



# LDE

**Northwest Indiana RDA Land Development Entity**

# Introduction

- How did we get here?
- What is a Land Development Entity?
- Example: St. Louis Revitalization Authority
- Why does Northwest Indiana need a LDE?
- Next Steps

# 2025 Comprehensive Strategic Plan Update

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## Create a Land Development Entity to Assist with Transformative Redevelopment

### *VISION:*

**Accelerate redevelopment by assisting with assembling, acquiring, and stabilizing challenging properties, providing added capacity and expertise, and operating collaboratively with local municipal entities.**

### *THIS INCLUDES:*

- Property Assembly + Acquisition
- Brownfields
- Identifying + Acquiring Grant Opportunities
- Managing Funding

### *INITIATIVES:*



Work with agencies and municipalities to identify potential properties and procure grant funding to assist in environmental cleanup.



Explore potential TOD opportunities unlocked by new, enhanced rail service.

# What is the Land Development Entity?

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- The Northwest Indiana RDA's Land Development Entity, or LDE, is a 501 C3 non-profit subsidiary of the RDA that will assemble, acquire and prepare properties to make them suitable for private sector investment and redevelopment.
- The LDE will be able to work hand in hand with local communities in tandem with their own land assembly efforts to maximize tax base through private sector investment.
- The LDE will provide a coordinated, region-wide approach while leveraging public-private partnerships to fill funding gaps, share risk, and align private investment with public goals.
- The LDE will help optimize Transit Development Districts and strengthen the State's return on investment in Northwest Indiana
- The LDE will acquire grant funding from various sources to implement projects
- The RDA is committing an initial \$5 million in seed money so that the LDE can begin operations as soon as possible.

# Example: St. Louis, MO Land Revitalization Authority (LRA)

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- Created in 1971 by Missouri statute to address St. Louis's tax-delinquent and abandoned property.
- Governed by a five-member board of mayoral appointees, the comptroller, and the school superintendent under the St. Louis Development Corporation.
- Manages, maintains, markets, and sells vacant buildings and lots to return them to productive use.
- Works with the city to clean up vacant and underutilized sites, focusing on infill housing and redevelopment partnerships with developers and CDCs.
- Completed projects include the North Sarah Apartments, Cortex Innovation District expansion, and scattered-site affordable housing.
- Holds over 70 acres of vacant land within a half-mile of the 10 proposed North–South MetroLink stations, designated for TOD development.



# Comparison: St. Louis County

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- **Comparable Population Scale:** While Chicago is much larger than St. Louis, the surrounding suburban areas of St. Louis County are similar in size to Lake and Porter Counties combined — roughly 691,000 residents compared to 678,800 residents in Northwest Indiana.
- **Similar Land Use Patterns:** Both regions have a comparable mix of residential, commercial, and industrial uses, with extensive first-ring suburbs and legacy industrial corridors that shape redevelopment opportunities.
- **High Concentration of Brownfields:** St. Louis County and City have a dense inventory of brownfields and underutilized sites, including major Superfund areas and clusters of tax-delinquent properties. This parallels the concentrations found in Gary, East Chicago, Hammond, and Portage — reinforcing the need for a coordinated regional land assembly and remediation strategy in Northwest Indiana.



