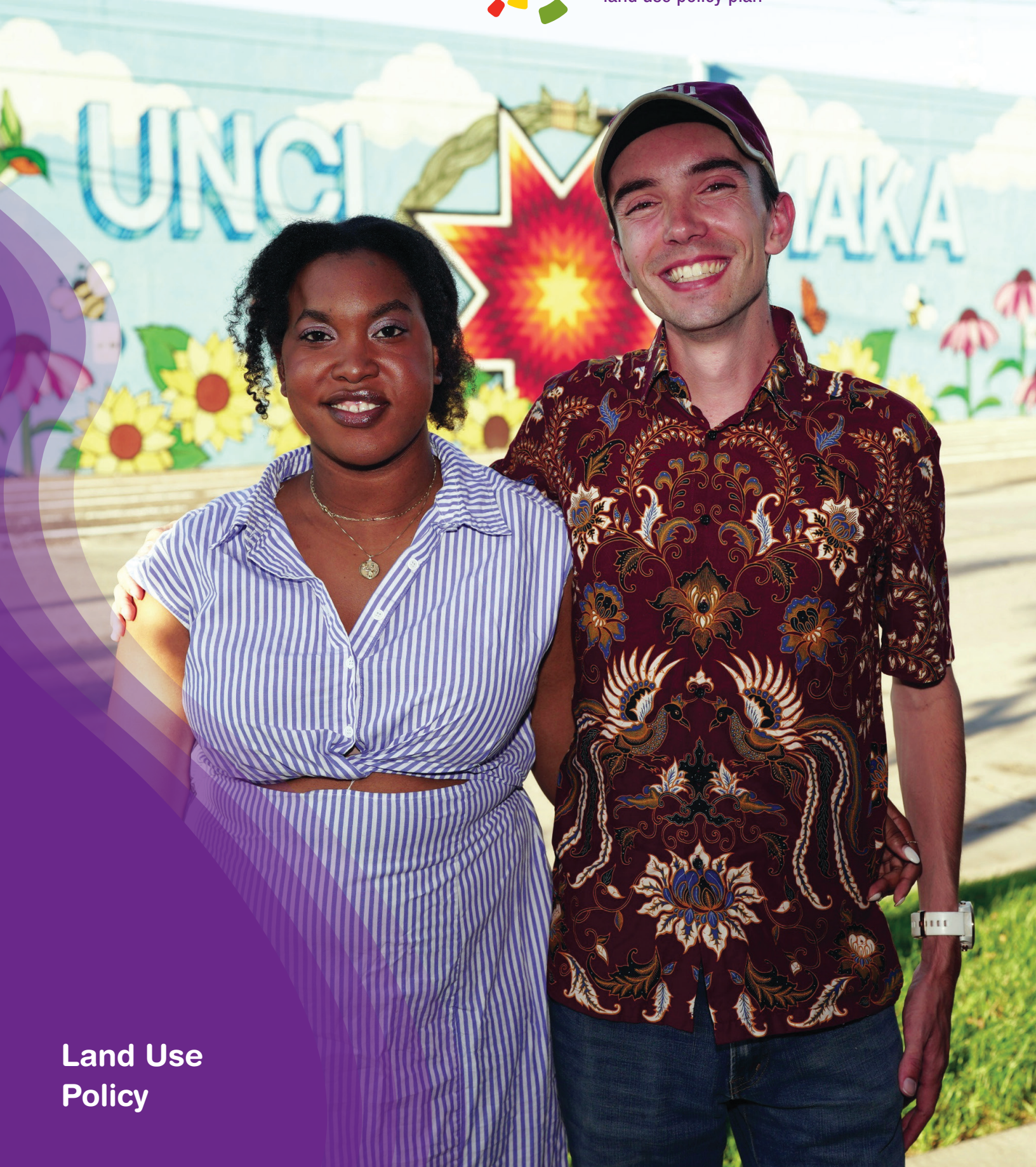




IMAGINE²⁰₅₀
land use policy plan



**Land Use
Policy**



METROPOLITAN
C O U N C I L

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SECTION 1: GUIDING GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE REGION

In the late 1960s, community leaders saw value in collaborating to solve the issues facing the region. At that time, the Twin Cities region was facing challenges resulting from rapid population growth and uncoordinated and disconnected urban sprawl:

- **Rapid growth was threatening ecosystems and natural areas better suited for preservation as parks and open space.**
- **Inadequately treated wastewater was emptying into lakes, rivers, and waterways.**
- **The Twin Cities' privately owned bus company was rapidly deteriorating, a victim of rising fares, declining ridership, and an aging bus fleet.**
- **Growing fiscal disparities were making it difficult for communities with inadequate tax capacity to fund essential services.**

The Minnesota Legislature took unprecedented action to address these challenges. In 1967, the Legislature created the Metropolitan Council and gave it responsibilities for planning and coordinating the region's growth and setting policies to deal with regional issues. On signing the bill, then-Governor Harold LeVander observed that the Met Council "was conceived with the idea that we will be faced with more and more problems that will pay no heed to the boundary lines which mark the end of one community and the beginning of another."

In 1976, through the passage of the Metropolitan Land Planning Act, the legislature took further steps to connect the Met Council's efforts around regional infrastructure planning with local comprehensive planning. As we approach the 50th anniversary of the passage of the land planning act, the region has decades of experience of working together to solve regional issues. As we look toward 2050, we are faced with new challenges:

- Post-COVID economic recovery
- Changes in the way we travel and work
- Water supply contamination and shortages, particularly in the east metro
- Impacts from climate change, including increasing rainfall intensity and increasing heat
- Continued racial disparities across many factors

As a regional plan, Imagine 2050 addresses issues greater than any one neighborhood, city, or single county can tackle alone to build and maintain a prosperous region.

At the same time, the future's increasingly complex challenges demand that we tap into our imaginations to develop new strategies and greater collaboration. Building on our region's past planning successes, the Met Council took an integrated approach to developing Imagine 2050 across all of its planning areas in an effort to seek strategies and solutions that have co-benefits across multiple dimensions. And it will take all of us in our continued and new partnerships to effectively address the demanding challenges facing the region.

Imagine 2050 guides the growth and development, both public and private, in the region. The Met Council sets the framework for land use patterns and guides the orderly and economical development of the region, as directed by the Metropolitan Land Planning Act (Minn. Stat. 473.145). To be fiscally responsible, the Met Council works collaboratively with local units of government to guide land uses and development patterns that leverage the region's infrastructure investments and private development to the benefit of all. Directing growth where infrastructure already exists also reduces the need to add roads and expand the regional wastewater system to support the same growth elsewhere.

Looking ahead to a growing and changing region

The seven-county Twin Cities region will continue to grow, but at a slower pace than in previous decades. Our region will gain 657,000 residents between 2020 and 2050, bringing the region's total population to 3,820,000. Though the region's population grew 11% between 2010 and 2020, growth rates of 6% to 7.5% per decade are expected through 2050. Our region's population will continue to age, and the share of the region's population age 65 and older will nearly double by 2050 to comprise 22% of the region's population.

Further, the region's population will become more racially and ethnically diverse, a shift that we already see today in schools and workplaces. The share of the Black population, American Indian population, and populations of color will nearly double between 2020 and 2050, going from 29% to 45% of the region's population. Together, both these demographic trends will fuel a transformation of the region's schools and workplaces.¹ These demographic trends also drive the plans we make across all aspects of the built environment including housing needs, transportation choices, recreational needs, and the design of our neighborhoods and cities.

The Twin Cities region added 238,000 jobs between 2010 and 2019, before temporarily losing these gains in 2020 due to the economic disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic. (Employment has since rebounded, mostly.) Participation rates (the share of the population working or seeking work) are expected to reach a ceiling around 2024, as employers struggle to replace aging workers. This results in an employment slowdown between 2025 and 2040, before employment accelerates again in the 2040s. The total number of jobs is forecasted to reach over two million by 2050.

Table 1.1: 2050 Regional forecasts of population and employment

Category	2010	2020	2030	2040	2050
Population	2,850,000	3,163,000	3,364,000	3,555,000	3,820,000
Employment	1,541,000	1,581,000	1,802,000	1,895,000	2,074,000

Recent land use and development trends

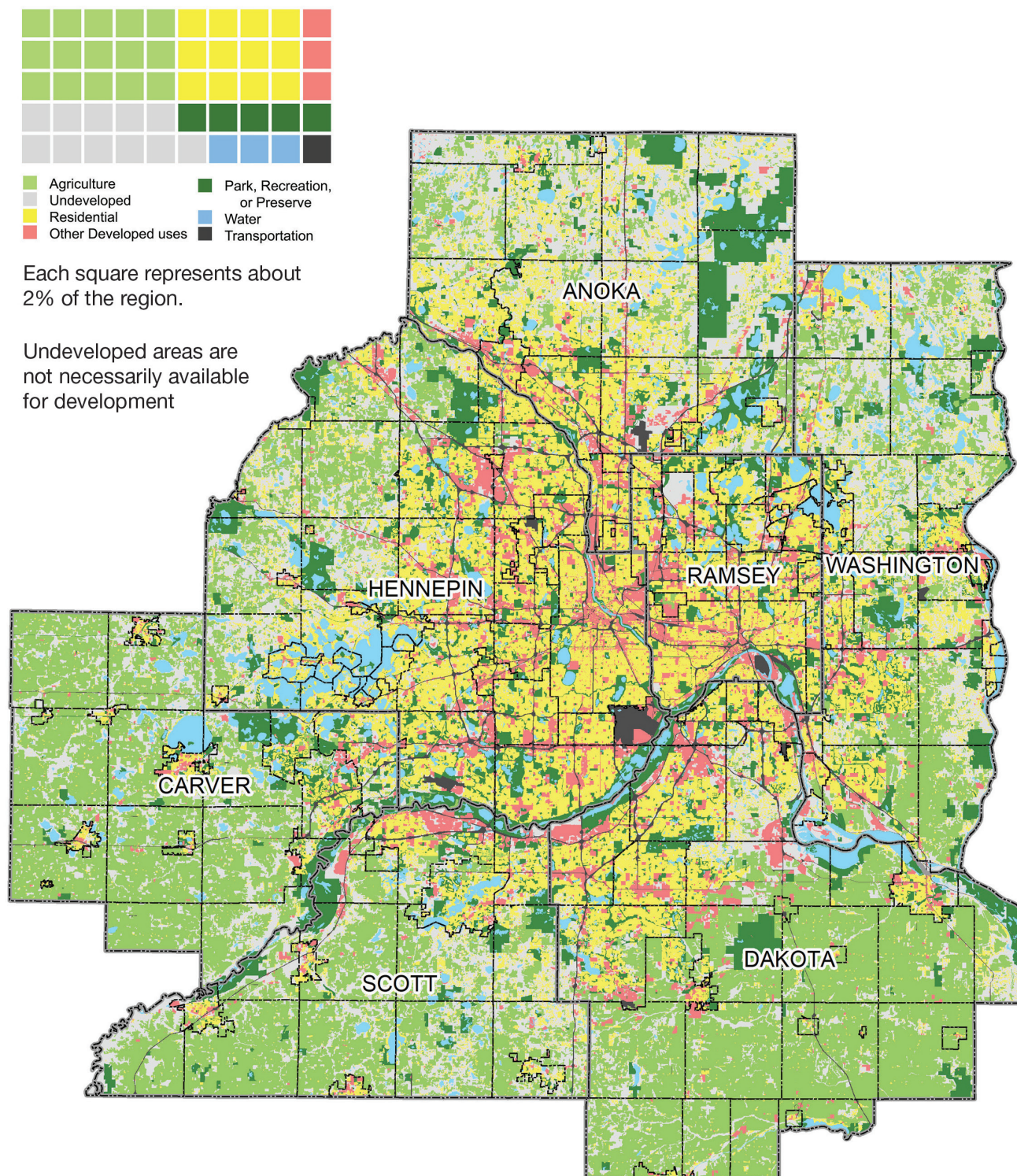
The seven-county metro contains about 1.9 million acres of land, with just over half of the region's acres in agriculture or undeveloped land uses. Residential development, primarily single-family homes, take up about one-quarter of the region's acres, while parks, recreation, and natural preserves account for 10% of the region's land uses (Figure 1.1).² This distinction between the developed portion of the region and the rural portion of the region is reflected and advanced through the decades of regional planning that has distinguished between the urban and rural service areas.

In this last decade, the region has accommodated growth in a more compact fashion, consuming 290 acres per 1,000 households, down from 490 acres per 1,000 new households from 2000-2010. Single-family detached housing remains the main driver of land consumption, accounting for nearly two thirds of the growth in developed acres from 2016-2020 (approximately 12,500 acres) and constituting nearly two-thirds of all developed land in the region. At the same time, the region has also seen an increase in the acreage of land dedicated to parks, open space, and natural preserves, as formalizing those land uses often accompanies land development.³

This growth in more compact development has also been buoyed and furthered by local comprehensive plans. During the 2010-2020 decade, local governments amended their plans frequently to accommodate new development on land that had been previously guided for non-residential uses or to accommodate development at higher densities than had been previously planned.

About 25% of the total housing units constructed during this period were facilitated through a comprehensive plan amendment.⁴

Figure 1.1: Generalized land use composition, 2020



Source: Metropolitan Council, 2020 Generalized Land Use Inventory

At the same time, local governments were developing their 2040 comprehensive plans, which on the whole planned for densities well above the minimum densities required in Thrive MSP 2040, particularly in the more urbanized portions of the region. Cities planned to accommodate growth on fewer acres, while at the same time increasing the allowable densities. These planning efforts resulted in increased land capacity to support forecasted growth.⁵ As the rate of projected population and employment growth slows, recent Met Council analysis of the existing capacity within the Metropolitan Urban Service Area shows that the region has more than adequate land supply to accommodate growth through 2050.

Housing development was relatively slow during the early 2010s as the region recovered from the Great Recession. But the latter half of the decade was marked by rapid development, particularly multifamily. On average, 12,900 housing units were added per year from 2010 to 2020.⁶ Strong housing development has continued into the 2020s, with over 20,000 housing units added in both 2021 and 2022.⁷

Considering the implications of different scenarios in policy development

Imagine 2050 considers several factors when localizing the regional forecasts and developing policies to guide growth across the region. As part of preparing for Imagine 2050, the Met Council initiated a scenario-planning process to ensure that it can advance toward its regional goals in the face of uncertainties. The main purpose of this process was to identify policies and investments that can help the Met Council navigate those uncertainties and be prepared for them. In the face of those uncertainties, understanding the implications of these different scenarios can aid in developing policies and strategies to advance the regional goals as well as in developing policies and strategies to mitigate undesired impacts of different scenarios.⁸

The scenario process started by identifying uncertainties that the Met Council should explore. Staff from multiple divisions collectively examined a set of uncertainties and settled on two that had the most impact on the Met Council's main role of planning for regional growth: "How much will the region grow?" and "Where will residents and employers decide to locate in the region?"

Most of the region's growth depends on external factors such as immigration rates and the performance of the national economy. Since the region has very little impact on these larger-scale factors, the amount of growth in the region presents an uncertainty for which the region needs to be ready. Met Council staff simulated alternative futures with varying levels of regional growth to explore the future impacts of this uncertainty. They analyzed three growth levels - business as usual (continuation of current growth levels), higher growth, and lower growth.

Similarly, the Met Council and local jurisdictions do not know exactly where people and businesses will decide to locate and what demand in real estate markets will look like. While the Met Council works with local jurisdictions to make land available for development, unforeseen dynamics in the real estate markets play a big role in determining where actual development occurs. Once again, planners need to be prepared for alternative futures where market demand plays out differently in the region.

These variables yielded five future scenarios: business-as-usual growth; high-growth compact; high-growth dispersed; low-growth compact; and low-growth dispersed. In forming these scenarios, staff used the region's current planned density ranges within locally adopted comprehensive plans, its existing transportation and wastewater infrastructure, as well as its current housing and land use policies.

To ensure plausibility, staff utilized the Met Council's forecast and land use models and simulated alternative futures with realistic growth rates based on conditions experienced in the past. While plausible, the simulated scenarios were also different enough from each other that staff could identify significantly different impacts on the Met Council and the region.

Key findings of scenarios analysis

The results of this analysis showed that compact scenarios compared to dispersed scenarios would bring the region closer to achieving the regional goals across all policy areas. To summarize:

Land use: Compact development uses land more intensely and efficiently, regardless of how much the region grows. It also puts less pressure on the region's agricultural areas and natural systems. These findings suggest that compact development makes it easier to protect the region's natural systems by reducing the footprint of development. They also imply that compact growth patterns can make the region more dynamic and resilient by preserving its agricultural economy.

