

# PLAT MONITORING PROGRAM

*Residential Platting in Developing Communities  
In the Twin Cities Region, 2018*



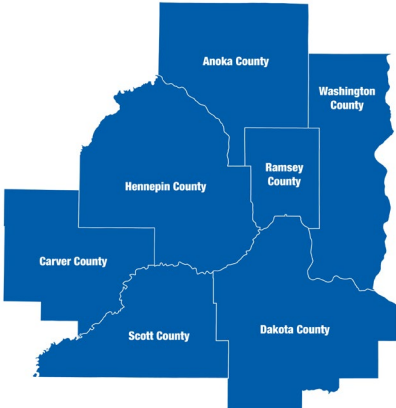
October 2019

# The Council's mission is to foster efficient and economic growth for a prosperous metropolitan region

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## About the Program

The Plat Monitoring Program tracks and monitors development in 45 communities in the region, mostly located within areas designated as “Suburban Edge,” “Emerging Suburban Edge,” and “Rural Center” in *Thrive MSP 2040* (Figure 1), the metropolitan area’s development guide. The objective of the Plat Monitoring Program is to measure the success of local implementation of Council policy by providing an annual report on sewer residential development in some communities, including the average density, the mix of new sewer residential development, the number of units platted, the amount of land developed, and the land use consumption. This data creates a baseline for land supply and tracks the housing mix and density of new residential developments. Twelve communities participated in the pilot Program in 2001, reporting on sewer residential plats approved in 2000. The pilot Program focused on communities with the corresponding designations of “Developing” and “Rural Center” in the *2030 Regional Development Framework* (Figure 2). The Program continues to grow to cover more communities as the Twin Cities Region develops.

The Program provides baseline data on residential development trends in participating communities and was designed to help answer the following questions:

- Is residential development consistent with Metropolitan Council policies?
- How are communities accommodating residential development in comparison to their local comprehensive land use plans?
- What is the mix of housing types that communities are approving each year (single family vs. multi-family)?
- How is residential land being developed within the Metropolitan Urban Service Area (MUSA)?

Since 2001, the Council annually reports on residential development in participating communities using data collected through the Program. The Program assists communities and the Metropolitan Council in assessing a community’s consistency with the Council’s residential density policy, which requires sewer residential development to occur at a minimum density of 3 to 5 units per net developable acre for communities with the Suburban Edge, Emerging Suburban Edge, and Rural Center designations. By maintaining a record of approved sewer subdivisions, the Council and metropolitan communities can evaluate the success of communities in implementing the density policy and the extent to which the wastewater treatment system is being used efficiently. In addition, participating communities receive credit for residential plats meeting the Council’s

Figure 1. Thrive MSP 2040

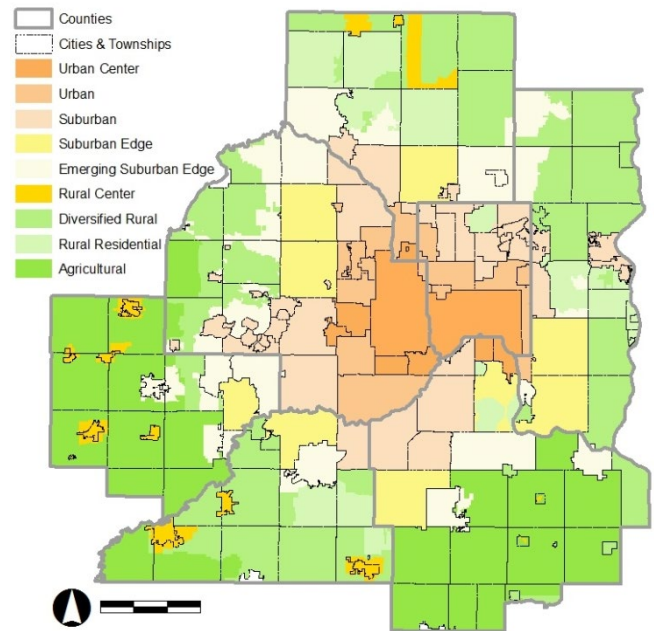
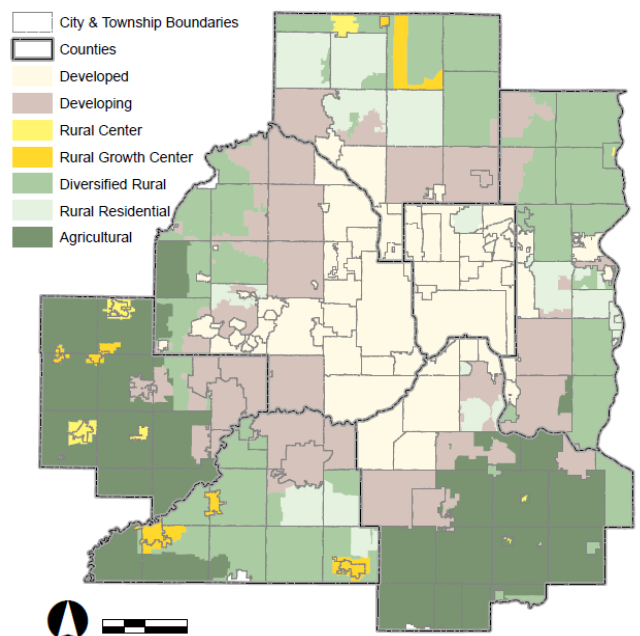