*Industrial site on Ogden Avenue in Wellston, MO*

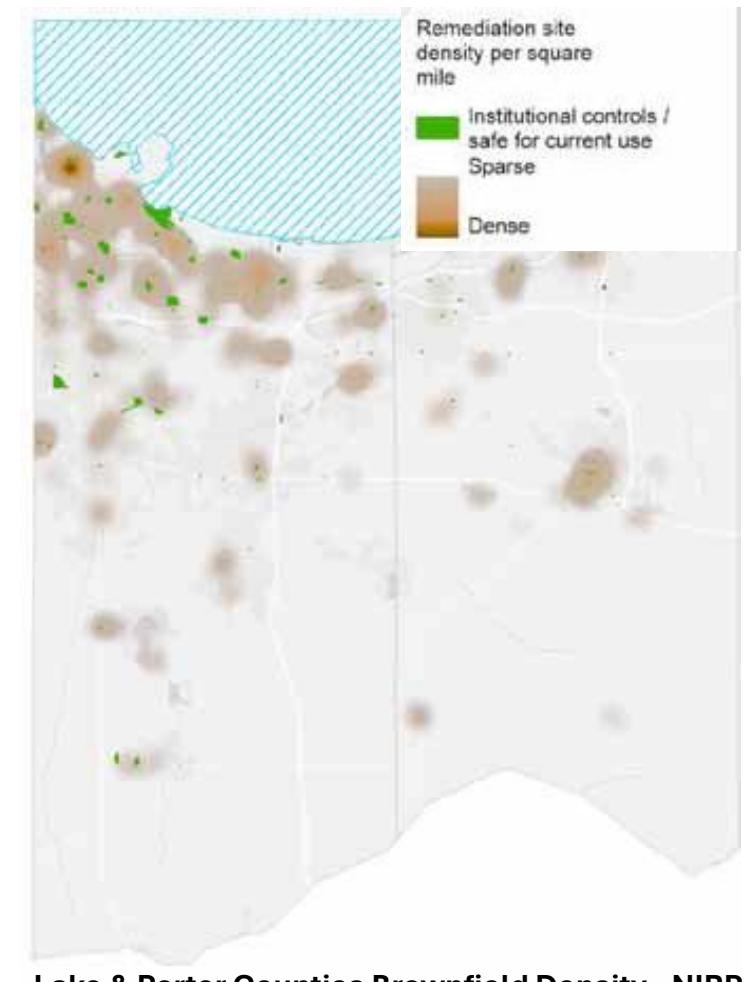
# Need and Purpose

## The Need

- Northwest Indiana has a high concentration of documented brownfields and likely additional undocumented sites.
- The region lacks a coordinated, region-wide cleanup and redevelopment effort comparable to other states.
- Local governments and regional organizations face significant funding and capacity constraints to address these sites.

## The Purpose

- Collaborate with local communities to identify and solve redevelopment barriers.
- Assemble, acquire, clean up, and redevelop or sell environmentally degraded or challenging properties for productive reuse.
- Optimize Transit Development Districts (TDDs) to maximize private investment and catalyze transit-oriented development opportunities.



# Barriers to Development

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Perhaps the greatest obstacle to scalable redevelopment is availability of contiguous vacant or public land. Ownership varies from property to property, creating few sites large enough to effect redevelopment. An average city block in our communities platted over a hundred years ago are comprised of up to 50 separate parcels, each less than a tenth of an acre in size. With disinvestment and population loss, this makes land assembly difficult. The majority of publicly-owned parcels are vacant single-family lots. Sites large enough to effect significant development will require the aggregation of dozens of individual parcels. With parcel sizes this small and the amount of diligence required to complete any meaningful land assembly, **most entities do not have the financial, time, or staff capacity to complete the process in a timeline that is congruent with private sector development and decision-making timelines.**

– City of Gary Comprehensive Plan 2019

A single blighted block could contain:

- +/- 48 title reports
- +/- 48 tax deeds
- +/- 48 quiet title actions

Legal fees and associated costs for **donated** parcels average \$1,800 per parcel after quiet title

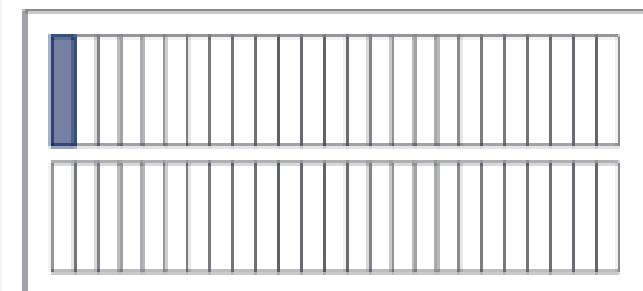
$$\$1,800 \times 48 \text{ parcels} = \$86,400 / \text{block}$$