Transportation: Compared to dispersed growth, compact growth results in lower vehicle miles traveled, lower transportation-related greenhouse gas emissions, greater job accessibility, and better transit access, regardless of how much the region grows. These findings show that compact growth patterns are in alignment with the Met Council's goal of being leaders in climate mitigation, adaptation, and resilience. They also imply that compact growth is more conducive to generating a more dynamic and equitable region.

Housing: The cost of meeting the affordable housing needs of the population is lower in compact-growth scenarios than dispersed ones. As such, compact growth promotes a more dynamic and equitable region. However, compact growth might lead to gentrification and displacement of low-income residents in areas where growth pressures make housing more expensive. If not addressed, gentrification and displacement risks can undermine equity in the region.

Water quality: Regarding surface water runoff and quality, each pattern of growth generates different types of pollutants and the results of each scenario depend on the type of pollutant. For instance, dispersed-growth scenarios produce larger reductions in nitrate runoff, while compact-growth scenarios produce lesser amounts of chloride runoff. Regionwide differences in scenario results do not tell the whole story since surface water impacts occur locally on small streams and lakes.

Water supply: In all scenarios, industrial development increases in very highly vulnerable areas of water supply. More industrial development occurs in high-growth scenarios. In dispersed-growth scenarios, the region relies more on groundwater than surface water and this brings the region closer to the sustainable groundwater limits. These scenarios also increase the pressure to use additional private wells in areas not

served by municipal systems. In compact-growth scenarios, the region relies more on existing water systems such as the Mississippi River, which has higher monitoring, treatment, and costs. These scenarios create a higher risk of impact from sudden drought, making the region less resilient.

Wastewater management: In compact-growth scenarios, the region utilizes its existing wastewater infrastructure more efficiently. Dispersed-growth scenarios have the greatest potential to shift resources toward early and unplanned expansion efforts. They also increase the use of septic tanks and rural local treatment plants, which can lead to long-term environmental degradation if they are not appropriately managed. This implies that the region's goal of protecting natural systems in the region may be harder to achieve in dispersed-growth scenarios.

Parks and trails: The amount of growth rather than its location plays a more important role in determining park and trail acquisition, protection, and use outcomes. High-growth scenarios increase the cost of acquisition, constitute a challenge for conservation, and might lead to overuse of parks and trails. In addition, higher growth could imply higher visitation, which might lead to the need for increases in funding appropriations for capital projects and operations and maintenance. The specific challenges and opportunities associated with acquisition, protection, and use of parks and trails depend on where growth happens, in mature or developing parks and trails.

Climate: Compact growth produces lower greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions than dispersed growth, no matter how much the region grows. This is also the case for transportation and residential building energy related GHG emissions. These findings suggest that compact growth patterns would serve the region better in terms of reaching its climate goals.

Natural systems: Dispersed development patterns pose a higher risk of natural systems loss, fragmentation, and species loss than compact patterns. This means that compact-growth patterns are better aligned with the region's goal of protecting and restoring natural systems.

The findings suggest that, compared to dispersed scenarios, compact-growth scenarios offer more opportunities for achieving the MetCouncil's regional goals. However, compact-growth scenarios also pose some challenges, such as gentrification and displacement risk, that can get in the way of achieving these regional goals. These challenges need to be addressed for the region to be sufficiently prepared for all scenarios.

Infrastructure and landscape factors that continue to influence planning choices

As part of the long-range planning process, a number of land use and infrastructure features were identified as important variables that play an integral role in long-range planning. Many of these variables are factors in different parts of the long-range planning process, including factoring into localizing the regional population and employment forecasts, transportation planning within jurisdictions, water planning, housing planning, and others. Local governments may also find these data sources important as they commence their future land use planning and in determining the most optimal location for various uses within their communities.

These factors include considerations across water supply, climate and natural resources, transportation infrastructure, and economic development and employment. As local governments dive into local planning processes, there may be additional localized features that also influence their planning decision-making.

Water considerations

- Metropolitan Region Water Supply Planning Atlas
- Source water protection and pollution prevention
- Drinking Water Supply Management Area and vulnerability ratings
- Wellhead Protection Area and Emergency Response Area
- MPCA Groundwater Contamination Atlas
- County geologic atlases
- Minnesota Hydrogeology Atlas (MHA)
- Groundwater infiltration
- Wastewater Service Area – regional and local, including the Long-Term Sewer Service Area

Climate and natural resources

- Regionally significant ecological areas
- Extreme heat
- Localized flooding
- Tree canopy
- Prime agricultural soils
- Aggregate resources

Transportation and Infrastructure

- Transitways
- Existing and planned station areas
- Freight terminals and related infrastructure

Economic development and employment centers

- Job concentrations
- Manufacturing/distribution locations
- Educational institutions
- Housing affordability
- Redevelopment opportunities

The Local Planning Handbook will provide datasets, tools, and resources to aid local governments as they conduct their local comprehensive planning processes.





SECTION 2: URBAN AND RURAL SERVICE AREAS

The region consists of a range of local characteristics, from the agricultural areas to the urban core, and the Met Council applies different policies tailored to each one. Imagine 2050 sets the visionary strategic direction for incorporating and implementing regional development goals in local comprehensive plans. This direction provides specific land use and development strategies for implementation but provides flexibility for local governments to determine how best to align with regional policies and work toward regional outcomes while still accomplishing local goals. The Met Council recognizes that variation exists in development patterns, neighborhoods, and land uses within each jurisdiction. Through its comprehensive plan, each local government determines how to implement the regional land use and development strategies in a manner that best meets local goals and suits the variation within their jurisdiction.

The Met Council has distinguished between urban and rural land areas with the Metropolitan Urban Service Area (MUSA) as a means to manage land consumption, to deliver efficient regional services, and to preserve valued rural and agricultural areas. Examples of regional services differentiated in this manner include metropolitan wastewater services, the regional highway system, and the regular-route transit system. The Met Council monitors available

land, density of development, and local government growth plans to ensure regional services are provided as requested. The MUSA represents the areas that already have regional wastewater service or are planned to receive service within the planning horizon.

While the Urban Service Area constitutes about half of the land in the region, in 2020 about 93% of the population lived within this area. The Urban Service Area has the highest level of investment in regional and local services, including regional wastewater services. The Urban Service Area includes a diverse set of municipalities ranging from the urban downtowns in Minneapolis and Saint Paul to developing areas planning for staged growth and expansion with varying challenges and development expectations. A variety of residential neighborhoods, housing types, and densities, along with a varying mix of commercial and industrial areas that developed at different times in the region's history, serve different development patterns and needs. The Met Council will continue to provide these regional services and will work with local governments to support growth that best capitalizes on regional systems and infrastructure investments. The Urban Service Area is divided into the following Community Designations:

Urban – Urban Edge – Suburban – Suburban Edge

About half of the seven-county region's land area is within the Rural Service Area. These areas include a range of uses including cultivated farmland, vineyards, hobby farms, gravel mines, woodlands, small towns, scattered and clustered housing, open spaces, and significant expanses of the region's natural systems. Aside from the investments in the regional parks system, investments in regional services are limited in the Rural Service Area. The Met Council strives to protect the vital agricultural lands and natural amenities in the Rural Service Area, and to recognize the desire for rural and small-town residential choices. In the Rural Service Area, the Met Council has discouraged high development densities typically seen in urban and suburban areas to ensure the orderly development of the region, efficient use of regional investments, and to protect agricultural land, natural resources, the quality and quantity of our water sources, and the rural landscape.

It should be noted that some small cities within the Rural Service Area do have local development patterns similar to Urban Service Area communities and are typically geographically surrounded by unincorporated townships. These small cities typically provide local water supply and wastewater services, with a few exceptions that are connected to the Metropolitan Disposal System. These rural cities have historically been included in the Rural Service Area because they provide services to and are integrally connected to the surrounding rural and agricultural areas. The Rural Service Area is divided into the following community designations:

Rural Center - Diversified Rural – Rural Residential - Agricultural

Community Designations

Recognizing the variety of landscapes, in local jurisdictions and across the region, the Met Council sets the strategic direction using community designations and regional land use policies to accommodate regional forecasted growth, respond to development trends, and adapt the regional planning landscape to current challenges. These community designations continue the longstanding history of distinguishing between the Urban and Rural Service Areas while adding policy guidance to form the geographic planning areas that will guide the orderly and economical development of the region. Imagine 2050 builds upon the foundation of community designations by categorizing cities and townships based on defining characteristics essential for effective regional planning (see Figure 2.1).

As part of the regional development guide, community designations work in concert with land use policies to guide growth in areas with urban infrastructure; establish distinct land use policies and density expectations; protect agricultural land and natural amenities; and outline strategies to meet the region's forecasted growth. Community designations are further used to plan and implement regional policies at the local level.

The Met Council assigns a community designation to each city and township based on the prevailing characteristics. Cities and townships along the developing edge of the region may have more than one community designation based on forecasted growth and current or planned development patterns. For example, an area of a township under an orderly annexation agreement with an adjacent Suburban Edge

community would be assigned a Suburban Edge community designation or a township may be split between Rural Residential and Diversified Rural designations based on the existing development pattern. This designation indicates the overall state of current and anticipated development and regional issues faced by that city or township.

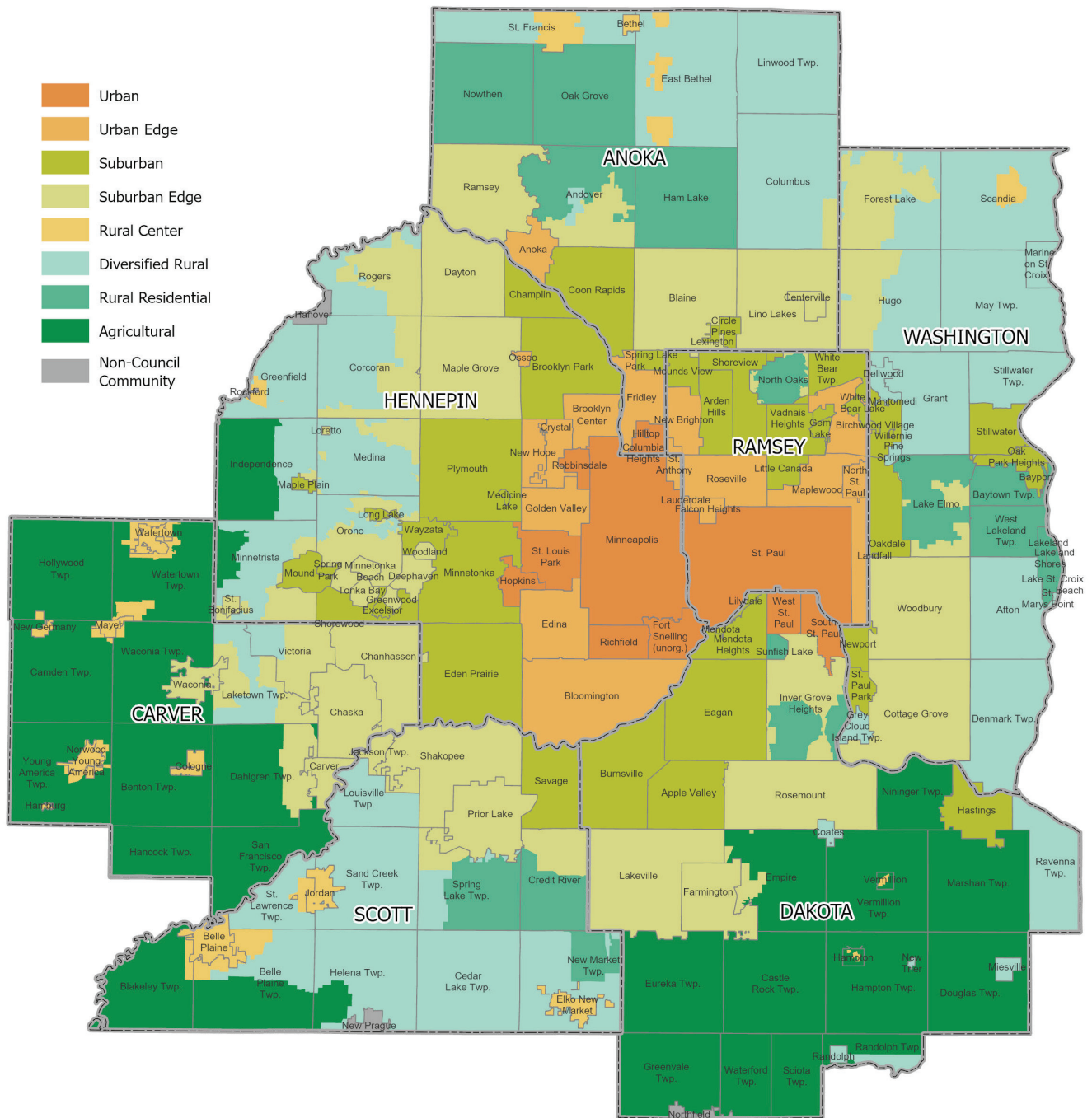
Community designations are also used to guide growth and development to areas that have urban infrastructure in place and capacity to accommodate development or redevelopment, to establish land use and density expectations for different planning areas, and to outline the roles of the Met Council and the individual local governments. Land use policy sets overall densities, by community designation, that planned development patterns of a city or township can be expected to achieve, along with planning considerations that local governments should incorporate into their planning processes.

Regional land use policies are framed around common characteristics of different jurisdictions. These common characteristics are the basis for community designations. These community designations are informed by key variables that guide development toward areas equipped with the necessary urban infrastructure to support forecasted growth. Key variables used to define community designations include:

- **Age of infrastructure:** Acts as a proxy for the infrastructure's overall condition and anticipated service life.
- **Planned residential density:** Extracted from 2040 local comprehensive plans; this variable helps in anticipating future growth patterns.
- **Intersection density:** Serves as an indicator of connectivity, urban form, and accessibility within the city or township.

By incorporating these main variables, Imagine 2050's designations are tailored to implement regional policies effectively at the local level, accommodating projected growth with structure and foresight. Community designations not only support the planning of local policies but also help implement these strategies effectively, accommodating the region's projected growth in a sustainable and efficient manner.

Figure 2.1: 2050 Community Designations



Community Designations Descriptions

Urban

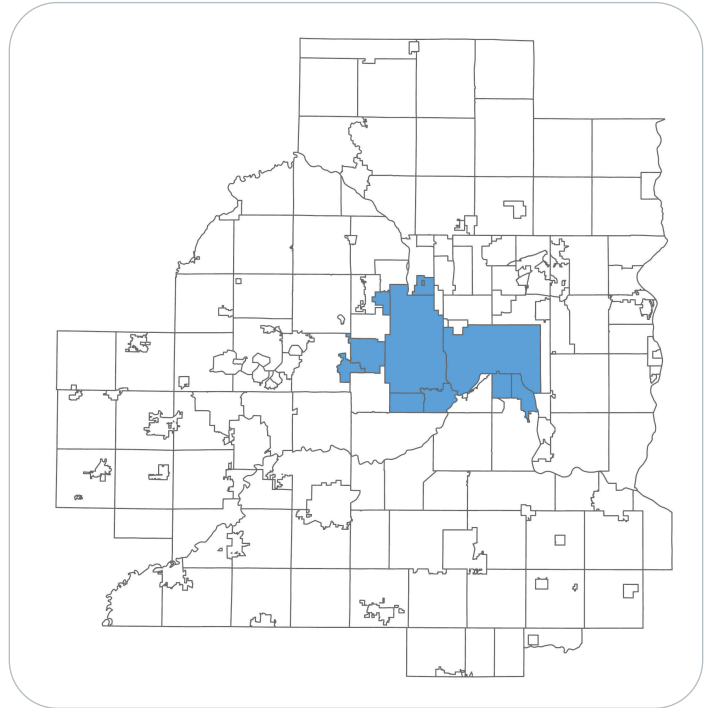
Urban cities represent the densest and most centrally located local governments within the metro area, proven by extensive development that includes mixed-use areas combining residential, commercial, and cultural uses.

Urban cities are fully developed, and most of these cities' growth occurred before or in the decades immediately following World War II. The influence of the streetcar network on their initial development resulted in a development pattern that is less dependent on personal automobiles, and most of their housing stock was built prior to 1965. Due to the age of their building stock and increased prevalence of interconnected neighborhoods which are more conducive to high-frequency transit, they experience the most opportunities for redevelopment, often at significant densities.

At the same time, urban cities also confront significant environmental challenges, including elevated median surface temperatures that often exceed 93 degrees Fahrenheit, necessitating strategies for urban cooling and greening to mitigate urban heat island effects.

Local governments with an Urban community designation include Columbia Heights, Hilltop, Hopkins, Minneapolis, Richfield, Robbinsdale, South St. Paul, St. Louis Park, Saint Paul, and West St. Paul.