Figure 2. 2030 Regional Development Framework



density policy and receive increased development flexibility within the MUSA for approving plats that exceed the density policy. For example, if the overall net density of a participating community is higher than 4 units per acre, that community can approve lower residential densities, so long as the overall net density remains above 3 units per acre. The credit from the Program is crucial information in reviewing comprehensive plan updates and amendments to provide more flexibility for the communities as they consider guiding lower density land uses. It is also a key implementation tool in Council’s review of Sanitary Sewer extension permit applications.

### History of Program Participants

In 2001, the Metropolitan Council initiated the Plat Monitoring Program with input from the Builders Association of the Twin Cities (BATC) and MetroCities (formerly the Association of Metropolitan Municipalities). Participating communities complete an annual summary worksheet and submit copies of plats approved during the calendar year.

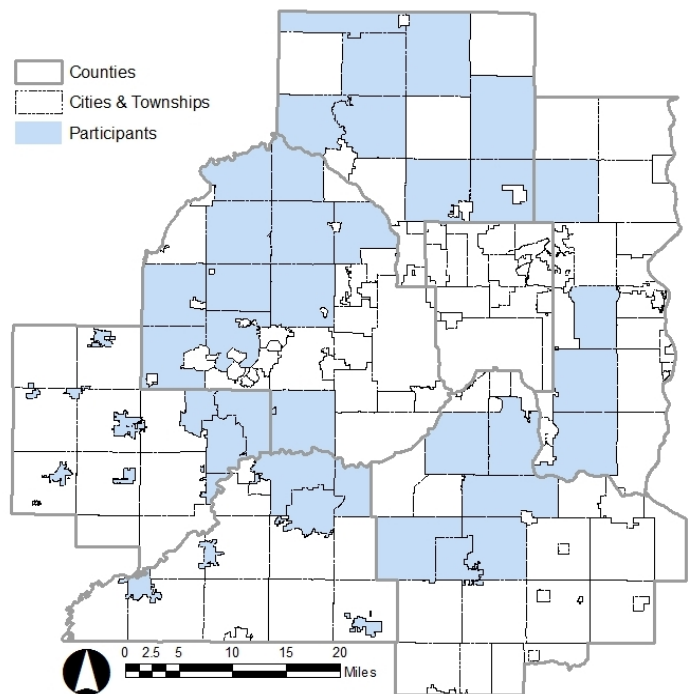
The initial 12 volunteer communities included Blaine, Chanhassen, Eden Prairie, Hugo, Inver Grove Heights, Lakeville, Maple Grove, Ramsey, Savage, Shakopee, Waconia, and Woodbury. In 2002, the City of Farmington was added to the Program. As conditions of amendments to expand Metropolitan Urban Service Area (MUSA), Empire Township and the Cities of Andover, Lino Lakes, Medina, Minnetrista, Rogers, Rosemount, and Victoria were added to the Program in 2003. The City of Brooklyn Park was required to report sewered residential plats starting with 2006 plats as a condition of a land use amendment. In 2007, the Cities of Cottage Grove and Orono were required to join the Program as conditions of comprehensive plan amendment (CPA) requests, while the City of Eagan voluntarily joined the Program. In 2008, as a part of the decennial review of comprehensive plan updates, the Cities of East Bethel, Mayer, and New Germany were added to the Program. Another 18 communities, including a number of communities designated as “Rural Center,” joined the Program as part of the decennial review of their 2030 comprehensive plan updates: the Cities of Belle Plaine, Carver, Chaska, Cologne, Columbus, Corcoran, Dayton, Elko New Market, Independence, Jordan, Mayer, Norwood Young America, Nowthen, Oak Grove, Plymouth, Prior Lake, St. Francis, and Watertown. The City of Lake Elmo also joined the Program in 2013. In 2015, the City of Nowthen was dropped from the Program due to no sanitary sewer extension plans in that area.

