FRAMEWORK PLAN OVERVIEW

Based on the direction that was supported by public input and validated by the Working Group, Mayors and stakeholders, the planning team developed a land use "Framework Plan" that builds upon the vision statement and principles and guides more detailed design and decision making that will follow this study. It literally provides the framework for the Marquette Plan's realization.

In order to illustrate specific recommendations more clearly, the Framework Plan was separated into a series of layers that illustrate key project systems. They include:

1. Industry and Infrastructure Framework
2. Motorized Transportation Framework
3. Greenways Framework
4. Multi-Use Trails Framework
5. Community Investment Framework

Each framework illustrates recommendations specific to that system (i.e. new park areas in the Greenway Framework) both graphically and through a series of written recommendations. When combined, they represent the Composite Framework, the first map in this section.

COMPOSITE FRAMEWORK

This map illustrates the composite land use strategy envisioned for the Marquette Plan study area. It illustrates the desired mix of existing and refined land uses and a set of general recommendations that represents the long term vision for the lakeshore communities.

1. INDUSTRY AND INFRASTRUCTURE FRAMEWORK

This framework illustrates potential land use changes to existing industrial properties that are intended to improve the viability of the lakefront for industry and the general public. It highlights lands suitable to be reclaimed for alternative uses such as parks or mixed-use developments to diversify the tax base and those that could be consolidated to improve the function of existing business and improve their integration into the surrounding communities.

2. MOTORIZED TRANSPORTATION FRAMEWORK

This framework outlines a series of roadway and rail recommendations intended to improve connections to the lakefront, between and within the lakefront communities and to regional destinations, from streetscape enhancements to spur economic development in "main street" areas such as the Miller section of Gary to enhancements to major highways like I-90 and I-65 intended to improve aesthetics and community access to them. They include a renewed look at large-scale infrastructure that was designed to serve a past need, such as sections of Cline Avenue that could be re-routed and set at a more appropriate height to still provide the safe and efficient grade separated commerce traffic it does today while better serving industry and integrating into the surrounding community.

This framework recommends the designation of a "Scenic Byway" along U.S. 12, in an attempt to establish and preserve high quality aesthetics, views and settings while tapping potential funding sources to achieve this agenda. Finally, this framework includes rail-related recommendations including the consolidation of redundant rail lines where possible, mass transit expansion and station enhancements to allow bike riders to use transit and to foster economic or "Transit Oriented Development" (TOD) around existing South Shore commuter rail stations.

3. GREENWAYS FRAMEWORK

Northwest Indiana is blessed by a host of wonderful natural resources, including Lake Michigan, the Grand and Little Calumet Rivers and a diversity of landscapes associated with these water features. It is also home to an historic regional landscape tied to the formation of the Great Lakes and glacier activity including the lake plain that was primarily vegetated dry sandy ridges alternating with marshy swales and inter-dunal ponds (Dune and Swale) prior to human European development. Human development in the project area has greatly altered the landscape as well as the natural processes such as fire, surface water flow, and hydrology but the remaining natural areas include globally rare ecosystems such as Dune and Swale and Oak Savanna. As one travels east, towards the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore, the park and open space system has been structured to protect and capitalize on this "green infrastructure" that provides area residents with the restorative spaces necessary for a healthy mind, body and spirit. This is not always the case further west but positive examples and opportunities do exist. These natural spaces also provide an excellent complement to the "built" environment of...
industry, transportation and mature community centers.

The greenway framework capitalizes on this green infrastructure to create a ribbon of landscapes and cultural features that are indicative of the region and intended to be places for people to visit, recreate and celebrate the magnificent lakeshore setting. From pristine natural settings to industrial heritage campuses to reclaimed industrial properties projecting nearly one mile into Lake Michigan, the greenway connects people to their environment, to their past and to each other in a one-of-a-kind setting of natural and working waterfront heritage. Finally, it provides the setting for the extensive trail network outlined in the multi-use trails framework and focuses on open public access to every lakeshore treasure, be it a reclaimed industrial peninsula or a public bird sanctuary where future ecologists are born through class trips and family outings.

4. MULTI-USE TRAILS FRAMEWORK

The multi-use trails framework consolidates a myriad of trails that are either in existence today or on the drawing boards of state, county and/or local entities onto a single map. These are paired with new connections based on this plan’s proposed land use patterns to create a single comprehensive trail network. This plan is not intended to show the exact location or alignment of trails but rather key corridor connections to augment the greenway network envisioned in this plan. It includes nearly one hundred miles of trails, including nature trails, bike trails, boardwalks, riverwalks, water trails and unimproved trails along existing public beach right of ways. These trails will link greenspaces together and link communities to the lakefront and to each other. They will also link to the regional land and water trail networks in the region, including Illinois’ extensive water trail network that utilizes the lakeshore, creeks and rivers.

Despite this extensive trail yield, it’s important to note that this is more than a traditional trail-focused greenway plan and one must recognize that the environs must be addressed before any trails are built to ensure long-term sustainability. Yes, trails will be a key component but they must be part of a larger corridor that includes places of unmatched beauty and an awe-inspiring working waterfront, and vibrant neighborhoods from end to end. They must be trails that are safe, trails that connect existing and new destinations and trails that are destinations upon themselves.

5. COMMUNITY INVESTMENT FRAMEWORK

Each of the lakefront communities in the study area is fortunate to have a solid stock of residential neighborhoods, commercial centers, streetscapes, transit stations and numerous architectural treasures that anchor the community. While it is true that the decline of the local economy and some unsympathetic infrastructure projects have taken their toll on portions of each community, the existing urban fabric that remains provides a solid foundation for the type of reinvestment needed for future prosperity.

The intent of this framework is to illustrate the potential community reinvestment benefits associated with the Marquette Plan’s land use strategies.