Figure 2.2: Urban map



Urban Edge

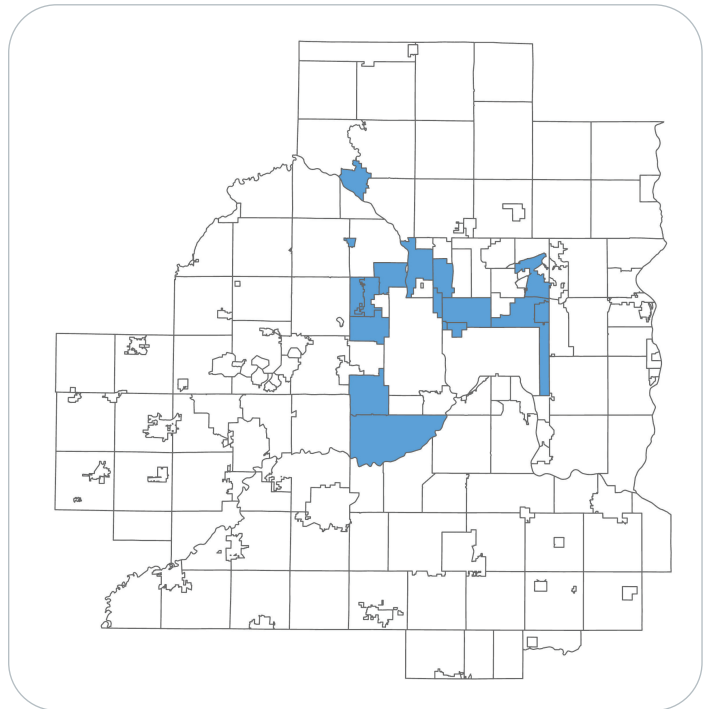
These cities are characterized by growth that occurred primarily during the period between the end of the Second World War and the economic downturn of 1973-1974. These cities, adjacent to the Urban cities, experienced rapid development fueled by an expanding population and the expanding highway system.

Highway accessibility led to many of these cities developing as centers of office, commercial, institutional, and industrial uses, resulting in a high density of jobs. The increased influence of automobiles resulted in a development pattern that reflects an increased emphasis on traffic movement and circulation, which contributes to their transitional character between denser urban cities and more spread-out suburban areas. Similar to Urban areas, the age of their building stock and access to transit – facilitated by their relatively high street connectivity – provides opportunities for redevelopment at high densities.

Urban Edge areas face similar urban challenges, such as managing increased surface temperatures and safeguarding drinking water quality, which requires tailored environmental and infrastructure solutions.

Local governments with an Urban Edge community designation include Anoka, Bloomington, Brooklyn Center, Crystal, Edina, Falcon Heights, Fridley, Golden Valley, Lauderdale, Maplewood, New Brighton, New Hope, North St. Paul, Osseo, Roseville, St. Anthony, and White Bear Lake.

Figure 2.3: Urban edge map



Suburban

Suburban areas are primarily residential, featuring auto-oriented, medium-density housing developments. Many Suburban jurisdictions have a downtown or core area with a more urban development pattern, reflecting their initial phase of development; however, all these municipalities experienced most of their growth in the 1980s and early 1990s. This has resulted in an overall development pattern of expansive subdivisions that prioritize vehicle access and exhibit limited intersection density, which affects the efficiency of public transit. Many Suburban areas also feature park-and-ride facilities to enhance connectivity to larger transit networks, supporting commuter needs.

Unlike Urban and Urban Edge cities, these jurisdictions often include small amounts of undeveloped land, providing opportunities for future development or green space conservation.

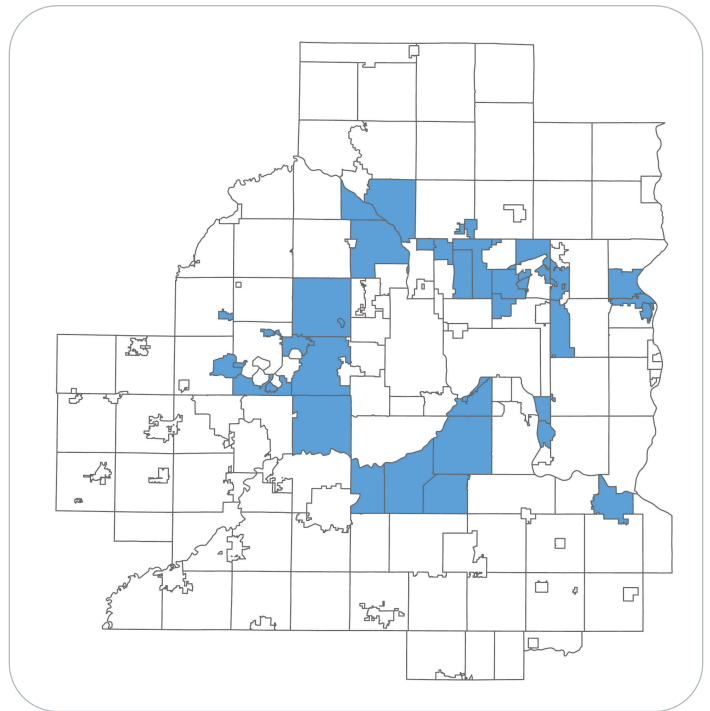
Additionally, as the last of their greenfield areas are developed and their earlier developments age, these municipalities are experiencing opportunities for infill and redevelopment, often at higher densities than the prevailing development pattern.

As these areas continue to grow, they face challenges such as rising surface temperatures and strains on local water supplies, emphasizing the importance of integrated resource management strategies.

Local governments with a Suburban community designation include Apple Valley, Arden Hills, Bayport, Birchwood Village, Brooklyn Park, Burnsville, Champlin, Circle Pines, Coon Rapids, Eagan, Eden Prairie, Excelsior, Gem Lake, Hastings, Landfall, Lexington, Lilydale, Little Canada, Long Lake, Mahtomedi, Maple Plain, Mendota, Mendota Heights, Minnetonka, Mound, Mounds View, Newport, Oak Park Heights, Oakdale, Plymouth, Savage, Shoreview, Shorewood, Spring Lake Park, Spring Park, St. Paul Park, Stillwater, Vadnais Heights, Wayzata, White Bear Township, and Willernie.

** Indicates that there is more than one community designation for this jurisdiction*

Figure 2.4: Suburban map



Suburban Edge

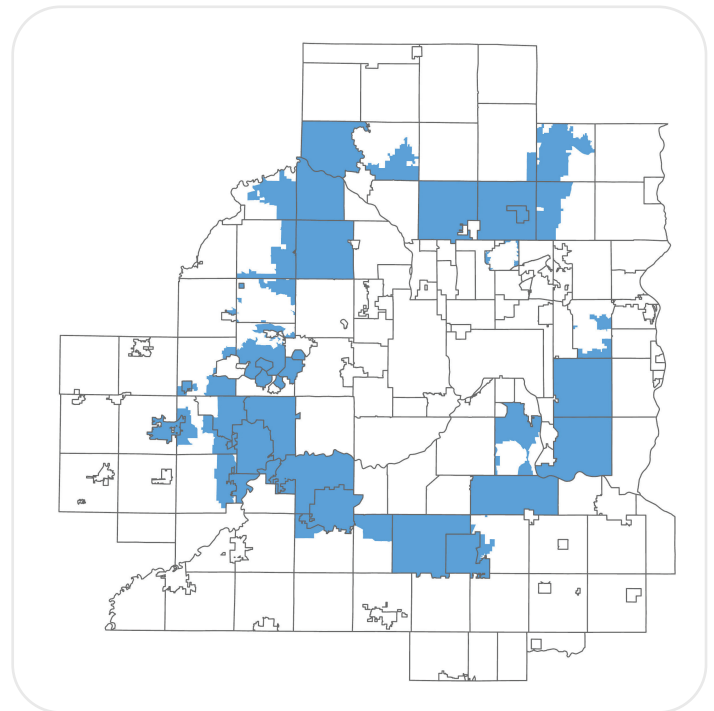
Suburban Edge municipalities are on the edge of the Metropolitan Urban Service Area (MUSA) and primarily developed after the 1990s. While denser downtown or core areas are often present, the predominate development pattern is low- or medium-density residential subdivisions characterized by cul-de-sacs and limited access to major thoroughfares for traffic movement. These areas also feature extensive undeveloped land planned for low to medium residential densities along with some areas guided for industrial and commercial uses, often near highway intersections.

The planning challenge in Suburban Edge areas is to improve street connectivity and integrate sustainable development practices, ensuring that growth and conservation effectively coexist. Suburban Edge cities may have more than one community designation based on forecasted growth and current or planned development patterns. This happens generally when areas in a municipality either have an historic development pattern more appropriate for a different designation or portions of the municipality are not currently planned for future development and are still considered rural or agricultural in nature.

Local governments with a Suburban Edge community designation include Andover,* Blaine, Carver, Centerville, Chanhassen, Chaska, Columbus,* Corcoran,* Cottage Grove, Credit River,* Dayton, Deephaven, Dahlgren Twp.,* Empire,* Farmington, Forest Lake,* Greenwood, Hugo,* Independence,* Inver Grove Heights,* Jackson Twp.,* Lake Elmo,* Lakeville, Laketown Twp.,* Lino Lakes, Loretto, Maple Grove, Medicine Lake, Medina,* Minnetonka Beach, Minnetrista,* North Oaks,* Orono,* Prior Lake, Ramsey, Rogers,* Rosemount, Shakopee, Spring Lake Twp.,* St. Bonifacius, Tonka Bay, Victoria,* Waconia, Woodbury, and Woodland.

** Indicates that there is more than one community designation for this jurisdiction. Areas of townships with this designation are a result of an adopted orderly annexation agreement.*

Figure 2.5: Suburban edge map



Rural Center

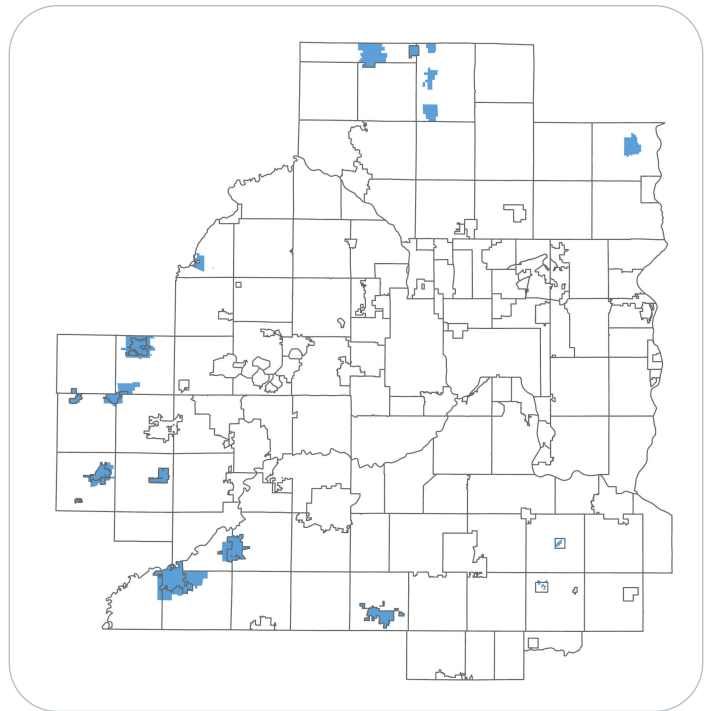
Rural Center cities serve as vital commercial, employment, and residential hubs for the surrounding rural and agricultural areas. Although typically smaller in scale than cities in the urban service area, Rural Centers have similar development patterns. Often these municipalities have a denser historic downtown or core area surrounded by lower density residential subdivisions and include less than 5% prime agricultural land. These cities usually operate their own municipal wastewater treatment services, facilitating denser land uses and provide water supply services to their residents.

Most of these areas were developed prior to 2000 and have relatively higher intersection density, compared to the surrounding areas. Similar to their counterparts in the urban service area, they face the challenge of integrating sustainable development practices to ensure that growth and conservation effectively coexist. Rural Center cities may have more than one community designation due to surrounding township areas that were included in an orderly annexation agreement where growth was planned in previous planning cycles.

Local governments with a Rural Center community designation include Belle Plaine, Bethel, Blakeley Twp.,* Cologne, East Bethel,* Elko New Market, Greenfield,* Hamburg, Hampton,* Jordan, Mayer, New Germany, Norwood Young America, Scandia,* St. Francis,* Vermillion,* Watertown, Watertown Twp.,* and Young America Twp.*

** Indicates that there is more than one community designation for this jurisdiction. Areas of townships with this designation are a result of an adopted orderly annexation agreement.*

Figure 2.6: Rural center map

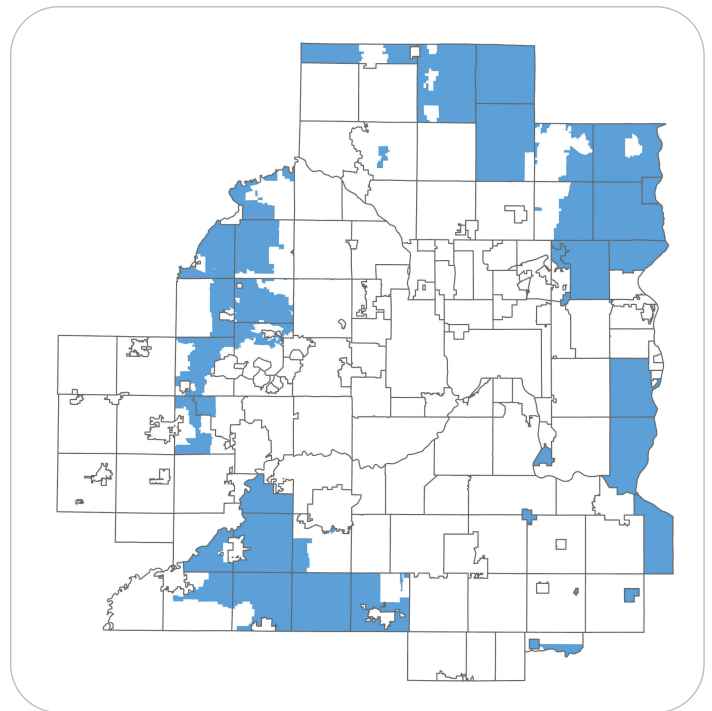


Diversified Rural

These cities and townships include some prime agricultural land and farms, as well as large-lot residential development and clustered housing. Most of these areas were developed just prior to 2000 with lower residential densities. This pattern of development is most conducive for future expansion of urban infrastructure, as some of these areas are within the Met Council's Long-Term Service Area.

Considering the long-term plans for orderly growth of these areas, urbanized levels of residential development is discouraged to avoid premature demand for wastewater expansion, as are subdivisions that would preclude future urbanized development. Diversified Rural cities and townships may have more than one community designation based on forecasted growth and current or planned development patterns.

Figure 2.7: Diversified Rural map



Local governments with a Diversified Rural community designation include Afton, Andover,* Belle Plaine Twp.,* Cedar Lake Twp., Coates, Columbus,* Corcoran,* Dellwood, Denmark Twp., East Bethel,* Forest Lake,* Grant, Greenfield,* Grey Cloud Island Twp., Helena Twp.,* Hugo,* Independence,* Laketown Twp.,* Linwood Twp., Louisville Twp., Marine on St. Croix, May Twp., Medina,* Miesville, Minnetrista,* New Market Twp.,* New Trier, Orono,* Pine Springs, Randolph, Randolph Twp.,* Ravenna Twp., Rogers,* Sand Creek Twp., Scandia,* Spring Lake Twp.,* St. Francis,* St. Lawrence Twp., Stillwater Twp., and Victoria.*

** Indicates that there is more than one community designation for this jurisdiction.*

Rural Residential

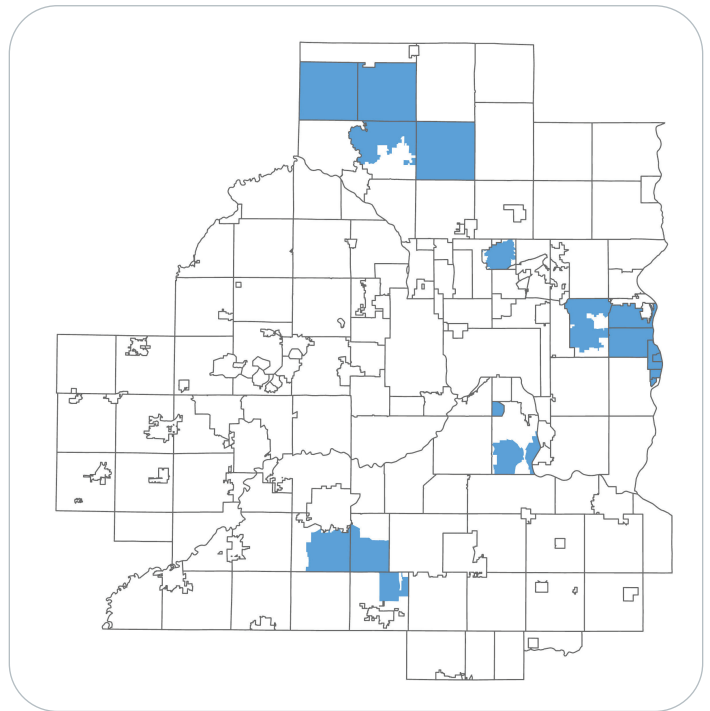
These are areas with larger lot developments which preclude the provision of urban infrastructure, such as regional wastewater service. Rural Residential areas represent historic development patterns of average lots sizes of 1-2.5 units per acre that were mostly built in the 1980s and 1990s. The growth pattern in Rural Residential areas is not aligned with the Met Council's mission of orderly and economical growth, therefore, the Met Council discourages any expansion of this community designation. These cities and townships generally plan to accommodate minimal growth while preserving natural areas as some areas may have environmental limitations to development.