### Analysis

This report analyzes sewered residential development in 45 cities and one township (see Figure 3). This report also shows the trends for all the participating communities since the inception of the Program for years with submitted data, including year-to-year density and housing mix comparisons.

From 2000 to 2018, participant communities platted an average of 5,246 single-family and multi-family housing units each year, peaking in 2003 with over 10,000 housing units platted. This number declined from 2004 to 2009, with the lowest number of plats ever recorded in the history of the Program when

Figure 3. 2018 Participating Communities



only 286 units were platted. Since 2009, the participating communities have seen an overall increase in the number of platted units, with 5,964 units in 2018. A total of 131 plats were recorded by 45 participating communities in 2018.

### Total housing units and housing mix

In 2018, communities faced a decrease in platting numbers compared to 2017. This could be a reporting issue due to the timing of the 2040 comprehensive planning process as communities were occupied with updating their plans. As shown in Figure 4, platting activity has been increasing steadily since 2009.

Figure 4. Total Units Platted, 2000-2018

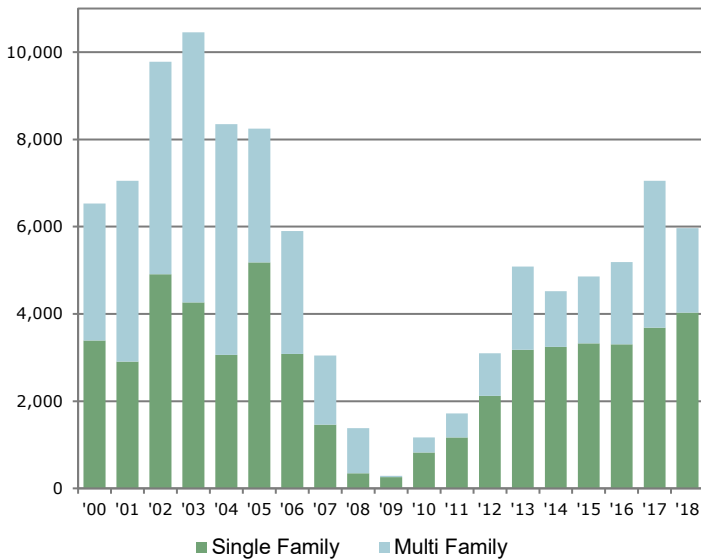
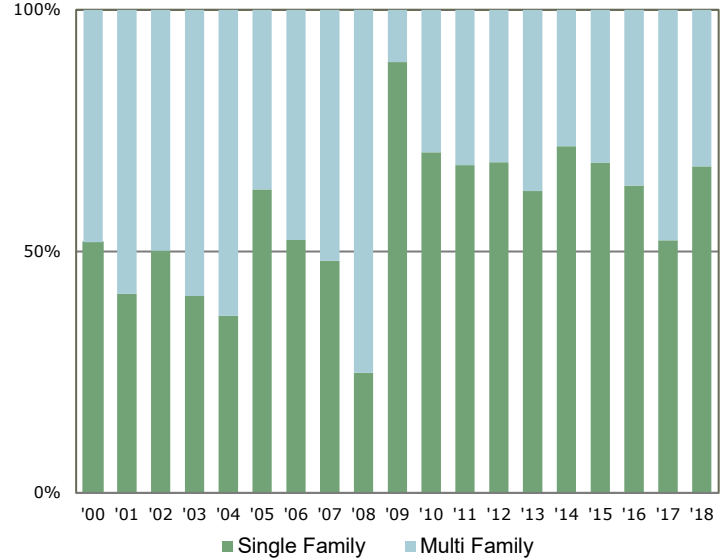