Common Parcel Size

0.7 acres

Common Block Configuration

48 Parcels



# Stakeholder Meeting Quotes

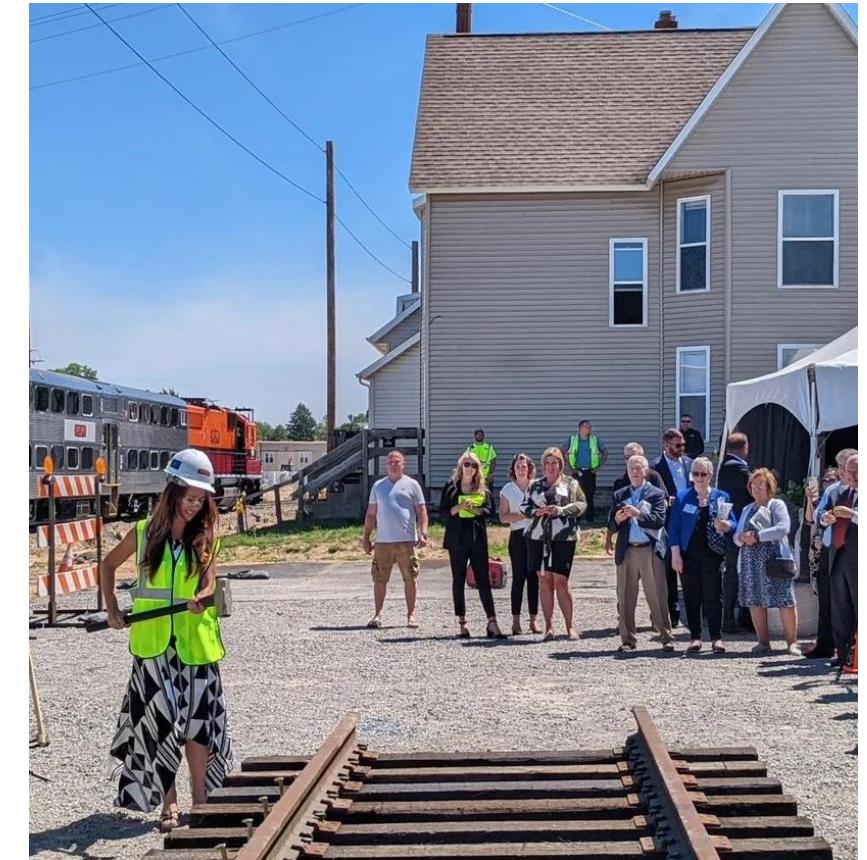
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- “An LDE would be a powerful tool for Northwest Indiana communities, able to work directly with local units to take on transferred properties, pursue brownfield remediation, clear titles, and package sites for the private market in ways a local Redevelopment Commission cannot.”
- “The RDA should position itself to offer reduced-rate financing to Northwest Indiana communities, potentially through the creation of a dedicated gap-closing fund. Establishing an RDA Land Development Entity or Authority would add another powerful tool to help local communities' advance development.”
- “(our community) needs help assembling and cleaning up large sites for development.”
- “We can't purchase a gas station in a neighboring community, even when it sits at a critical location for a future roadway. If the RDA had a land development nonprofit able to acquire such properties and convey them to the city, it would be a game-changer.”

# Findings of Fact Summary

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- RDA was established in 2006 to encourage economic development in NWI.
- RDA was further charged with establishing Transit Development Districts to help finance development in NWI.
- Though the RDA has been successful of over the past 20 years, obstacles remain:
  - fragmented land ownership
  - large underutilized sites not contributing to the community vibrancy or tax base
  - numerous documented and potential brownfield sites
  - complex site conditions that inhibit private investment.
- While local governments and regional organizations have made progress, many lack the funding, capacity, or tools to address these challenges at the necessary scale.
- The creation of a separate Land Development Entity will address these challenges by bringing focused resources to bear over the long term.



Double Track groundbreaking in Michigan City, October 2022.

# Statutory Considerations

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As the RDA is considering having RDA staff provide services to the LDE, the following recommendations have been made by IceMiller to avoid triggering Indiana's "ghost employment" law.

- The RDA and the LDE should enter into a "shared services agreement," which outlines the duties that the RDA will perform for the LDE and which requires the LDE to pay the RDA for the use of its employees.
- The RDA can adopt a policy which approves employees to perform services for the LDE.

IceMiller has also made the following recommendations to ensure that the LDE does not conflict with the Indiana Public Works statute. These include:

- Utilize its own sources of funding in pursuit of projects
- Avoid ownership of property by the RDA
- Limit control of projects by the RDA
- Limit overlap of RDA and LDE boards

# Next Steps

PUBLIC HEARING AND  
RDA BOARD APPROVAL  
OF RESOLUTION  
ESTABLISHING THE LDE

CREATION OF A LDE  
FUND

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

STRATEGIC OUTREACH  
AND IMPLEMENTATION