Rural Residential cities and townships often have more than one community designation representing the historic development patterns that exist alongside newer planned development areas. These areas may be anticipating regional sewer service or are part of orderly annexation areas in nearby cities.

Local governments with a Rural Residential community designation include Andover,* Baytown Twp., Credit River,* Ham Lake, Inver Grove Heights,* Lake Elmo,* Lake St. Croix Beach, Lakeland, Lakeland Shores, New Market Twp.,* North Oaks,* Nowthen, Oak Grove, Spring Lake Twp.,* St. Mary's Point, Sunfish Lake, and West Lakeland Twp.

** Indicates that there is more than one community designation for this jurisdiction.*

Figure 2.8: Rural Residential map



Agricultural

Agricultural cities and townships mostly include more than 50% prime agricultural land with large areas dedicated to farming. These areas are planned and zoned for long-term agricultural use, and development that is not compatible with agricultural uses is discouraged. These farming activities support the economic competitiveness of the region and promote local food production. Large portions of these areas are enrolled in the Metropolitan Agricultural Preserves and Green Acres Program.

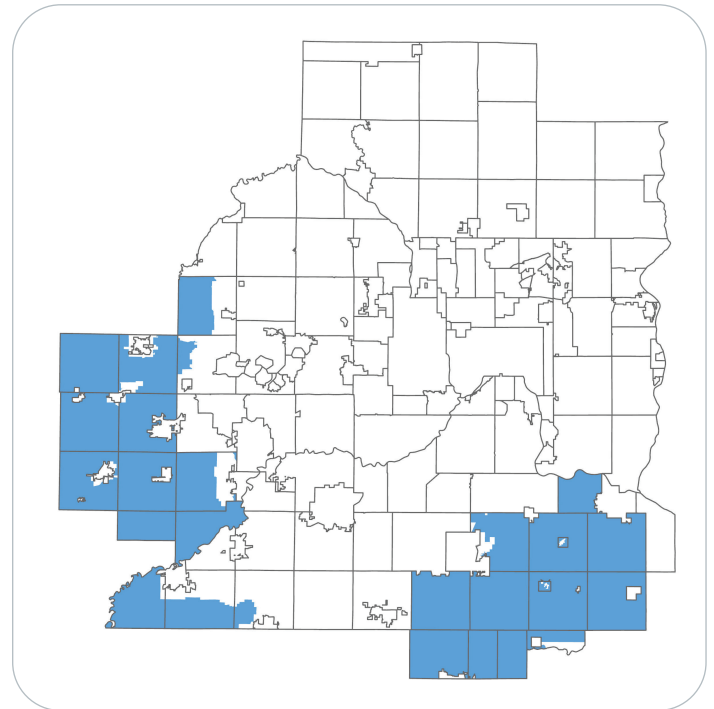
While most Agricultural areas have lower surface temperatures compared to the rest of region, they also include some higher vulnerability drinking-water areas, as well as high potential for groundwater and surface water interaction. Preservation of these agricultural areas and implementing best management practices in farming operation is important for overall water quality improvement.

Agricultural cities and townships often have more than one community designation representing the existing patterns of development within and nearby. Some jurisdictions have orderly annexation agreements with adjacent cities and some represent the transition from areas with large agricultural production to smaller farms or homesteads.

Local governments with an Agricultural community designation include Belle Plaine Twp.,* Benton Twp., Blakeley Twp., Camden Twp., Castle Rock Twp., Dahlgren Twp., Douglas Twp., Empire,* Eureka Twp., Greenvale Twp., Hampton,* Hampton Twp., Hancock Twp., Helena Twp.,* Hollywood Twp., Independence,* Marshan Twp., Minnetrista,* Nininger Twp., Randolph Twp.,* San Francisco Twp., Sciota Twp., Vermillion,* Vermillion Twp., Waconia Twp.,* Waterford Twp., Watertown Twp.,* and Young America Twp.

** Indicates that there is more than one community designation for this jurisdiction.*

Figure 2.9: Agricultural map







SECTION 3: LAND USE OBJECTIVES, POLICIES, AND ACTIONS

Roles and responsibilities

Imagine 2050 identifies a regional vision, four core values, and five overarching goals, as well as objectives, policies, and actions specific to the areas of housing, land use, regional parks and trails, transportation, and water. Within each subject area, the policies and actions include a mix of items that local governments are either encouraged to address in planning and practice or are required to implement or adopt in some manner. After each policy and action statement, there is an identifier of (Met Council) or (Local Government). These tags are intended to indicate the party that is responsible for implementing the activity.

Where there are identifiers of (Met Council/Local Government), this indicates that both have a role to play in implementation. In most cases, the role should be evident and in other cases, the language further elaborates on the expectation. Where there may be questions, the Local Planning Handbook will identify specific comprehensive planning requirements for each jurisdiction. At any time, Sector Representatives are also available to provide guidance. Additional planning resources, described in the Implementation section, help local governments address comprehensive planning expectations.

The land use objectives

The land use objectives, policies, and actions in this chapter balance both urban and rural characteristics of the region to create the most healthy, sustainable, and welcoming environment for the people in this region. The land use objectives in this chapter are intended to support the regional vision and achieve the 2050 goals while addressing key land use and regional growth issues. Each objective should achieve more than one regional goal and the land use direction in this chapter sets the stage for development throughout the region. Crafted with both an equity and environmental justice focus, the land use objectives, policies, and actions center the voices of community members in the same measure as stakeholders like local governments and partners like the American Indian Advisory Council. Outcomes for land use policy will be measured with both quantitative and qualitative efforts.

To achieve the five cross-cutting regional goals established in Imagine 2050, the Met Council identifies eight land use objectives with accompanying land use policies and actions for both local governments and the Met Council to implement. Each objective has specific policies and actions and while nested under a specific objective, in practice they serve multiple purposes. Land use

objectives impact all planning and policy areas and serve to guide how growth and development occur in the region.

The land use objectives are:

- 1. Respect the relationship with land and water as a foundation for regional growth.**
- 2. Maximize opportunities for growth in places well-served by transit, bicycle, and pedestrian infrastructure.**
- 3. Establish vibrant, inclusive, connected, and safe communities for people to live, work, and recreate in.**
- 4. Prioritize land use and development activities that protect, restore, and enhance natural systems at all scales.**
- 5. Ensure that people in all types of communities find housing opportunities that align with their needs.**
- 6. Remedy past and present discriminatory land use practices.**
- 7. Implement land use and development practices that reduce greenhouse gas emissions, embed climate adaptation, and create resilient communities.**
- 8. Support the economic well-being of our region and its communities.**

As a policy, land use is interrelated with all aspects of the built form and the people that live and move within the region. Alignment of land use with housing, transportation, parks, natural systems, water, climate mitigation and adaptation, and more is critical to achieving regional goals of Imagine 2050. One objective or policy alone cannot achieve the outcomes the people of this region need from the regional development guide. Instead, a comprehensive approach to address all the objectives will set the stage for people's individual success. While an objective may appear to directly support some of the regional goals more than others, all the land use objectives, policies, and actions are interrelated.

Each of the following land use objectives applies to all local governments, albeit application in urban and rural areas will and must look different to be successful. Community Designations will be used to refine requirements for individual cities, townships, and counties. The Local Planning Handbook, the PlanIt program, Sector Representatives, and a full suite of technical assistance tools will provide guidance and resources to help local governments implement specific local planning expectations.



Objective 1: Respect the relationship with land and water as a foundation for regional growth.

Land and water are essential for sustaining all life. We recognize that planning for the region is about more than accommodating a growing human population, but also about respecting the integrity and needs of all living beings in the region. This approach to growth management emphasizes the importance of stewardship and interconnectedness. By acknowledging and respecting this connection, a broad and shared understanding of the impact humans have on the environment and all living beings within it can change the relationship between development, people, and the environment. Development doesn't have to disturb or disrupt but instead can care for and protect the region's assets, both natural and human.

To achieve this balance, regional growth requires an orderly and efficient approach to land development to meet evolving and expanding needs. A development pattern that reduces the amount of land used to accommodate growth supports this outcome by leveraging the region's existing resources and limiting impacts to existing habitats. This includes encouraging redevelopment, infill, and adaptive reuse of existing buildings as a part of the development process. These land use patterns exist throughout the region in cities and townships of all sizes.

Directing growth within local governments to areas where infrastructure already exists promotes efficient use of available infrastructure capacity in the urban and rural service areas and reduces the need for infrastructure expansion. The concentration of growth in existing service areas also prevents premature development of agricultural areas and destruction of natural systems. Managing growth in this manner allows our region to preserve its agricultural economy and rural lifestyles while accommodating the needs of residents and businesses.

Policies (P) and Actions (A)

Policy 1.

Incorporate Indigenous approaches, values, and practices in management of land and water sources. Sovereignty of Tribal Nations requires a government-to-government relationship, which compels the Met Council to take a leadership role in elevating the needs and contributions of American Indian community members in the region. Actions that integrate Indigenous perspectives towards caring for the land, water, and living beings are intentional and attempt to alleviate some of the historic harms that American Indians continue to experience. (Met Council)

A1.1

Adopt regional land management guidelines co-created with American Indian community partners to share with local governments and interested partners as a resource for planning purposes and implementation in areas where there may be local discretion or desire to use such tools. Resources at the regional scale

can help provide consistent, clear guidance to a large area of Dakota land and reduce the burden on small American Indian community organizations overtaxed with many individual requests to engage with multiple governments, organizations, or community groups. (Met Council)

A1.2

Establish an American Indian Advisory Council with authority and dedicated resources to implement land management guidelines in areas of Met Council influence or ownership. This Advisory Council would need to be established by the Met Council and participants with a mutually agreed upon structure, purpose, and role in the Met Council's decision-making process. This Advisory Council is intended to focus on Imagine 2050 implementation, issues of regional importance, and does not interact with or assume responsibilities of others in established review of cultural or archeological assets. (Met Council)

A1.3

Provide educational resources for non-native populations about American Indian practices as it relates to caring for the land and water. (Met Council)

A1.4

Encourage more broad application of American Indian land and water management practices at the individual, neighborhood, community, and regional level. (Met Council/Local Government)

Policy 2.

Accommodate orderly and economical regional growth through efficient land use practices to reduce the cost of infrastructure expansion and service improvements. (Met Council/Local Government)

A2.1

Promote more compact development in areas with existing infrastructure. Infrastructure investments at all scales, in all community types, need to be planned for a more compact development pattern. Compact development occurs in all areas with existing infrastructure, from rural downtowns to the growing suburban areas to the most densely developed urban neighborhoods. Planning for compact development patterns at all scales maximizes the benefits of investment, mitigates impacts of climate change, and builds localized resilience. (Met Council/Local Government)

A2.2

Using a rolling land supply analysis, the Met Council will evaluate requests to connect a new municipality outside of the Met Council's long-term sewer service area – or a new area within an already served municipality – to the regional wastewater system. The evaluation will be based on the regional need for additional land to accommodate growth and local development trends. Identifying a 20-year rolling land supply ensures that there is sufficient land within the planned Metropolitan Urban Service Area (MUSA) to accommodate the region's forecasted growth without having an oversupply that leads to premature

infrastructure investments. This evaluation helps prevent inadvertent restriction of land supply that can drive up land prices, while also carefully evaluating MUSA expansion requests within a local jurisdiction and across the region. Analysis shows that there is more than adequate land supply within the current MUSA boundary to accommodate the 2050 regional growth forecasts. (Met Council)

To ensure efficient and cost-effective growth management, the Met Council standard criteria for MUSA expansion where growth had not previously been planned at a regional or local scale, is described herein. The Met Council will consider the following criteria:

1. Requests must meet system conformance requirements and maintain consistency with regional policies and goals.
2. Proposed additions must demonstrate a need for additional land supply, including the need for a change to adopted forecasts. The Met Council will review requests to ensure a 20-year rolling land supply considering both regional and local market demand.
3. For local governments already served by regional wastewater services, planned sewer-serviced densities must be consistent with regional density policy for the applicable community designation, including existing planned densities and the planned densities for the new area to be served.
4. Any previous conditions related to Met Council authorization of a comprehensive plan or plan amendments must be fulfilled and program participation (Plat Monitoring Program, building permit survey, etc.) must be current and complete.
5. Past performance must meet density expectations. The Met Council will consider a shorter look-back period for performance and/or measure performance against rules in place at the time.
6. When calculating land capacity, the following will be excluded: publicly protected areas, water bodies, wetlands, steep slopes, areas with limited depth to bedrock, depth to water table, and areas protected by public ownership/easement.

A2.3

Residential density requirements are based on adopted community designations for both the rural and urban services areas (see community designations section). Local governments and land within the MUSA receive a higher level of regional services and investments than those in the rural service area, such as regional wastewater services, regional highways, transit service, and programs that support redevelopment. In return, the Met Council expects jurisdictions in the MUSA to plan for and build the higher levels of development that economically support those regional services. Compact development also reduces the pressure on agricultural land areas and decreases the impact of development on natural systems, which helps manage the region's land supply consistently and more effectively.

In addition, density requirements are necessary planning tools to meet the legislative requirement for net zero greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2050 as well as the regional goal to lead in addressing climate change.

While not the only tool needed to achieve the legislative requirement, every tool available must be used. Compact development has been shown to lower GHG emissions, irrespective of the development trajectory, which is crucial in meeting the state's new GHG reduction targets and regional climate goals.

The Met Council analyzed current and projected development densities across local governments within the MUSA. The conclusions from the density analysis highlight differences between actual developed densities that exist in the built environment and planned minimum densities that are authorized as part of local comprehensive plans. Additional information on the methodology, analysis, and possible policy and planning approaches that were assessed can be referenced in the Density Analysis for Imagine 2050.

The overall density requirements for both the Urban and Rural Service Areas based on the adopted community designations must be reflected in the local comprehensive plan as outlined in the table below. (Local Government)

Table 3.1: Overall Density expectations by community designation and service area

Metropolitan Urban Service Areas Minimum Average Net Density	
Urban	25 units per acre
Urban Edge	14 units per acre
Suburban	7 units per acre
Suburban Edge	3.5 units per acre

Rural Service Area Maximum Allowed Density, except Rural Centers	
Rural Center	3 units per acre minimum
Rural Residential	1-2.5 acre lots existing, 1 unit/10 acres where possible
Diversified Rural	4 units per 40 acres
Agricultural	1 unit per 40 acres

Average minimum and maximum densities apply to all areas guided to support forecasted growth within the planning period.

The Met Council will implement the following standards for regional density policy as part of the local comprehensive plan review process:

1. Plan for the overall minimum average net residential density expectations across all land within the city or township guided to support forecasted growth within the planning period. (Local Government)
2. Each local government determines how and where density is guided consistent with regional policies. Setting minimum average densities for new development provides municipalities with the flexibility to determine which areas are best suited for higher or lower density development under the framework of meeting that overall minimum on available developable lands. (Local Government)

3. Measure minimum net density by taking the minimum number of planned housing units and dividing by the net acreage. Net acreage does not include land covered by wetlands, water bodies, public parks and trails, public open space, arterial road rights-of-way, and other undevelopable acres identified in or protected by local ordinances, such as steep slopes. This applies to local governments within the MUSA and Rural Center communities. (Local Government)
4. Plan for forecasted growth and land supply by decade in local comprehensive plans, meeting the community designation minimum density requirements within each planning decade. (Local Government)
5. The Met Council will evaluate the practical feasibility of demand and development to ensure that both the intensity (density range) and location of planned developments are practical as part of comprehensive plan and plan amendment review. Local governments need to plan land uses that are realistically marketable within the planning period, focusing on plausibility and long-term viability. This helps prevent the overestimation of development outcomes, thereby reducing the risk of underutilized infrastructure, inefficient land management, and implausible planned densities. This differentiates between what is merely allowed and what is plausible, providing a realistic framework for land use planning. (Met Council/Local Government)
6. In the Rural Service Area, the Met Council discourages higher development densities to ensure the orderly development of the region, promote the efficient use of regional investments, and protect agricultural land, water resources, and the rural landscape. At the region's developing edge, some local governments are split between the Urban Service Area and the Rural Service Area. All jurisdictions in the Rural Service Area are expected to set maximum allowable densities, except Rural Centers. (Met Council/Local Government)
7. In the Rural Service Area, the development pattern in Rural Residential community designations reflects both historic large lot subdivisions and areas with environmental limitations to development. This effectively precludes provision of urbanized infrastructure in an effective, connected, and efficient manner and in some cases increases the potential for damage to the environment. These areas need to accommodate minimal growth while protecting natural areas, water quality and quantity, and ensuring sufficient public infrastructure. Expansion of the Rural Residential community designation is inconsistent with regional goals and objectives and considered a departure from regional system plans. (Met Council)
8. Update and adopt administrative guidelines which offer a balanced and flexible approach to local implementation of land use and density policies, while maintaining conformance with regional system plans and consistency with Met Council policies. (Met Council)

As part of the administrative guidelines review and the implementation work plan, the Met Council will:

- Prioritize collaboration with local government partners and regional stakeholders to best meet both regional goals and local needs.