Figure 5. Housing Mix, 2000-2018



During 2018, 68% of the platted units were single family, for a total of 4,030 units, which is more than 2017 with 52% single family units, accounting for 3687 units. In contrast, there was a decrease in the number of multi-family units platted, changing the share of multi-family housing from 48% in 2017 to 32% in 2018 with 1,934 units. The composition of housing mix since 2000 (Figure 5) shows that, while there is variability from year to year, overall there is almost an equal number of multi-family and single family units platted over the course of the Program, for a total of 99,675 units. Since 2000, 54% of all units platted were single family and 46% were multi-family.

### Consistency with local comprehensive plans

Every year since the start of the Program, participant communities have approved plats that are consistent with the guided densities in their local comprehensive plans. The allowable density is measured based on the corresponding land use designation and density range described in local comprehensive plans for the platted properties.

As shown in Figure 6, the actual number of units platted in 2018 is well within the range of overall allowable units for the participant communities as a group, while closer to the lowest allowable number of units. The lowest allowable unit total is the sum of the number of units anticipated if all 131 plats were subdivided at the lowest allowable density defined in the local

Figure 6. Number of Units Platted & Allowable Number of Units, 2018

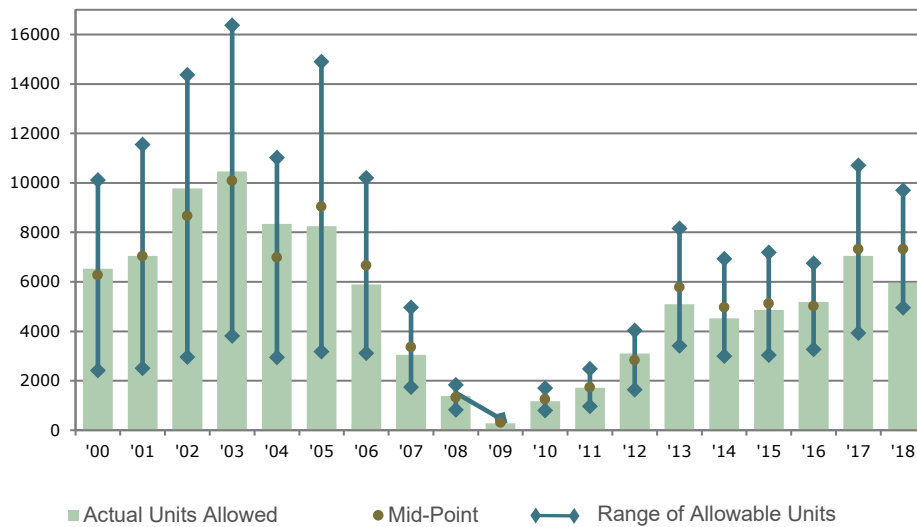
Lowest Allowable Units	4,949
Highest Allowable Units	9,696
Actual Units Platted	5,964

comprehensive plan. Likewise, the highest allowable units would have been expected if all the plats were subdivided at the highest allowable density based on the land use designation.

Since 2000, participant communities have generally platted at a density around the mid-point of the overall density range. However, in 2018, the total number of actual units platted was below the mid-point of allowable units, which has been a trend during the recovery over the past five years.

The annual fluctuation of the number of units around the mid-point is not significant over the course of the Program. However, since 2005, the number of platted units has mostly been below the mid-point of allowable density range, except in 2008, 2012, and 2016 as shown in Figure 7. This trend shows demand in the market for lower densities in these communities, even during the market rebound, as well as reflecting the propensity of some communities encouraging lower density developments.

