Planning for the uncertainty of the future: highlights on the drivers of the future and scenarios for NWI to consider
Drivers of NWI’s future

Drivers and influences

Staff identified five broad drivers of NWI’s future: economy, environment, people, regional assets, and technology. Each of those five drivers collectively represent unique influences that we can identify today. The influences may be currently experienced, trending, emerging, or in some cases are speculative. Full details on NIRPC’s [website](#).

**Economy**
- E-commerce
- Business climate
- Housing market
- Global competitiveness
- Tourism
- Trade and tariffs

**Environment**
- New energy sources
- Increased water demand in drought locations elsewhere
- Extreme weather events

**People**
- The aging population
- Slow population growth
- Migration and immigration
- Jobs and personal income
- Entrepreneurial capacity

**Regional assets**
- Lake Michigan
- Geological and ecological
- Proximity to Chicago
- Existing infrastructure
- People and culture

**Technology**
- Shared mobility
- Electrification and batteries
- Drones
- Connected and autonomous vehicles
- Internet of Things and Everything
2050 Plan summer pop-up events

Pop-up highlights

- Interactive table-top game
- Participants provided feedback on what trends may impact NWI’s future
- Over 900 responses captured from Aug. 10 – Sept. 1st
- Rich feedback captured from diverse audiences
People’s thoughts on most impactful influencers

Environment
- New energy sources
- Climate change
- Water demand

Regional assets
- Proximity to Chicago
- Indiana Dunes
- Lake Michigan

Technology
- C/AVs
- Shared mobility
- 3D-printing

Economy
- E-commerce
- Entrepreneurial capacity
- Housing market

People
- Labor force participation
- Aging population
New chances in a new frontier

The New chances in a new frontier future is one of significant and rapid change that the Region acknowledges and prepares for. Change is driven by a large influx of residents in need of fresh water, and technological innovation. The economy is strong due to fast growth of the population, but changes in technology allow for a balance between the economy and the environment.

### Economy
- The economy has diversified and the benefits are enjoyed by more of the population.
- The economy of NWI is strong but the impacts to the environment are less severe.
- The strong economy of NWI is buoyed by the growth in people, mitigating the aging population.
- The strong economy of NWI is most impacted by Lake Michigan as a regional asset w/ water.
- The economy of NWI is different from today and assisted by new technology.

### Environment
- The environment has changed with chronic droughts elsewhere forcing people to seek fresh water.
- People are flocking to places with abundant sources of fresh water like NWI.
- Lake Michigan provides the region a new draw for people seeking fresh water.
- Tech advances in energy and batteries reduce the economies impact on the environment.

### People
- Population growth is strong, and the region is more diverse, and better educated.
- Our people and culture grow, people are better educated and healthier.
- People enjoy new efficiencies in their jobs and mobility brought about by technology.
- Technological advances let NWI be more "independent" from Chicago's economy.

### Regional assets
- Lake Michigan is the strongest regional asset, drawing people seeking fresh water.
- Technological advances let NWI act more "independent" from Chicago's economy.

### Technology
- Technology has dramatically changes our lives through innovation and automation; NWI is ready.

Illustration credit: Nick Vovjodich

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The **Sharp and in focus** future is one that has a healthy economy with diversification, a protected environment, moderate growth, with a still aging population, but more in-migration, strong connections to Chicago, but not a dependency, many innovations, but not so rapidly it dramatically changes the way we know the Region today.
Stay in your lane

The future resembles the economy of today, the environment is at risk, our population growth is slow, with an aging workforce, and the region depends on our infrastructure connections to Chicago to sustain the economy, and changes in technology are resisted, risking NWI’s place in future.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>In this scenario, the future of NWI is driven by:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Economy</strong></td>
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**Economy**

- The economy resembles that of today; manufacturing is extremely important for NWI.

**Environment**

- The environment struggles like it does today; growth continues on green-space.

**People**

- Our population growth is slow; lack of immigration and aging population keeps workforce small.

**Regional assets**

- Our existing infrastructure is NWI’s greatest strength and Chicago is biggest opportunity.

**Technology**

- Technological change is resisted and NWI is not ready for some of the biggest changes.

Illustration credit: Nick Vojodich

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