- Evaluate the need for updates to current administrative guidelines including the MUSA Implementation Guidelines and Flexible Development Guidelines to align with regional goals and to effectively advance the policies in Imagine 2050.
- Evaluate the net residential density calculations guidance and assess the implications of excluding stormwater management areas, permanent public easements, and others.
- Update the Plat Monitoring Program to better reflect more recent development patterns by examining a lookback period that is not dependent on when the program was initiated in 2000, or when participation in the program began.
- Consider how flexibility for infill and redevelopments may be accommodated based on their different infrastructure needs and ability to meet different regional goals.
- Consider positive past planning outcomes and innovative local initiatives that have supported regional goals including existing development patterns, adopted plans and ordinances, as well as other relevant data.
- Provide the necessary tools, resources, and technical assistance to help local governments meet these planning expectations.

A2.4

Guide an adequate supply of land at the following appropriate minimum densities to meet their allocation of the regional Future Affordable Housing Need. This applies to local governments with forecasted sewer service. Refer to section 4 of the Housing Policy Chapter on Land Guided for Affordable Housing for more information. (Local Government)

Table 3.2: Future affordable housing need minimum density requirements

Local Options	Minimum density requirement
Option 1	Guide sufficient land at a minimum density of 10 units/acre to meet the city or township's total Future Need.
Option 2	Guide sufficient land at a minimum density of 12 units/acre to meet the city or township's Future Need for 30% AMI or less and a minimum density of 8 units per acre to meet the Future Need at 31-60% AMI.

A2.5

Focus local-level growth near high-frequency transit service and station areas, to leverage infrastructure investments, support transit ridership, and encourage compact and vibrant mixed-use, walkable areas. Housing is a vital element of a transit-supportive land use mix, and average residential density is a common metric employed in transit-oriented development plans regionally and nationally. The appropriate scale of residential density around stations varies by community designation and transit mode. Residential development around station areas, existing and planned, accounts for nearly half of all multifamily residential development in the region. Between 2009 and 2023, new residential development around station areas

frequently ranged from 30 to 40 units per acre, with higher average densities at stations in the urban areas. (Met Council/Local Government)

1. Jurisdictions with transit investments need to meet higher average minimum densities within station areas, depending on the transit type. The average minimum density requirements for all areas planned to accommodate forecasted growth for each transit type and geography by community designation are in the table below. (Local Government)
2. Residential density is measured as an average of all new residential development and redevelopment in the station areas, calculated on the basis of net developable acres. The average provides flexibility for individual jurisdictions to plan for a range of residential types and densities, mixed with other uses in the station areas. (Met Council/Local Government)

Table 3.3: Transit station area minimum density requirements by community designation, mode, and geography

Transit Type	Geography	Urban Min. Required	Urban Edge Min. Required	Suburban Min. Required	Suburban Edge Min. Required
Light Rail	1/2-mile radius	50	35	30	25
Dedicated BRT / Commuter Rail	1/2-mile radius	50	30	25	20
Highway BRT	1/2-mile radius	30	25	20	15
Arterial BRT	1/4-mile radius	30	25	20	15
Modern Streetcar	1/4-mile along	30	25	20	15
High Frequency Bus	1/4-mile along	25	15	10	10

Average minimum densities apply to all areas guided to support forecasted growth within the planning period.

A2.6

Communities within the MUSA need to allow for more than one housing type in land use categories with residential uses. To accommodate this, residential densities for land use categories need to provide a wide enough range of densities so that more than one housing type can be developed within individual land use categories. Single-use residential districts, particularly at the lower-density end, limit the diversity of housing within the region and prevent more efficient use of land. Also, single-family residential districts occupy more land than any other use within the Urban Service Area. Limiting such a large land supply to one housing product impacts land use efficiency, diversity of housing stock within neighborhoods and across the region, and availability of options for residents to stay within the community of their choice as their needs and abilities change. (Local Government)

A2.7

Encourage orderly annexation agreements (OAAs) between cities and adjacent townships to encourage planned and orderly development in rural areas, where applicable. (Met Council/Local Government)

1. Local governments may only plan for areas within their municipal boundaries (Minn. Stats. 462.353, subd. 1 and 462.357, subd. 1) unless an orderly annexation agreement authorizes another jurisdiction to assume planning authority. Planning to use the annexation-by-ordinance process does not convey long-term planning authority and will not be considered as part of comprehensive plan review. As annexations-by-ordinance occur, a comprehensive plan amendment should be submitted to integrate new growth areas into the local plan and update land uses, forecasts, and other changes as needed. Local planning that encompasses areas outside of jurisdictional authority will not be considered as part of the Met Council's review and authorization of local comprehensive plans. (Local Government)
2. Orderly annexation agreements must encompass the planning horizon and identify needed updates that occur within the planning period. The Met Council will evaluate the land capacity to accommodate forecasted growth in the OAA area. If an adopted OAA terminates prior to the end of the planning horizon, additional land supply within the jurisdictional authority of the local government may need to be identified to accommodate any additional forecasted growth or the Met Council may consider a forecast adjustment. Plan authorization may only apply to timelines permitted within the orderly annexation agreement. (Met Council)
3. The Met Council supports a cooperative, orderly planning approach that protects the long-term viability of growth and development of Rural Center communities. Where appropriate and requested, the Met Council may act as a convener between jurisdictions to help facilitate discussion and resolution of annexation-related issues. (Met Council)
4. Unincorporated areas surrounding Rural Centers, and some Suburban Edge communities, guided by the current local government jurisdiction for future urban expansion should not encourage a development pattern that precludes the extension of future urban services. Even if a particular land use may be acceptable in the Rural Service Area from a regional perspective, the Met Council does not encourage land uses or development that would be incompatible with plans of adjacent jurisdictions.
5. Where the extension of long-term regional sewer service may be under consideration or planning, the Met Council will evaluate the overall impact of interim uses in rural and agricultural areas to ensure conformance with regional system plans and avoid departures from those plans. (Met Council)

Policy 3.

Protect rural and agricultural areas from premature development and retain the ability to provide urban services based on regional system plans and long-term needs. (Met Council/Local Government)

A3.1

Promote enrollment in the Metropolitan Agricultural Preserves Program including supporting legislative changes to strengthen the program. Promote enrollment in the Green Acres Program for properties not enrolled in the Metropolitan Agricultural Preserves Program. (Met Council)

A3.2

Encourage preservation of land identified as prime farmland or farmland of statewide importance from uses other than agricultural production and its ancillary uses. (Met Council/Local Government)

A3.3

Encourage promulgation of right-to-farm policies and ordinances at the local level. (Met Council/Local Government)

A3.4

Support the growth of urban agriculture by encouraging the use of vacant and underutilized parcels for this purpose and by providing model ordinances that promote urban agriculture. (Met Council/Local Government)

1. Encourage creation of small (less than 40 acres) farms within Diversified Rural communities. (Met Council/Local Government)
2. Support changes to the definition of “farm” to expand benefits to smaller (less than 10 acres) farmsteads. (Met Council)
3. Support changes to the building code to reduce the barriers for constructing hoopouses and similar agricultural structures on nonfarm properties. (Met Council)
4. Encourage sustainable models for shared long-term agricultural uses (for example, incubator farms, community farms). (Met Council/Local Government)

A3.5

Evaluate rural development patterns and proposals in the Long-Term Sewer Service Area for future economical expansion of regional service. (Met Council)

Policy 4.

Encourage redevelopment, infill, and adaptive reuse as part of development priorities. (Met Council/Local Government)

A4.1

Establish a redevelopment monitoring program using existing surveys to obtain information through streamlined data collection efforts. (Met Council)

A4.2

Evaluate building permit survey information that may be necessary to inform frequency and success of adaptive reuse of buildings. (Met Council)

A4.3

Support funding and incentives for redevelopment projects, environmental remediation, cleanup efforts and adaptive reuse to address the finance gaps that are prevalent in these efforts. (Met Council)

A4.4

Encourage mitigation of the impact to natural systems as redevelopment and infill occur. (Met Council/Local Government)

A4.5

Provide technical support as part of established grant programs to support redevelopment, infill, and adaptive reuse projects. (Met Council/Local Government)

1. Support repurposing existing vacant or underutilized buildings. (Local Government)
2. Explore opportunities to incentivize adaptive reuse of existing buildings, such as repurposing vacant schools or commercial properties into affordable or senior housing developments. (Met Council/Local Government)

A4.6

Consider opportunities to streamline local development review processes, programs, and incentives that may help realize adaptive reuse for affordable or senior housing developments. This can include identifying and proactively completing initial due diligence work on properties that could be suitable for adaptive reuse. (Local Government)

A4.7

Consider updates to land use guidance and regulations that incentivize de-paving in infill and redevelopment opportunities. (Local Government)

Policy 5.

Direct growth away from sensitive ecosystems and water sources to prioritize protection of natural systems. Responsible management of growth can include practices which respect and value the region's ecological assets. Considerations as to where and how development occurs can positively impact ecological health and accommodate development. Areas with high biodiversity or ecological significance require sensible land use approaches to development. The Met Council promotes development and land use stewardship that integrates natural systems in design and implementation. (Met Council/Local Government)

A5.1

Prevent groundwater contamination from development, especially in vulnerable Drinking Water Supply Management Areas. (Local Government)

A5.2

Community-wide growth shall consider water supply constraints in the management of growth and development across the region. (Met Council)

A5.3

Develop regionally supported best practices to protect vulnerable regional priority waters and aquifers from development and restore water quality as part of development practices. (Met Council)

A5.4

Assess development pressures that threaten terrestrial habitats, such as remnant prairie and oak savanna. (Met Council)

A5.5

Develop regionally supported best practices to direct growth away from significant terrestrial habitats and incorporate habitat restoration into development processes. (Met Council)

A5.6

Local water supply plans, as part of the local comprehensive plan, shall adequately demonstrate availability of clean, safe drinking water in areas where forecasted growth will be accommodated. (Local Government)

1. Amendments to local water supply plans are needed when changes exceed the Met Council-adopted threshold for change. Guidelines will be established for comprehensive plan amendments after the 2050 plan reviews. (Met Council)

A5.7

Encourage development design using best management practices for stormwater runoff from the site, including natural areas protection and use of green stormwater infrastructure, to protect any drinking water sources and surface water where sites may drain. (Met Council/Local Government)

A5.8

Encourage cross-jurisdictional conversations related to water and terrestrial habitats to continue on a regular basis in a manner which includes all relevant partners including community development/planning staff as well as engineers and public works staff. (Met Council)

Policy 6.

In staging areas for new development, local governments need to plan for aggregate resource extraction prior to development where viable deposits remain accessible, as mapped in Minnesota Geological Survey Information Circular No. 46 (Minn. Stat. 473.859). Aggregate resources are needed not only for construction of new roads and buildings but also maintenance and repair. Accessing these resources locally reduces the costs for local construction projects compared to shipping resources in from outside of the region. (Local Government)

A6.1

Local governments with accessible, viable aggregate deposits in undeveloped areas must state their goals, intentions, and priorities concerning these resources as required by Minn. Stat. §473.859. (Local Government)

A6.2

Where regionally significant ecological areas or other locally protected natural areas overlay aggregate deposits, the Met Council prioritizes preservation of natural systems and protection of highly vulnerable Drinking Water Supply Management Areas over aggregate extraction. (Met Council)

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2025





Objective 2: Maximize opportunities for growth in places well-served by transit, bicycle, and pedestrian infrastructure.

Land use and transportation are closely interrelated – changes in land use affect transportation; changes in transportation affect how land can be used. Transportation systems connect people to housing, work, services, and recreation opportunities. The region is well-served by an existing system of extensive roadways that provide connections for people choosing or able to use a personal vehicle. A transportation system that is well connected with uses and services close to an individual's daily needs provides opportunities for choices in travel options that can help to decrease driving. Both planning and investment need to be coordinated to ensure thoughtful growth and development while continuing to serve people's mobility needs throughout the region.

The region also has a robust network of existing and planned regional transit, bicycle, and walking/rolling infrastructure responding to increasingly diverse travel preferences and needs. Many residents use these options for some or all of their daily travel needs due to cost, ability, health goals, climate concerns, or preference. Additional housing, jobs, and services in places that support these travel modes can have many benefits, including:

- Increased accessibility of the region for those without access to a personal vehicle.
- Reduced need for vehicle trips and/or their cost and duration.
- Reduced GHG emissions related to transportation and land use.
- Efficacy of regional investment in regional transit/bicycling infrastructure.
- Increased positive health outcomes due to greater physical activity.

Places well-served by transit, bicycle, and pedestrian infrastructure can be identified and prioritized in several ways. Comprehensive plans and other local plans often call out these places specifically. Transit market areas, an analysis maintained at the Met Council, identifies areas in the region with density, walkability, and levels of car ownership that could support various levels of transit service. Population analysis such as age (youth/older adults), ability, income, and personal preferences can also identify areas with likely non-automobile-using residents.

Local governments in the region can support, reinforce and create these areas through planning and implementation that encourages additional density around activity centers and along corridors, a greater mix of uses, and improvement to the walkability and livability of the area. A critical piece of local planning is the development of interconnected local street and pedestrian networks that provide more opportunities to support travel by modes other than a car. The design of the networks, the street layout, the relationship with the surrounding land uses, and the space for people to travel without a car is important in creating effective and safe places for people.

Policies (P) and Actions (A)

Policy 7.

Maximize opportunities for residential growth and supportive commercial growth in areas with mixed land uses that support walking, rolling, biking and transit. (Met Council/Local Government)

A7.1

Focus planned residential and commercial development near available and planned transportation and transit infrastructure. (Local Government)

A7.2

Develop and implement transit-oriented development (TOD) policies and design at all stages of development (site plan, subdivision, long-range plan). (Local Government)

A7.3

Plan higher-density residential developments around public transportation hubs and corridors. (Local Government)

A7.4

Provide technical assistance for retrofitting/transitioning from one transit market area to another. (Met Council)

A7.5

Provide technical resources related to accommodating additional density, reducing parking and parking impacts, travel demand management (TDM), placemaking/placekeeping, pedestrian networks, and related considerations. (Met Council)

Policy 8.

Plan auto- or truck-oriented growth, such as industrial, shipping, or warehousing development, around existing infrastructure availability, such as highways, rail, waterways, airports, water supply, and wastewater services to minimize impacts on pedestrian/bike/transit areas. (Met Council/Local Government)

A8.1

Analyze and coordinate the effects of land uses and transportation infrastructure on each other at all scales of development. (Met Council/Local Government)

Policy 9

Plan for and build an interconnected system of vehicular, pedestrian, bicycle, and transit infrastructure that provides comfortable use for all modes and users. (Met Council/Local Government)

A9.1

Invest in local efforts to encourage growth in locations that support improved access, such as strategic land acquisitions, infrastructure investments, and community/developer engagement. (Met Council)

A9.2

Identify regional, state, and federal funding sources to pair with local efforts to access funding through programs like the Regional Solicitation for transportation funding, regional trail acquisition and development funding, federal programs, and new opportunities as they become available. (Met Council)

A9.3

Explore the inclusion of market studies in local implementation strategies and priorities. (Local Government)

A9.4

Address network connectivity gaps to improve accessibility and personal safety. (Met Council/Local Government)

A9.5

Pursue partnerships to collaborate on funding programs that enhance biking, walking, and rolling access to centers of economic activity. (Met Council/Local Government)

A9.6

Explore opportunities to adjust parking requirements to reduce underutilized parking infrastructure, lower development costs, encourage alternative modes of transportation, improve water quality through reduced runoff, and increase land availability for other uses. (Local Government)

Policy 10

Support regional centers of economic activity through pollution cleanup, preservation, accessibility improvements, land acquisition for public investment and other planning support. (Met Council/Local Government)

A10.1

Explore Met Council funding opportunities to support investments in regional centers, through Livable Communities programs, water quality grant programs, transportation funding, or housing investments as applicable. (Local Government)

Policy 11

Prioritize the preservation, restoration, and enhancement of environmental and natural systems near transportation features and areas where transit is available. (Met Council/Local Government)

A11.1

Integrate environmental and natural features in road rights-of-way, along highways and corridors, and other public transportation features, including near transit where available. (Met Council/Local Government)

A11.2

Integrate planning for nonmotorized access to transit locations, neighborhoods, employment centers, and parks through various regional, state, and federal funding sources. (Met Council/Local Government)

A11.3

Leverage the development process to integrate natural features that can provide bicycle and pedestrian protections as part of planning for local roads, intersections, connections, trails, sidewalks, and bikeways. (Met Council/Local Government)

A11.4

Coordinate infrastructure planning efforts to minimize disruptions to habitat connectivity, integrating wildlife crossings into transportation and utility projects. (Met Council/Local Government)





Objective 3: Establish vibrant, inclusive, connected, and safe communities for people to live, work, and recreate in.