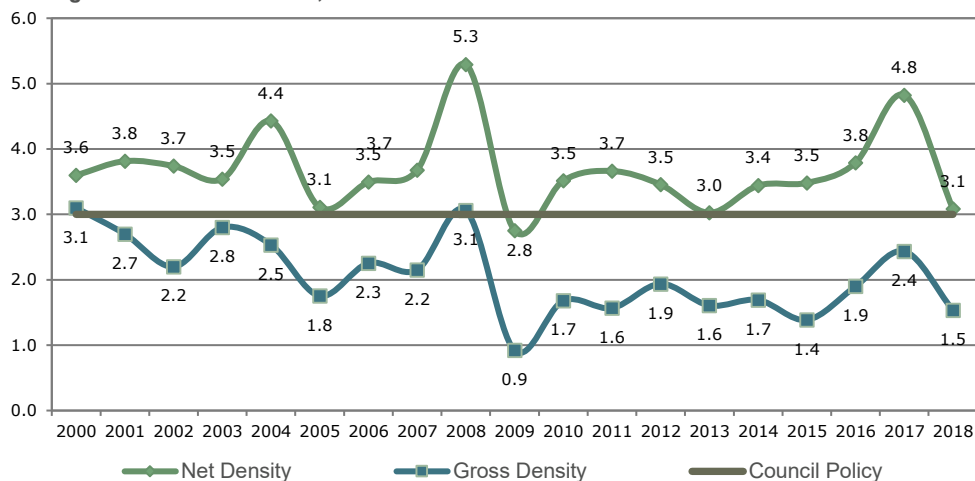
Figure 7. Planned and Actual Units



### Overall density and Council policy

Based on the Council's *Thrive MSP 2040* and Council policies, Suburban Edge, Emerging Suburban Edge, and Rural Center communities are to maintain an average density of at least 3 dwelling units per acre. From 2000 to 2018, Plat Monitoring Program participants, as a group, have generally platted sewered residential developments at or above 3 units per developable acre, with the exception of 2009, when recorded average density fell below 3 units per acre (2.8 units per developable acre).

Figure 8. Overall Densities, 2000-2018



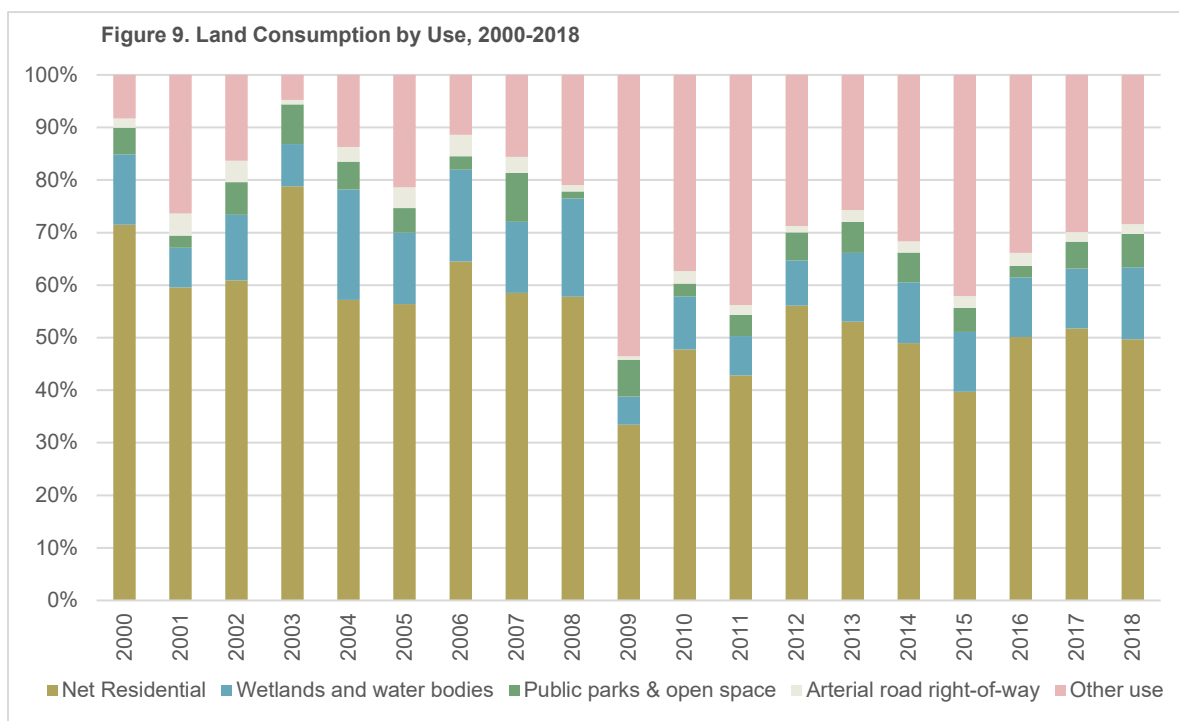
During the reporting year of 2018, 29 communities had two or fewer plats reported, while six communities approved over 10 plats. Of the plats approved in 2018, eight of the participating communities had annual platted net densities below 3 units per acre: Brooklyn Park, Carver, Hugo, Lino Lakes, Medina, Minnetrista, Orono, and Savage. Additionally, 22 participating communities did not record any plats in 2018, compared to 2017 when 15 participating communities did not approve any plats. Part of the change is due to these communities not reporting their platting activity in 2018 because of internal staffing resources related to 2040 comprehensive planning activities.

