has improved from 2011 when just under 50,000 households, or 23.9 percent, struggled.
- In Lake County, the number of homeowners with unaffordable housing rose from 19.2 percent in 2000 to 23.4 percent in 2014. In Porter County, the number rose from 16.3 percent in 2000 to

19.4 percent in 2014. In La Porte County, the number increased from 16.8 percent to 19.9 percent. Nationally, 25 percent of homeowners paid more than 30 percent of their income for housing in 2014.

- Northwest Indiana renters struggled to afford housing at an even higher rate than homeowners, similar to renters across the nation. Regionally, the number increased from 33.8 percent of renters in 2000 to 48.9 percent of renters in 2014. The 2014 rate actually represented a slight decrease from 54.8 percent in 2010.
- Regionally, the number of vacant homes rose 92 percent from 20,897 in 2000 to 40,222 in 2014. In 2000, 7.3 percent of homes were vacant. In 2014, the percentage of vacant homes had risen to 12.3 percent.
- The annual number of housing starts fell 57 percent from 3,475 in 2000 to 1,481 in 2014. Since 2010, the number of new homes has increased by 14 percent within the region. Porter County has seen the most growth with new home construction up by 78 percent since 2010.

## **ARTS & CULTURE**

### **Overall Trend: Improving**

Although down following the recession, funding to the arts is improving along with many other similar trends. Reports showed Northwest Indiana arts-related businesses has increased to 1,139 and creative sector workers decreased slightly to 4,691 in 2015. It is the region's rich cultural, recreational and natural resources drawing in millions of tourists from across the globe each year. The majority of these visitors in 2012 and 2013 came from the nearby states of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan and Ohio but the region also saw visitors from as far away as Germany staying an average of 2.4 days and typically traveled in a party of 3.7 people. The most popular attractions continued to be the four casinos, Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore, Indiana Dunes State Park, Lighthouse Place Outlets, Albanese Candy Factory restaurants, sports events and recreational facilities such as Deep River Water Park, Zao Island and Washington Park Zoo.

And while charitable giving decreased nationally following the recession, regional giving accounted for just under \$285.7 million in personal income to charity organizations annually as of 2012. Lake County residents are most generous, donating about 2.79 percent of the median income. Based on 2013 data human services, health and education remain the focus of more nonprofit activity in Northwest Indiana than the arts, environment, international affairs or civil rights. In 2014, there were 3,122 registered nonprofit organizations in Northwest Indiana, a 2 percent rise from 2000, representing 9 percent of Indiana's nonprofit sector.

- Between 2000 and 2014, Indiana Arts Commission funding to Northwest Indiana through the South Shore Arts, increased \$142,647 to \$187,679 or 12 percent. The number of grants awarded increased from 21 in 2001 to 34 in 2014, but the average grant amount decreased by 2 percent.
- According to data from 2013 and 2014, Northwest Indiana's tourism and travel industry provided 23,083 jobs and \$213 million in wages per year. Taxes generated through income and sales taxes connected to tourism and travel totaled \$300.5 million per year.
- Visitors spent over \$1.8 billion in the region per year. Lake County benefited the most from the tourism industry with \$795.3 million in spending in 2014 to generate 12,225 direct jobs. In 2013,

Porter County saw \$386.6 million in revenue to generate 4,962 jobs. In La Porte County, \$619.2 million in tourism and travel revenue in 2014 generated 5,896 jobs.

- Total revenues and total assets of Northwest Indiana nonprofit organizations rose between 2000 and 2014. Revenues reached just under \$3 billion in 2014, an increase of 95 percent from \$1.5 billion in 2000. Assets grew to \$5.6 billion in 2014, an increase of 89 percent from \$2.9 million in 2000.

## **GOVERNMENT**

### **Overall Trend: Improving**

The total net assessed valuation of property increased significantly between 2006 and 2014. In 2006, rates reflected statewide restructuring measures changing the formulas for assessed valuation. Budget appropriations local governments rose 1 percent to \$2.06 billion in 2014. When comparing presidential election years, voter registration for the general election increased 5 percent in the region from 509,415 registered voters in 2000 to 534,731 in 2012. As everywhere, turnout in both primaries and general elections was highest during years with a presidential election. Regional commitment to ethics and civility is beginning to change perceptions within Northwest Indiana. Long term, this commitment should improve public confidence in local government, which should lead to more active civic engagement.

- The total net assessed valuation in Northwest Indiana rose an estimated \$1.2 billion, or 4 percent, between 2006 and 2014 from 18.0 billion to \$30.1 billion.
- Net assessed value increased 7 percent from \$19.2 billion to \$20.6 billion in Lake County, dropped 6 percent from \$8.9 billion to \$8.3 billion in Porter County and grew 7 percent from \$4.8 billion in 2006 to \$5.2 billion in 2014 in La Porte County.
- Total spending in Lake County decreased by 4 percent to \$1.36 billion in 2014 in Lake County, rose 14 percent to \$408 million in Porter County and rose 14 percent to \$285 million in La Porte County.
- Overall, per capita government spending increased 19 percent on average from \$1,936 in 2006 to \$2,295 in 2014. Local government spending per capita dropped 56 percent from \$3,206 in 2006 to \$1,398 per capita in 2014 in Lake County, rose 4 percent from \$1,973 in 2006 to \$2,051 in Porter County and rose a significant 490 percent from \$630 in 2006 to \$3,718 in La Porte County.
- Average voter turnout for general elections during presidential years was 61 percent in Northwest Indiana, 6 percentage points higher than the national average during the same time period.
- From 2009 – 2015, Northwest Indiana advanced its commitment to ethics with the number of governments committing to the voluntary Shared Ethics Advisory Commission’s membership requirements increasing from three in 2005 to 23 in 2016.