The experiences people have of the places where they live, work, and recreate reflect the livability of the region. Feelings of safety and connection in one's community promote a sense of belonging and ownership. A mix of uses makes it possible for residents to take advantage of opportunities close to home, like parks and shopping. Planning for future growth presents the opportunity to design places where new and existing residents can gather and connect while meeting their daily needs. Communities can use public spaces to celebrate local culture and history through events that bring together people from different backgrounds. Local cultural and historic assets that represent the diverse time periods and peoples of a place can provide a valuable sense of identity, pride, and education for communities, and are important to identify and consider for preservation before they are lost. Thoughtful land use decisions can create a built environment that supports local identity, safety, physical activity, commerce, housing choice, and convenient access to amenities and services within cities, townships, and counties.

Policy 12

Prioritize planning policies and practices that support mixed-use development, walkable neighborhoods, easy access to transit, and enhanced connectivity through biking and other sustainable transportation options. (Local Government)

Policies (P) and Actions (A)

A12.1

Develop transportation, land use, and open space plans with features and amenities scaled for human use and comfort in both urban and rural environments. (Local Government)

A12.2

Integrate new ideas and variety in design of public rights-of-ways in collaboration with other transportation partners. (Local Government)

A12.3

Consider form-based zoning codes to ensure that new developments enhance neighborhood aesthetics, increase walkability, and strengthen community cohesion. (Local Government)

A12.4

Consider incorporating Complete Streets or Living Streets design frameworks, which seek to improve mobility, safety, and aesthetics of the transportation system for all users, into land use and transportation planning, policies, and practices. (Local Government)

A12.5

Consider incorporating Crime Prevention through Environmental Design principles, or similar approaches for design features in the built environment that discourage crime, in local controls and encourage integration of these principles into new developments. (Local Government)

A12.6

Track and monitor the level and type of residential and commercial components in mixed-use districts, with assistance or guidelines provided by the Met Council. The information facilitates effective evaluation of system impacts and regional trends. (Local Government)

A12.7

Support a comprehensive pedestrian network assessment, coordinated with transportation planning, and incorporate it into development projects to address network connectivity gaps. (Local Government)

A12.8

Support small-scale, locally driven development projects that reflect and serve diverse needs of residents, particularly in underserved areas. (Met Council/Local Government)

Policy 13

Revitalize and strengthen communities at the neighborhood level by planning and maintaining public spaces for community gatherings to foster a sense of belonging and ownership. (Local Government)

A13.1

Consider placemaking initiatives, such as street vending, pop-up parks, farmers markets, and community art installations, to inject vibrancy and encourage social interaction in public spaces. (Local Government)

A13.2

Encourage creative placemaking that celebrates diversity and enhances community spirit for all residents. (Local Government)

A13.3

Consider opportunities for new or enhanced public spaces with access to amenities such as drinking water, restrooms, public transit stops, and parking. (Local Government)

A13.4

Support culturally significant design elements that animate the public landscape to promote cultural retention and connection. (Local Government)

A13.5

Support public art installations that draw residents to public spaces. (Local Government)

A13.6

Develop partnerships with local organizations to facilitate cultural programs and initiatives within public spaces, enhancing community identity and inclusivity. (Local Government)

Policy 14

Prioritize and plan for creation and preservation of green public spaces in developed areas. (Local Government)

A14.1

Support neighborhood-scale public open space and use of green spaces for public benefit. Create safe and inclusive green spaces for all abilities, ages, and needs by enhancing and adding parks, community gardens, and recreational amenities, especially in underserved areas. (Local Government)

A14.2

Consider innovative and emerging practices to adapt underutilized land or buildings for development of green infrastructure. (Local Government)

A14.3

Explore incentivizing preservation and integration of existing green spaces in new developments or redevelopments for public use. (Local Government)

A14.4

Support the development of community-based urban agriculture initiatives and community gardens. (Local Government)

A14.5

Utilize preservation ordinances to protect and maintain sensitive natural areas or natural amenities, such as tree preservation or wetland buffer ordinances. Areas protected or removed from development by local ordinance can be excluded from net density calculations. (Local Government)

A14.6

Integrate green infrastructure, food-growing spaces, and nature-based solutions, like Living Streets, into local planning processes and development implementation. (Local Government)

Policy 15

Protect and preserve historic and cultural assets to enhance community heritage and identity in alignment with the unique needs of each community. Minn. Stat. §471.193 authorizes local governing bodies to engage in a comprehensive program of historic preservation, and to promote the use and conservation of historic properties. As the historic element is required in Minn. Stat. §473.859 Subd. 2b to be a part of the land use plan, the Met Council will review this as part of the comprehensive plan review process. (Met Council/Local Government)

A15.1

Develop and implement criteria for the designation of historic and cultural assets, considering factors such as architectural significance, historical importance, and cultural relevance, ensuring alignment with evolving community standards and development goals. (Local Government)

A15.2

Identify historic and cultural assets except where Federal and State policies protect the confidentiality of sensitive sites, such as American Indian burial mounds. (Met Council/Local Government)

A15.3

Develop policies to protect and preserve historic and cultural assets and consider adopting culturally expansive ordinances to further enhance restoration and preservation efforts. Culturally expansive ordinances may include provisions related to language access, cultural celebrations, religious practices, heritage preservation, and other aspects of cultural expression and identity. The goal is to ensure that public policies and regulations are sensitive to the diverse backgrounds and experiences of all community members. (Local Government)

A15.4

Provide information resources, technical assistance, and guidance to local governments on identification and designation processes for culture and historic resources, and on culturally expansive historic preservation practices. (Met Council)

A16.1

Plan for developments that comprehensively address the needs of people with disabilities, considering elements of Universal Design, in addition to mandatory ADA requirements. ADA requirements are a baseline and may not meet the needs of all community members. (Local Government)

Policy 16

Incorporate Universal Design principles that consider the needs of all community members of various cultural backgrounds, age groups, languages, abilities, and gender identities in planning and design of public places. Universal Design is a concept in which products and environments are designed to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design. It aims to make the built environment inclusive, accommodating diverse needs and preferences, including those of individuals with disabilities, older adults, children, and people with temporary or situational impairments. (Met Council/Local Government)

A16.2

Support and partner on age-friendly initiatives, including the Governor's Council on Age-Friendly Minnesota and Age-Friendly Minnesota's Multisector Blueprint on Aging with keen attention to the needs of all older adults in the region. (Met Council/Local Government)

A16.3

Collaborate with schools and integrate Safe Routes to Schools into planning strategies to improve infrastructure safety and land use efficiency around schools. (Local Government)

A16.4

Promote Universal Design for all residential use types to provide more housing opportunities for residents of all abilities. (Local Government)



Objective 4: Prioritize land use and development activities that protect, restore, and enhance natural systems at all scales.

Abundant natural systems contribute to the vibrancy of our region, but stewardship of these regional assets has historically conflicted with growth and development. The Met Council promotes development and land use stewardship that integrates natural systems in design and implementation. This requires a balancing of natural systems protection, restoration, and integration with development practices for mutual benefit. Although regional parks, conservation areas, and lakes and rivers stand out as obvious focus areas, preservation and restoration of natural systems must also take place at a more local and site-specific scale. Smaller-scale efforts may include implementing environmentally sensitive design practices, integrating green infrastructure, re-meandering streams, restoring wetlands, and reducing impervious surfaces. Integrating aspects of the natural environment into urbanized areas helps create livable areas and desirable places to visit, while making sure that biodiversity is enhanced through establishment of wildlife corridors. On a larger scale, protecting contiguous areas of high-quality natural systems from development helps preserve habitat corridors across the region and maintain regional biodiversity.

Policy 17

Identify natural systems within and connecting cities, townships, and counties to assess areas for protection, restoration, and enhancement. (Met Council/Local Government)

Policies (P) and Actions (A)

A17.1

Provide tools and guidance on measuring the value of natural systems to assist local governments in protection, restoration, and enhancement efforts. (Met Council)

A17.2

Inventory natural systems within and between local jurisdictions, using mapping and data collection methods to inform conservation and land use planning decisions. (Met Council)

A17.3

Identify areas of opportunity for protection, restoration, and enhancement based on ecological significance, potential for ecosystem improvement, and equity considerations. The Met Council will provide technical assistance and tools for local planning purposes. (Local Government)

A17.4

Utilize your local or the Met Council's natural systems inventory and assessment to develop action plans to implement preservation, restoration, and enhancement, while leveraging resources and monitoring progress. (Local Government)

Policy 18

Establish and connect natural systems corridors through land use, water resources, and conservation planning. (Met Council/Local Government)

A18.1

Identify and prioritize opportunities to establish key habitat corridors, including land and water connectivity, through mapping and analysis, considering ecological data and stakeholder input. (Met Council/Local Government)

A18.2

Update land use planning regulations to incorporate measures for protecting, restoring, and enhancing natural systems corridors, such as conservation easements, ecological buffers, and wildlife-friendly development standards. (Local Government)

Policy 19

Prioritize the protection, restoration, and enhancement of natural systems in overburdened communities to build local resilience. (Met Council/Local Government)

A19.1

Engage communities in restoration projects tailored to their needs, such as native plantings, food-growing opportunities, restoring impaired soils, and naturalized stormwater management improvements. (Met Council)

A19.2

Provide environmental education and capacity-building opportunities for residents to advocate for and participate in protecting, restoring, and enhancing natural systems. (Met Council)

Policy 20

Working with partners, build a shared regional understanding and identify strategies that address risks to public and ecosystem health. (Met Council/Local Government)

A20.1

Establish an interagency task force to coordinate efforts and develop integrated strategies for addressing risks to habitat loss, biodiversity decline, and environmental degradation. (Met Council)

A20.2

Support joint research and monitoring programs to collect data and assess ecosystem and community health to inform evidence-based decision-making. (Met Council)

A20.3

Collaborate with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to provide technical assistance to local governments in implementing the Mississippi River Critical Area Program, and coordinate with the DNR in review of those plans and ordinances.

A20.4

Develop and adopt critical area plans and ordinances consistent with Executive Order 79-19 and Critical Area Program rules in all communities with affected lands in the Mississippi River Critical Area Corridor.

Policy 21

Utilize planning and development processes to enhance wildlife habitat and pollinator plantings, including native vegetation and climate-adapted species, across land and water. (Met Council/Local Government)

A21.1

Develop guidelines for integration of pollinator habitat and native plantings across various land uses, including aquatic habitat and climate adaptive species. (Met Council)

A21.2

Encourage land use and ordinance updates to establish, enhance, and maintain pollinator and native plant habitat on public and private land through incentives and technical assistance. (Met Council)

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Objective 5: Ensure that people in all types of communities find housing opportunities that align with their needs.

Historically inequitable land use planning has had a disparate impact on people and places within our region. Discriminatory land use planning practices have perpetuated systemic racial inequalities, resulting in limited access to resources, opportunities, and fair housing options for American Indians, Black communities, and communities of color. Inflexible low-density residential land use categories often mandate large lot sizes and prohibit even low-density multifamily housing, making it unaffordable, or inaccessible to many. Discriminatory lending practices, such as redlining, systematically denied mortgages to people of color, particularly those living in predominantly nonwhite neighborhoods. Single-family land use planning played a role in this process by restricting the types of housing available in these areas, further entrenching racial segregation. By concentrating affluent residents in predominantly single-family neighborhoods, while restricting affordable housing options elsewhere, land use planning contributed to racial segregation.

Residential land use categories that support more than one type of housing product offer a variety of housing types and accommodate the needs of diverse populations, including large families, immigrants, and older adults, all within one neighborhood. By providing a mix of housing options, including single-family homes, townhouses, duplexes, or apartments, local governments can offer affordable housing choices to a broader range of residents and help prevent socio-economic segregation to ensure that individuals of all income levels can access housing where they would like.

The region must plan to support housing options and services for those who are most vulnerable to housing insecurity. As the population ages, there is a growing need for housing that is accessible, affordable, and designed to meet the unique needs of older adults. For people with disabilities, accessible housing options are essential for individuals to live independently. These housing options must be integrated within all scales of development close to supportive services, healthcare facilities, culturally responsive social services, and recreational programs to ensure that people are protected from isolation and have access to essential services.

Revitalizing and reinvesting in communities at the neighborhood level, along with repurposing existing vacant or underutilized buildings, fosters a sense of community pride and belonging by improving the functionality of and cultural connection to one's neighborhoods.

Policies (P) and Actions (A)

Policy 22

Communities within the MUSA shall allow for more than one housing type within residential land use categories to encourage mixed-income developments, diversity of housing types within neighborhoods, and broader access to housing for more people. (Local Government)

A22.1

Support local controls and fiscal devices which allow mixed-use developments and diverse housing types by right, and incentivize the creation of affordable housing opportunities, including modular homes in single-family districts, cooperative housing, and multi-generational housing options. (Local Government)

A22.2

Explore local controls and fiscal devices that accommodate and preserve manufactured and modular home communities, and educate residents about manufactured and modular housing benefits. (Local Government)

A22.3

Revise local regulations and fiscal controls as well as local policies, procedures, and practices to remedy historic land use and housing discriminatory practices. The Met Council LCA policy grant program provides assistance for these efforts. (Local Government)

A22.4

Provide guidance and technical assistance to support housing and land use policy implementation in local comprehensive planning. (Met Council)

A22.5

Support locally-led development initiatives that actively counteract the adverse effects of gentrification, ensuring long-term affordability, cultural vibrancy, and stability of gentrifying neighborhoods. Examples of support could include providing support for small businesses during redevelopment, implementing inclusionary zoning policies, or involving historically underserved or underrepresented groups in the development process through intentional engagement. (Local Government)

Policy 23

Support the specific housing needs of the region's aging population, people living with disabilities, and individuals experiencing housing insecurity. (Local Government)

A23.1

Support the local integration of supportive services, healthcare facilities, culturally responsive social services, and recreational programs. (Local Government)

A23.2

Support the creation of local controls and fiscal devices that address the needs of individuals experiencing housing insecurity that connect them with emergency housing services during a public health or climate crisis. (Local Government)

A23.3

Support the creation and enforcement of local controls that ensure the maintenance of healthy and safe properties for tenants. (Local Government)

A23.4

Support the creation and enforcement of local controls that permit the construction of accessory dwelling units in areas within the MUSA. (Local Government)

Policy 24

Prioritize a variety of housing types across all income levels close to local destinations including neighborhood centers, public parks, transit nodes where applicable, and community gathering spaces. (Met Council/Local Government)

A24.1

Improve transportation choices to connect senior housing and affordable housing to essential services, healthcare facilities, and recreational amenities. (Met Council/ Local Government))

A24.2

Support fair housing initiatives and housing programs that remediate historic inequities in land use policy implementation and development practices. (Met Council/Local Government)

A24.3

Explore opportunities to design, redevelop, and retrofit neighborhoods to reduce auto-dependency. (Local Government)

A24.4

Incentivize public transportation hubs and multimodal connections within and adjacent to housing developments, where transit services are available. (Met Council/Local Government)

A24.5

Ensure equitable access to safe and healthy housing, and plan for residential uses away from manufactured or environmental harms. (Local Government)



Objective 6: Remedy past and present discriminatory land use practices.

Our region has a history of discriminatory planning and policy decisions that have contributed to persistent racial inequities and disparities.

Discriminatory practices such as redlining, racially restrictive covenants, and disproportionate investment have left deep and lasting impacts on Black, American Indian, and other communities of color throughout the region. These systemic barriers have led to significant disparities in income and homeownership rates, hindering opportunities for generational wealth-building and exacerbating the wealth gap between white residents and communities of color. Prejudicial practices have restricted job access and educational opportunities, and constrained transportation options, further entrenching inequities across the region.