Since 2009, the number of units platted has been generally increasing, with the overall net density of platted units is 3.1 units per acre in 2018. While this number conforms to the Council policies, there is still a significant gap between 2018’s overall density and the recorded peak of 5.3 units per developable acre in 2008, which is a reflection of change in market production towards larger-lot single family homes in these communities. From 2000 to 2018, the overall average net density of the plats in all participating communities is 3.67 units per acre.

### Land utilization

The net developable acres in each plat are calculated based on an analysis of land cover and land uses on that property. Wetlands, natural bodies of water, publicly owned park and open space, arterial road right-of-way and land set aside for future development are subtracted from the gross residential acres to determine the net residential area. Communities are encouraged to take the most advantage of developable land to plan for anticipated units in order to achieve or exceed the minimum required net residential density of 3 units per acre in their community.

Figure 9 shows the breakdown of land consumption from 2000 to 2018. The year 2009 marks the lowest use of platted land for residential development and highest percentage of land reserved for future development, which is in sync with the economic downturn. With decreased housing demand and the economic crisis, about a third of gross residential acres had been reserved for future development as outlots (“Other use” in Figure 9). Despite the increase in the share of net residential acres since 2009, the percentage of net residential acres has yet to reach the highest levels in 2003.



## Density by community

In 2018, communities approved a total of 131 plats. As shown in Figure 10, Northwest and Southeast quadrants of the region had the highest number of plats and number of units platted, when the Northeast and Southwest quadrants were similarly lower. The composition of multi-family and single-family housing is similar between all quadrants.

The attached 2018 Plat Monitoring Program Summary Sheet outlines the number of submitted plats, number of units platted, housing mix, and the average net density for each community and for all communities overall. Most of the participating communities have been developing with an average net density of 3 units per acre or above.

Based on the submitted data since the beginning of the Program and the history of communities' participation, 13 participating communities have an **overall** density falling below 3 units per acre since their involvement in the Program: Andover, Cologne, Columbus, Cottage Grove, East Bethel, Empire Township, Independence, Lino Lakes, Minnetrista, New Germany, Norwood Young America, Rogers, and Victoria. Some of these recorded densities are low due to the short timeframe of their participation and reduced levels of development in recent years. Six of these communities have been a part of the Program only since 2008 or after. The others have mostly joined the Program around 2003. Two communities, Oak Grove and St. Francis, have not submitted any approved plats during their participation in the Program. Both of these participants have joined the Program in 2009, during the housing market downturn. In 2015, the City of Nowthen was removed from the Program due to lack of any sewer extension plans in that area. No new participants joined the Program in 2018.

Below are a few examples of participating communities and their platting and density pattern since the beginning of the Program. These examples represent a variety of different platting histories with a minimum density of at least 3 units per acre.

## City of Blaine

Blaine voluntarily joined the Program in 2000 and has reported platting activity since then. The City has approved a total of 229 plats since 2000, reporting an overall net density of 3.44 residential units per acre. This platting activity has resulted in a total of 8,200 units, with 64% single family and 36% multi-family residential units.

The City's platting activity was the lowest in 2008 when only 17 housing units were platted through one approved plat. Although the number of units platted is recovering from the market downturn, it has yet to reach the high numbers of over 1,100 units in 2003. In 2018, the City approved 17 plats with 642 residential units, resulting in a net density of 4.07 units per acre for that year.