These practices have resulted in disproportionate exposure to environmental injustices, contributing to health disparities and limiting access to green spaces, which are essential for community well-being. A lack of investment in public space and amenities for gathering and the introduction of physical barriers, such as freeways that divide neighborhoods, has undermined opportunities for cultural and community connections.

Although the government has legally prohibited overtly discriminatory planning and regulatory practices, these have been replaced by seemingly race-neutral land use policies that reinforce barriers between white people and Black, American Indian, and people of color. As we move forward, it is imperative to not only acknowledge the historical faults embedded in our land use policies but also to actively engage in collaboration with communities that have borne the brunt of discriminatory decisions to work towards an equitable region.

Policies (P) and Actions (A)

Policy 25

Take ownership of past harms, provide transparent communication, and hold all government partners accountable to plans and actions. The Met Council will model this approach in the region and expects that communities and local governments will hold us accountable. (Met Council/Local Government)

A25.1

Provide technical assistance, tools, and resources for equitable land use planning and development practices. This includes exploration of potential funding sources to encourage more intentional planning for equity issues in local comprehensive plans beyond improved community engagement practices at the local level. (Met Council)

A25.2

Develop a public dashboard to share progress toward equity goals and ensure that the data is regularly updated. Regular public reporting would ensure visibility of regional progress and identify any needed re-evaluation of actions where progress is lacking. (Met Council)

A25.3

Provide technical assistance for developing and implementing decision-making tools to prioritize equitable outcomes across capital projects. (Met Council)

A25.4

Prioritize opportunities to acknowledge inequities and disparities that exist within local jurisdictions and across the region and identify strategies to address them. (Met Council/Local Government)

A25.5

Consider supporting and partnering with Just Deeds (Just Deeds Project) to discharge racially restrictive covenants from housing deeds and other efforts of a similar nature. (Met Council/Local Government)

A25.6

Aim to evaluate existing and proposed programs and policies, procedures, and planned development for disproportionate impacts on marginalized and underrepresented communities as needed. (Met Council/Local Government)

Policy 26

Find opportunities to prioritize engagement with underrepresented populations to collaboratively develop equitable and inclusive land use planning policies and programs that reflect diverse perspectives and lifestyles, steering away from imposing norms derived solely from dominant culture and class values. (Met Council/Local Government)

A26.1

Expand representation of marginalized and underrepresented populations on boards, commissions, and committees. (Met Council)

A26.2

Aim to partner with organizations that represent marginalized and underrepresented populations to inform program and policy development with a focus on cultivating trust, forming longstanding relationships, and valuing lived experiences consistent with the Community-Centered Engagement Framework in the Equity Chapter. Local governments should consider implementing the Community-Centered Engagement Framework. (Met Council/Local Government)

A26.3

Strongly consider investing in and partnering with community organizations to support building community capacity to understand and engage successfully with local and regional government processes. (Met Council/Local Government)

1. Work to eliminate barriers to individual and community-based organization participation in planning processes, including developing a streamlined and accessible procurement process created in partnership with community. (Met Council)
2. Provide an example of how the procurement process can be accomplished as a technical resource to others. (Met Council)

A26.4

Work towards identifying and eliminating barriers to engagement participation including location, timing, transportation, and access to childcare. (Met Council/Local Government)

A26.5

Build staff and partner capacity to conduct culturally responsive and inclusive engagement, including language services, ADA services, community assessments, and best practices. (Met Council)

A26.6

Reimburse community members participating in engagement for their time and expertise. (Met Council)

Policy 27

Find opportunities to promote equitable development and distribution of public investments to benefit communities disproportionately harmed by past and present policies and land use planning practices to eliminate racial disparities and discrimination. (Met Council/Local Government)

A27.1

Work towards developing strategies to restore community connections in areas negatively impacted by planning and investment decisions. (Met Council/Local Government)

A27.2

Explore the opportunity to establish a reparative action fund to finance mitigation measures for known and acknowledged past harms to the environment, to American Indian communities, to Black communities, and communities of color unjustly harmed by past local or Met Council actions. (Met Council)

A27.3

Apply the Anti-Displacement Framework identified in the Equity Goal chapter to ensure Met Council investments and policies center and align with community needs and reduce harm to communities. (Met Council)

A27.4

Provide technical assistance to create an analysis methodology utilizing the equity and environmental justice frameworks outlined in the Equity Goal chapter. The purpose is to evaluate how projects benefit or harm different communities and demographics and mitigate inequitable exposure to environmental, social, and economic harms. (Met Council)

A27.5

Create/design a set of criteria to measure equitable impacts of development and local investments on Black, American Indian, people of color, and other vulnerable communities. (Met Council)

Policy 28

Support community-led planning and anti-displacement efforts to ensure community cohesion during change resulting from public investments and market demand, at all scales of development. (Met Council/Local Government)

A28.1

Work with partners to consider mitigation measures for displacement due to changes in the built environment including relocation assistance programs, land-disposition practices, anti-displacement funding programs, support of commercial and residential land trusts, and others. (Local Government)

A28.2

Identify appropriate mitigation measures for different scales of development to provide a consistent and transparent level of planning and engagement. (Met Council/Local Government)

A28.3

Consider implementation of new policies or retrofitting existing ones to better meet the needs of communities vulnerable to displacement resulting from public investments. (Met Council/Local Government)

A28.4

Support community-centered engagement practices and community-led decision-making as part of development and public investment. (Met Council/Local Government)

Policy 29

Center the American Indian experience in decision-making and implement the actions included the Met Council's land, water, and people commitments. Acknowledge and value the work of the American Indian Advisory Council established as part of Imagine 2050 policy development through implementation of the actions and commitments recommended from their work. (Met Council)

A29.1

Work with Tribal Nations and American Indian partners to develop regional tools, resources, and guidelines that may benefit local planning practices to mitigate the volume of individual requests received by American Indian organizations. (Met Council)

A29.2

Engage in Tribal consultation and collaborate with adjacent and affected Tribal governments throughout project planning and regional planning processes. (Met Council)

A29.3

Create a power-sharing structure to partner with American Indian organizations and community members in planning processes. (Met Council)

A29.4

Update the Met Council's processes for Tribal consultation and partnership with the American Indian communities in the region. (Met Council)

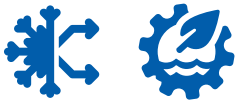
A29.5

Include accountability measures and a public reporting structure to evaluate implementation of the Met Council's commitments to the region's American Indian communities. (Met Council)

A29.6

Produce data and metrics that are clear, accessible, inclusive, and relevant to American Indian communities. (Met Council)





Objective 7: Implement land use and development practices that reduce greenhouse gas emissions, embed climate adaptation, and create resilient communities.

The effects of climate change transcend jurisdictional boundaries and impact the entire region, at all scales. People organize themselves into all sorts of different communities, from cities, to neighborhoods, ethnic and cultural communities, and communities based around interests or a particular geography. All scales and types of community are affected by climate change impacts. We must also recognize that under-resourced and historically disinvested communities often suffer the worst impacts of climate change. Climate change and environmental justice (equity considerations) are inextricably linked. Climate action must center environmental justice outcomes to build community and neighborhood-scale resilience.

It is important to implement mitigation measures to stop climate impacts associated with climate change from worsening. At the same time, we must use nature-based and built solutions to adapt to current and future climate impacts and strengthen our resilience in the face of these challenges. Nature-based solutions are sustainable approaches that utilize natural ecosystems and biodiversity to address various environmental, social, and economic challenges. The way our region develops impacts our ability to construct resilient cities, townships, and counties in the face of climate impacts. Development patterns that reduce impervious surface coverage and promote the use of green infrastructure can help reduce flooding during more intense rain events and cool areas impacted by the Urban Heat Island (UHI) effect. Preserving and restoring tree canopies, especially in urban areas, supports cooling efforts while sequestering carbon. Adaptation and mitigation measures work hand in hand to increase climate resilience, which ultimately makes our region more livable, healthy, and economically strong.

Policies (P) and Actions (A)

Policy 30

Reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the region to achieve the emissions reduction goal in state statutes (Minn. Stat. §216H.02). (Met Council/Local Government)

A30.1

Establish regional climate change strategies with state, regional, and local partners including setting regional emissions reductions targets for the different emissions sectors and actions to accomplish those goals. This action aligns with the requirements of the Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG) for the region. (Met Council/Local Government)

A30.2

Update and maintain the Met Council's Climate Action Work Plan on a regular cycle and dedicate resources to the operational climate action plan implementation. (Met Council)

A30.3

Explore and pursue funding opportunities for climate initiatives at the state and federal level as new opportunities emerge. (Met Council)

A30.4

Establish performance metrics and evaluate implementation measures for climate reporting at both the local and regional scales and provide regular public progress reports. (Met Council)

A30.5

Local governments must include in their comprehensive plans a greenhouse gas emissions inventory and projections generated from activity within the local government's jurisdiction that covers the range of applicable emissions sectors as required in the Metropolitan Land Planning Act (Minn. Stat. §473.859). The Met Council will provide technical assistance and tools for local planning purposes. (Local Government)

A30.6

Local governments must plan for strategies that reduce or naturally sequester greenhouse gas emissions as required in the Metropolitan Land Planning Act (Minn. Stat. §473.859). The Met Council will provide technical assistance and tools for local planning purposes. (Local Government)

A30.7

Collaborate with counties, local governments, and transportation authorities to reduce greenhouse gas emissions associated with waste management. (Met Council/Local Government)

Policy 31

Support local planning decisions to restore, enhance, and maintain the urban tree canopy. (Met Council)

A31.1

Conduct urban tree canopy assessments to identify priority areas for preservation, restoration, and maintenance efforts. (Met Council)

A31.2

Develop model urban forest management goals and strategies to protect and enhance the tree canopy, soil health, water quality, and overall biodiversity. (Met Council)

A31.3

Establish tree planting, preservation, and maintenance strategies at the local level. The Met Council will provide technical assistance, training, and resources to support local governments and residents. (Met Council/Local Government)

A31.4

Assess the adaptation, mitigation, and public health value of the regional urban tree canopy to support local level decision-making and policy development. (Met Council)

A31.5

Support species diversity and climate adaptive planting on public and private land, including support for management of Emerald Ash Borer. To support local initiatives, the Met Council will provide technical assistance and funding through the tree planting grant program. (Met Council/Local Government)

Policy 32

Incentivize urban design and development that maximizes renewable energy readiness and enhances energy efficiency, especially for energy-burdened households. (Met Council/Local Government)

A32.1

Establish local renewable energy and energy-efficiency strategies and incentives. (Local Government)

A32.2

Promote green building certification, energy benchmarking, and enrollment in programs like Xcel Energy's Partners in Energy, to encourage sustainable construction and energy management practices. (Met Council/Local Government)

A32.3

Pursue funding to establish a local government grant program to accelerate building decarbonization through weatherization and building retrofits. (Met Council)

A32.4

Provide support for renewable energy and energy-efficiency measures, including adaptive reuse, in lower-income communities and affordable housing. (Met Council)

A32.5

Encourage renewable energy programs to support renewable energy deployment, especially for energy-burdened households. (Met Council)

Policy 33

Encourage solar panel installations in underutilized land areas, as accessory uses on industrial land, on rooftops, and accessory to complementary uses. Protect agricultural areas by encouraging co-location and integration of solar within sites. (Met Council/Local Government)

A33.1

Provide technical assistance to local governments, including through the SolSmart program, on methods and means to maximize solar energy protection and development potential. (Met Council)

A33.2

Form public-private partnerships to develop solar energy projects, leveraging resources and expertise. (Met Council/Local Government)

A33.3

Simplify permitting and promote co-location of solar panels with compatible land uses to maximize efficiency, renewable energy deployment, and minimize land use conflicts. (Local Government)

A33.4

Local governments must ensure that local comprehensive plans and ordinances protect and enable the development of solar resources, as required by the Metropolitan Land Planning Act (Minn. Stat §473.859), and consider the use of other alternative energy sources as part of the planning process. Local comprehensive plans must include strategies needed to implement local solar protection and development policies. (Local Government)

Policy 34

Support integration of climate adaptation measures into development to prepare for current and projected climate impacts on our region, as required in the Metropolitan Land Planning Act (Minn. Stat. §473.859). (Met Council/Local Government)

A34.1

Adopt adaptation measures to reduce the effects of extreme heat, localized flooding, and other potential climate hazards. (Met Council/Local Government)

A34.2

Prioritize water conservation practices such as wastewater and stormwater reuse in development and redevelopment projects. (Met Council/Local Government)

A34.3

Provide incentives for projects integrating climate adaptation solutions, to encourage wider adoption. (Met Council)

A34.4

Establish clear performance criteria to measure and evaluate the success of adaptation projects, guiding program improvements and funding priorities. (Met Council)

A34.5

Prioritize planning practices that support nature as a climate adaptation solution to build local resilience to potential climate impacts. Nature-based solutions are sustainable approaches that utilize natural ecosystems and biodiversity to address various environmental, social, and economic challenges. (Met Council/Local Government)

A34.6

Identify human, built, and natural vulnerabilities to climate change, and prioritize adaptation solutions to enhance local resilience. (Met Council/Local Government)

A34.7

Develop policies and strategies to address human, built, and social vulnerabilities at the local level. (Met Council/Local Government)

Policy 35

Partner with American Indian and other overburdened communities to collaborate on climate solutions. (Met Council)

A35.1

Strengthen partnerships with American Indian and other overburdened communities to support collaborative climate and natural systems work, respecting Tribal sovereignty, self-determination, and cultural practices. (Met Council)

A35.2

Facilitate regular forums for knowledge-sharing between Tribal Nations, American Indian communities, and underrepresented communities to hear their perspectives on climate and natural systems work. (Met Council)

A35.3

Co-create regionally actionable climate solutions with Tribal Nations, American Indian communities, and underrepresented communities. (Met Council)

Policy 36

Integrate local food systems and land use planning to build community resilience, access to healthy food, and food security. (Met Council/Local Government)

A36.1

Assess land use and transportation policy implications as they relate to food access and security, including food deserts. (Met Council)

A36.2

Support farm-to-table initiatives and local food markets, facilitating direct connections between producers and consumers and promoting regional food systems. (Met Council/Local Government)

A36.3

Implement supportive urban agriculture policies to designate areas for community gardens and urban farms, streamline permitting processes, and provide incentives to remove barriers to food-growing spaces on public and private land. (Local Government)

A36.4

Partner with immigrant groups, Tribal Nations, and American Indian communities to establish, or join, coalitions that address urban agriculture and harvesting that respects cultures and spiritual practice. (Met Council)

A36.5

Determine food insecurity locations through assessment of the food safety net system (SNAP, food shelves, free and reduced lunch percentage) to better align land use planning and food access and security. (Met Council)





Objective 8: Support the economic wellbeing of our region and its communities.

The Twin Cities region boasts numerous economic assets that contribute to its robust and dynamic economy. While our region boasts numerous assets, systemic racial disparities undermine our economic vitality and threaten community stability. Disparities in employment, poverty, income, and homeownership by race and ethnicity persist in the Twin Cities and – in some cases – are the largest nationwide. To ensure a thriving future for all residents, we must address these inequities and build a more resilient economy. Building economic resilience is a priority that transcends individual jurisdictions. Achieving resilience requires robust interagency partnerships that bring together governments, businesses, nonprofits, and community organizations to address the region's complex and interconnected challenges.

Despite nationally low unemployment rates, the region is struggling to fill thousands of jobs. Existing racial disparities in educational attainment levels and unemployment rates continue to limit the growth of the local workforce. The region is dependent on immigrant labor, which is vulnerable to fluctuating federal policy. Immigrants also face additional challenges such as credential recognition, language barriers, and discrimination. Undocumented immigrants also fear deportation, limiting their job and education opportunities. Climate change harms the economy by disrupting agriculture and access to local food systems, damaging infrastructure, and impacting vulnerable communities and industries.

The Met Council promotes reinvestment and innovation in underutilized areas, aiming to revitalize and maximize the potential of economies at all scales. We also strive to enhance the accessibility of jobs for the region's workforce, facilitating greater opportunities for employment and economic participation. With our commitment to inclusive growth, we focus on meeting the needs of industries and enhancing the earning potential of workers through education, training, and mentoring programs which can be accomplished through partnership and collaboration. We seek to eliminate income and wealth disparities by race, advocating for equity and justice in economic opportunities. We are dedicated to creating accessible economic pathways for immigrants, acknowledging their valuable contributions to our region's diversity. Through these multifaceted efforts, we strive to build a resilient, inclusive, and thriving economy that benefits all people.