Figure 10. Units Platted by Regional Quadrants in 2018

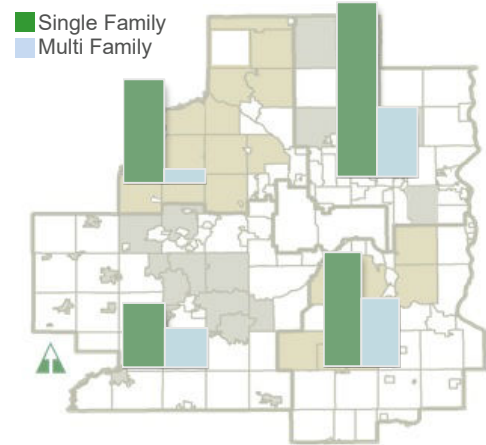
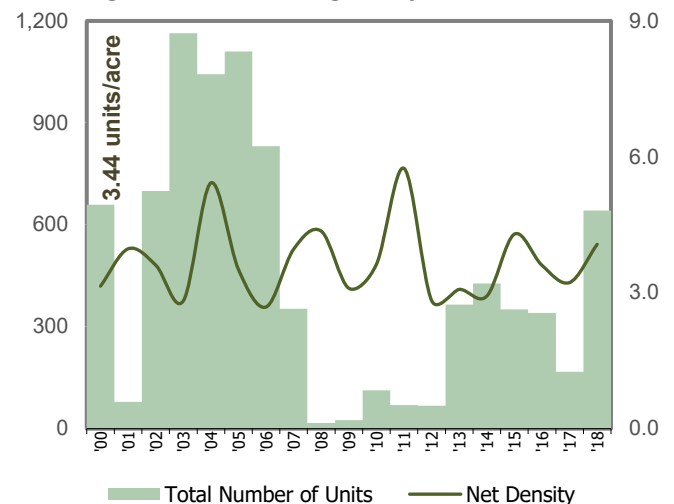


Figure 11. Blaine Platting History



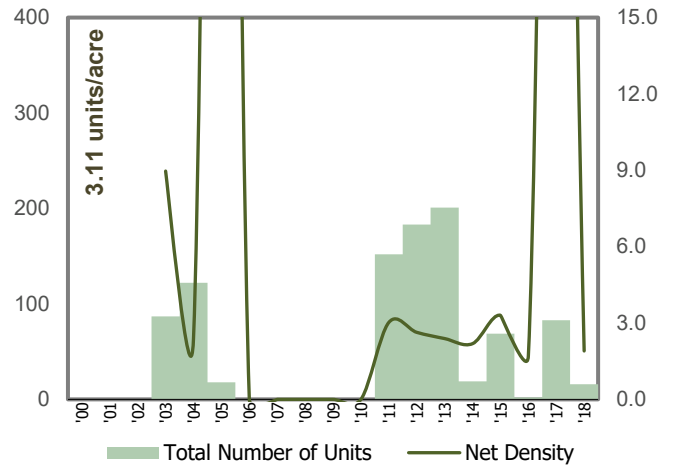


### City of Medina

The City of Medina joined the Program in 2003 as a condition of a comprehensive plan amendment. Since then, the City has reported 19 plats, resulting in 952 housing units. 80% of the total number of units platted were single family residential, with the remaining 20% platted as multi-family units.

Between 2006 and 2010, the City did not submit any plats and in most other years, it submitted an average of two plats per year. The City reported one plat in 2018 with a net density of 1.9 units per acre. The overall net density of the plats is 3.11 units per acre. As shown in Figure 12, the density of platted development in 2005 and 2017 were much higher than average with densities at 62.7 and 48.3 units per acre, respectively.