Policies (P) and Actions (A)

Policy 37

Support efforts to keep the region attractive and affordable for residents, visitors, and businesses, through partnerships, both public and private. (Met Council/Local Government)

A37.1

Conduct and disseminate ongoing research to understand the dynamics and place-based needs of the region's existing industries, businesses, and communities. (Met Council)

A37.2

Explore opportunities to develop and support programming that preserves the affordability of housing and commercial space in places experiencing significant investment. (Local Government)

A37.3

Support programming that reduces the cost-burden and uncertainties for industries, businesses, and entrepreneurs seeking to locate and/or expand in fully developed areas (in other words, redevelopment/renovation/reuse). (Local Government)

A37.4

Explore opportunities to bolster global competitiveness in innovative and developing fields. (Met Council/Local Government)

Policy 38

Support industries that directly contribute to addressing climate change and promoting environmental sustainability. (Met Council/Local Government)

A38.1

Partner and collaborate with other agencies, stakeholders, and partners to expand workforce development opportunities across climate and environmental sustainability fields. (Met Council/Local Government)

A38.2

Explore partnerships that support and provide tools, resources, and technical assistance to businesses and entrepreneurs seeking to develop business models that integrate sustainable and eco-friendly business practices. (Met Council/Local Government)

Policy 39

Value and promote a just economy through the economic growth and well-being of Black communities, American Indians, people of color, immigrants, and people of all ages and abilities in the region through equitable access to economic resources. (Met Council/Local Government)

A39.1

Remove barriers and promote equitable access to quality education, skill-building, mentorship programs, and diverse job training programs for all residents regardless of age, race, disability, or immigration status. Where possible, the Met Council will model skill-building, mentorship, and internship programs that support equitable workforce development. (Met Council/Local Government)

A39.2

Encourage businesses and developers to adopt diversity and inclusion initiatives aimed at recruiting, retaining, and promoting employees from diverse racial and immigrant backgrounds. (Met Council/Local Government)

A39.3

Support culturally responsive access to financial services and resources for underserved communities, including immigrants and people of color (for example, credit building, sharia-compliant financing, ITIN acceptance. (Met Council/Local Government).

A39.4

Collaborate with agencies, regional stakeholders, and institutions on planning and programming that promote the economic well-being of the region, prioritizing efforts that reduce racial economic disparities through the development of innovation hubs, skill-building programs or shared-use facilities on institutions or public lands. (Met Council/Local Government)

Policy 40

Advance economic equity and well-being in historically underserved communities by fostering growth of small and local businesses, entrepreneurship, and diverse industries in all places. (Met Council/Local Government)

A40.1

Integrate arts and cultural considerations into regional planning processes to ensure that cultural assets are recognized, preserved, and integrated into the fabric of the community. (Met Council/Local Government)

A40.2

Collaborate with historically underserved communities to identify local economic development strategies that preserve and enhance their local business districts and resources. (Met Council/Local Government)

A40.3

Establish local controls and fiscal devices to support the preservation and revitalization of business districts that have historically served and been focused on the needs of historically marginalized or vulnerable communities. Local Government)

A40.4

Explore opportunities to partner with organizations that support entrepreneurship and small business development among historically marginalized and immigrant communities by providing access to affordable loans, mentorship programs, business incubators, and technical assistance. (Met Council/ Local Government)

Requirements and Considerations

Many of the planning policies identified in the Land Use chapter of Imagine 2050 carry forward from previous regional development guides that reflect the Met Council's responsibilities outlined in the Metropolitan Land Planning Act, albeit with updated metrics or guidelines that reflect shifting regional needs and conditions. Other policies are new to Imagine 2050 and address emerging issues, priorities, or updated statutory requirements. Some policy and action statements apply to all local governments and others relate to specific community designations or unique local features.

Land use policy identifies specific expectations for the comprehensive planning process and outlines statutory requirements as well as the requirements the Met Council has established in order to achieve the regional goals. Language giving direction and indicating that the policy or action is likely to be a requirement includes directive language like must, shall, needs to, guide, plan, provide, prioritize, identify, and other action-based language.

The specific minimum planning requirements for local comprehensive plans will be clearly identified in the updated Local Planning Handbook to be released in Fall 2025, along with an individualized Checklist of Minimum Requirements specific to each local government. As these resources are updated and developed, the Met Council will continue its commitment to work with local governments to ensure that expectations are clear, accessible, and organized to meet both local and regional needs throughout the planning process.

There are many areas of policy where the Met Council is establishing a direction towards a goal that takes many partners to accomplish. In these cases, the Met Council uses permissive language like consider, encourage, partner, promote, pursue, support, and other more passive language. Please note that permissive language may not be outlined as a minimum requirement in a local government's checklist for comprehensive planning but may be a requirement for participation in Met Council incentives like the Livable Communities Act programs.



IMAGINE
2025





SECTION 4:

IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation of the Land Use Chapter of Imagine 2050 will happen through the activities described in the preceding objectives, policies, and actions, including actions to update specific guidelines and programs. The Met Council will work in partnership with local governments in the updates to those guidelines.

Following issuance of decennial System Statements, local governments will initiate their comprehensive plan updates. The Met Council will provide a suite of technical assistance tools to help local governments through the planning process. This includes direct planning services through the new small community planning services program and existing programs like the Sector Representative program, along with resources like the Local Planning Handbook, PlanIt, interactive tools, data, and other technology. The Met Council also has funding available to eligible communities through the planning assistance grants and the Livable Communities Act programs. Partnerships will truly drive implementation as public and private stakeholders at the regional and local scale all work together to achieve shared outcomes.

System Statements

Imagine 2050 is a comprehensive plan for the region. As chapters within the regional development guide, the Met Council prepares and adopts metropolitan system plans for transportation, including highways, transit, and airports; wastewater services; and

regional parks and open space. As required by Minn. Stat. §473.856, the Met Council issues system statements to each city, township, and county in the region when the Met Council updates or revises the comprehensive development guide as part of the 10-year regional planning cycle.

System statements are individualized reports for each community in the region that identify and explain the specific implications of the metropolitan system plans for each local government. Each individual system statement details the community's forecasted growth, how each regional system impacts that community, and whether there are planned changes to any of the systems affecting the community. System statements do not provide new or different information from Imagine 2050, but rather, system statements repackage the information making it more concise and useable for each city, township, and county.

The issuance of a decennial system statement initiates a local government's obligation to review and, as necessary, revise its comprehensive plan within three years. For this decennial planning cycle, comprehensive plans are due to the Met Council by Dec. 31, 2028.

Pursuant to Minn. Stat. 473.856, a system statement "shall contain information relating to the unit and appropriate surrounding territory that the [Met] council determines necessary for the unit to consider

in reviewing the unit's comprehensive plan.” Further, the statutes indicate that the system statement includes the following:

1. The timing, character, function, location, projected capacity, and conditions on use for existing or planned metropolitan public facilities, as specified in metropolitan system plans, and for state and federal public facilities to the extent known to the [Met] council; and
2. The population, employment, and household projections which have been used by the [Met] council as a basis for its metropolitan system plans.

In addition, the system statement provides procedural information on the system statement definition, next steps, and the dispute resolution process should a community disagree with any element of the system statement. After system statements are issued, local governments are directed to contact their Sector Representatives with any questions or if there are elements with which a local government disagrees. Typically, disagreements are resolved by working with staff.

If a community and the Met Council are unable to resolve disagreements, a community may request a hearing to determine whether the system statement should be amended. The request must be made within 60 days of receipt of the system statement and is conducted by either the Land Use Advisory Committee or the State Office of Administrative Hearings. If a hearing is requested, it must be held within 60 days after the request or at a mutually agreed-upon date. Minn. Stat. 473.857 further details the time frames under which a hearing report and final determination by the Met Council must be made. If no requests for a hearing are made within 60 days of system statement receipt, the system statement is considered final. Communities may commence their local planning process and may avail themselves of the Met Council’s technical assistance to aid in that process.

System statements will be issued in September 2025 to meet statutorily established deadlines.

Technical Planning Assistance

The objectives, policies, and actions identified in the Land Use chapter will be advanced in collaboration between the Met Council and local governments. The Met Council recognizes the breadth of policies and actions to be considered and addressed by local governments in the 2050 comprehensive planning cycle and is committed to providing support for that work through an array of resources. Minn. Stat. §473.191 specifically authorizes the Met Council to provide services and assistance with comprehensive planning.

Each comprehensive planning cycle, the Met Council updates and expands the resources offered in response to areas of greatest need for support, new planning areas, and consistent with regional priorities. Input from local governments on what resources are most helpful informs the right mix of technical assistance, tools, and resources. Once the comprehensive planning work is underway, new resources and tools may be developed to address emerging needs and information gaps. Improvements to guidance or technology will also be made as needs are identified.

The Met Council offers multiple forms of planning assistance to local governments as they update, amend, and implement their local comprehensive plans. These general types of planning assistance include the various programs and initiatives described below.

Small Community Planning Services

The Met Council is launching a new program to provide direct planning assistance as enabled in the Metropolitan Land Planning Act (Minn. Stat. §473.191) for some of the region's smallest cities and townships with limited resources and capacity to update their comprehensive plan. Local governments that meet Met Council-identified eligibility criteria will have the opportunity to receive a significant level of direct professional planning assistance from the Met Council to update their local comprehensive plan. Planning assistance will focus on the technical aspects of the comprehensive plan update and in meeting minimum requirements to be consistent with the local vision, goals, and priorities identified by city or township leaders and their community members.

Met Council staff will be collaborating with local governments to inform program development. The program will be available as early as 2026.

Sector Representative Program

The Sector Representative program ensures that every city, township, and county in the region has a designated and ongoing individual contact at the Met Council. Sector Representatives are experienced and knowledgeable professional planners familiar with the Met Council and its programs as well as with local planning processes. They provide planning and technical assistance on an ongoing and as-requested basis to cities, townships, and counties across the region and are the main point of contact for local staff's planning needs.

Sector Representatives serve as a liaison for local government staff with Met Council staff in areas including wastewater, transportation, housing, and others. They keep abreast of local governmental and agency activities and participate in meetings, technical advisory committees, and other working groups to connect the regional and local perspectives. Sector Representatives also foster cooperative relationships with governmental units and other organizations in the region to achieve local and regional goals. Sector Representatives are available to assist local governments in completing some of the statutorily required elements of local comprehensive plans.

Visit the Council's website to see the current Sector Representative map at <https://metro council.org/Communities/Planning/Local-Planning-Assistance/Sector-Representatives.aspx>.

Local Planning Handbook

The Local Planning Handbook is a guide that explains what specific information – including detailed tables, maps, data, and other materials – are required in local comprehensive plans for the Met Council to fully evaluate whether a plan:

- Conforms to regional system plans.
- Is consistent with Met Council policy.
- Is compatible with the plans of adjacent and affected jurisdictions.

The Local Planning Handbook guides cities, townships, and counties through the comprehensive planning process and provides a multitude of resources to assist. It serves as a single location for local governments to navigate the comprehensive planning process.

The Local Planning Handbook clearly identifies minimum requirements and provides tools to make meeting them easier. Tools and resources are developed both internally and in collaboration with local governments, partner agencies, and organizations to provide an integrated planning process, wherever possible. The Local Planning Handbook includes data, evaluative tools, administrative process guidelines, sample planning templates, model ordinances, best practices resources, local examples, and more. The Local Planning Handbook also provides information and resources about optional elements that a local government may consider including in their local comprehensive plan.

The Local Planning Handbook's Community Pages will continue to be a key feature providing each city, township, and county its own web page with individualized resources including:

- Checklists of minimum requirements
- Mapping tools and resources
- Funding opportunities, if applicable
- Other resources

The Local Planning Handbook will be updated to reflect guidance and respond to new policy direction in Imagine 2050. This resource will be relaunched for local governments when decennial System Statements are distributed in September 2025.

Local planning staff are encouraged to contact their Sector Representative if they have questions about the Local Planning Handbook tools and how to use them. Explore the Local Planning Handbook at <https://metro council.org/Handbook.aspx>.

Interactive Tools, Data, and Technology

Imagine 2050 introduced new regional priorities around climate, natural systems, and equity and will provide new tools and resources to help local governments planning so the region achieves the desired outcomes.

Examples of tools already available for use include:

- Climate Vulnerability Assessment
- Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Inventory
- GHG Strategy Planning Tool
- Solar Resource analysis
- Growing Shade
- Extreme Heat Mapping
- Flood Risk Assessment
- Natural Systems Framework
- Equity Considerations Dataset

Regional partners and local governments may have additional tools and resources they recommend or need as planning tools, which the Met Council can evaluate for addition to the Local Planning Handbook toolkit.

PlanIt Program

PlanIt, a training and development resource provided for Thrive MSP 2040, will be refreshed to assist local governments to meet the planning requirements in Imagine 2050. The PlanIt Program activities focus on a range of planning topics including water resources, transportation, affordable housing, equity, climate, natural systems, and engagement with community, local government, and regional partners.

- Webinars
- Workshops
- Online technical resources
- Policy-specific conversations
- Planning Certification Maintenance (CM) credits

The PlanIt program will launch again as early as 2026 through 2027.

Funding Resources

Planning Assistance Grants

Minn. Stat. §473.867, subd. 2, authorizes the Met Council to establish a planning assistance fund to provide grants and loans to local units of government. The primary purpose is for reviewing and amending local comprehensive plans, fiscal devices, and official controls, as required by the Metropolitan Land Planning Act. The Met Council has provided noncompetitive grant funding to identified eligible communities in previous decennial review rounds to update local comprehensive plans.

The Met Council identifies funding levels, eligibility criteria, and the application process for eligible and interested local governments. Many of the previous grant recipients have limited staffing so that even relatively minor comprehensive planning processes can be a large burden. Planning grants, along with the Met Council's technical assistance programs including the Sector Representative program, the Local Planning Handbook, PlanIt and others, facilitate the local planning process to ensure that the region continues to coordinate planning across all jurisdictions.

The Met Council will communicate with local governments about grant and planning assistance opportunities, procedures, and deadlines for Imagine 2050. Planning grants will be made available as early as 2026.

Livable Communities Act Programs

Established in Minn. Stat. §473.255, the Livable Communities Act (LCA) provides grants for development in the region that creates more housing choice, supports living wage job creation, and connects jobs, housing, and regional amenities. LCA grant programs each have a different focus, and currently include:

- Housing, Jobs, Efficient Growth: Livable Communities Demonstration Account (LCDA)
- Transit-Oriented Development (TOD)
- Pre-Development
- Policy Development
- Cleanup/Investigation: Tax Base Revitalization Account (TBRA)
- Affordable Rental Housing: Local Housing Incentives Account (LHIA)
- Affordable Home Ownership

Under LCA's Policy Development program to advance equitable development patterns, funding assistance may be available to update local ordinances and meet the requirements of Minn. Stat. §473.865, which requires local official controls to be amended within nine months following amendments to comprehensive plans. More information on LCA Programs is available on the Met Council's website at <https://metro council.org/Communities/Services/Livable-Communities-Grants.aspx>.

Local governments may also seek Met Council grants in the areas of transportation, water quality and wastewater, parks, rental assistance, and brownfield cleanup.

Partnerships

The Met Council depends on the knowledge and skills of partners across the region to improve its work, policies, and services. Ongoing conversations and collaboration will shape implementation of Imagine 2050 and inform how local governments address regional goals, policies, and actions in local comprehensive plans. The Met Council looks forward to working with existing partners and continuing to build new relationships in the coming years to advance a prosperous, equitable, and resilient region for all to live, work, play, and thrive.



Appendices

APPENDIX A

Endnotes

- 1 Metropolitan Council. (2023). The regional forecast: Population and employment in the Twin Cities region in 2050. <https://metro council.org/Data-and-Maps/Publications-And-Resources/MetroStats/Land-Use-and-Development/The-Regional-Forecast-Update-2023.aspx>
- 2 Metropolitan Council. (2021). 2020 generalized land use inventory. <https://metro council.org/Council-Meetings/Committees/Committee-of-the-Whole/2021/08-04-21/Info-Item-Release-of-Land-Use-Inventory-PPT.aspx>
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- 4 Metropolitan Council. (2018). Trends in comprehensive plan amendments, 2010-2017. <https://metro council.org/Council-Meetings/Committees/Community-Development-Committee/2018/February-5,-2018/Trends-ppt.aspx>
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- 6 Metropolitan Council. (2021). Residential development trends. Residential Development Trends (metro council.org)
- 7 Metropolitan Council. (2021). Lessons from 2023 population estimates. <https://metro council.org/Council-Meetings/Committees/Committee-of-the-Whole/2024/7-17-2024/INFO-1-Presentation.aspx>
- 8 For additional details about the methodology and further discussion on the analysis, see Metropolitan Council (2024). Scenario planning consolidated findings and connections to policy. <https://metc1new.metctest.state.mn.us/Council-Meetings/Committees/Metropolitan-Council/2024/3-27-2024/INFO-1.aspx>







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Land Use