Figure 12. Medina Platting History

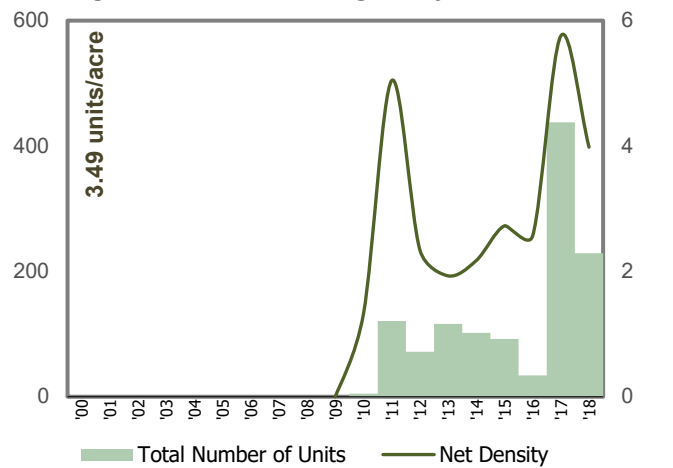


### City of Prior Lake

The City of Prior Lake was added to the Program in 2009 as part of the review of their 2030 Comprehensive Plan Update. Prior Lake has approved a total of 42 plats since then, with an overall net density of 3.49 units per acre. The City has approved an average of five plats every year since joining the Program, with no plats in 2009 and one plat in 2010 which is consistent with market conditions during that time.

The City has platted a total of 1,209 units over a total of 346 net developable acres, 74% of which are single family residential units. In 2018, the City platted 229 single family units through five recorded plat, resulting in a net density of 4.0 units per acre for that year.

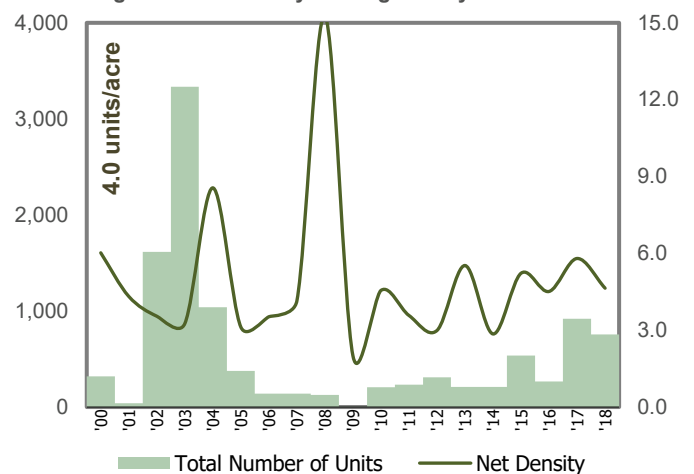
Figure 13. Prior Lake Platting History



### City of Woodbury

The City of Woodbury joined the Program in 2000 as a pilot participant, reporting a total of 119 approved plats since then, with an overall net density of 4.0 units per acre. These plats resulted in a total of 10,779 units, which are about equal parts single family and multi-family units. Platting activity in the City has been steady since the beginning of the Program. The number of platted units in Woodbury dropped to its lowest point in 2009, with only two units, reflecting the market conditions at that time. The City recorded 13 plats in 2018, for a total of 757 single family and multi-family units, resulting in a net density of 4.6 units per acre.

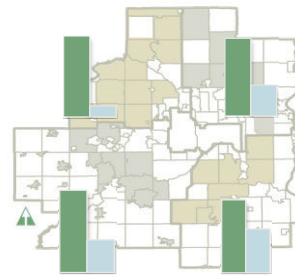
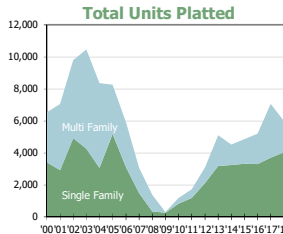
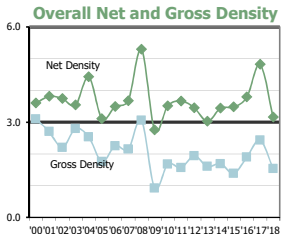
Figure 14. Woodbury Platting History



Woodbury’s participation is an example of the credit from the Program benefiting a City in the long-range planning process. Density credit from the Program assisted the land use analysis of the 2040 Comprehensive Plan and consistency with Council policies, boosting the overall density of future growth from 2.43 to 3.6 units per acre.

# Plat Monitoring Program: 2018 Summary

2018 SNAPSHOT	
Participating Communities	45
Total Number of Plats	131
Gross Acres Platted	3,889.0
Net Acres Platted	1,890.7
Number of Units Platted	5,964
Single Family	4,030
Multi-Family	1,934
Housing Mix	
Single Family	68%
Multi-Family	32%
Average Net Density ('00-'18)	3.67



**Units Platted by Regional Quadrant in 2018**

Single Family Units  
Multi-Family Units

**Number of Units Platted and Net Density by Community**

- Number of Housing Units
- Annual Net Density
- Overall Net Density
- Year Community Joined





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