

Information Item

Metropolitan Council Committee of the Whole



Meeting Date: May 17, 2023

Topic

Young Leaders Collaboration Expo and Presentations

District(s), Member(s):	All
Policy/Legal Reference:	Minn. Stat. § 473.145
Staff Prepared/Presented:	Darcie Vandegrift, Principal Researcher, Community Development Gabriela Olvera, Associate Planner, Community Development Mulki Haile, Intern, Community Development Nicholai Jost-Epp, Intern, Community Development Magaly Ruiz-Barrios, Intern, Community Development Sergio Almeida, Intern, Community Development
Division/Department:	Community Development / Research, Local Planning Assistance

Background

The Young Leader's Collaboration project connects the regional planning process with five organizations with leadership components for regional residents aged 14-24. Organizations are based in Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, and Scott Counties.

The Council project team included four interns and two staff. Additionally, 25 staff members shared career experiences. In total more than 70 staff and young people collaborated in mutual exchange to better understand youth perspectives and Council operations. During 30 hours of workshops and outside research, participants studied Council authorities and research methods.

Young people care deeply about cross-cutting issues of regional importance. As Council Members have advised, listening to youth insights enhances the 2050 Regional Development Guide's contribution to building a flourishing region. Young leaders selected the topics of interest to research and explore.

While the Council adopted a working set of values and vision statements, young people identified their own values, vision statements, and goals for the region based on their analysis work and lived experience. The Council staff team collaborated to build recommendations within the scope of the Council's jurisdiction, including innovative ideas that think about cross-cutting issues in new ways. Young leaders completed over 125 interviews with their peers on topics including pedestrian and transit safety, housing affordability, land use needs for cultural and community connection, habitat conservation, park access, and welcoming communities. They identified the connections between their lived experiences, community needs, and Council policy areas.

Young Leader Collaboration Expo Activities

The Young Leader's Collaboration Expo is an opportunity to hear from residents aged 14-24 about their research and personal experiences related to Council authorities. On May 17, the project participants will present their engagement findings and recommendations to Council Members and staff.

The afternoon will begin at 3:30 pm with poster presentations in the lobby. Organization members

will be available to present key ideas to Council Members and staff. At 4:00 pm, presentations will begin in Council chambers. The schedule includes six presentations of 10-15 minutes each, with each presentation followed by a brief time for questions. Young leaders are finalizing their presentations and may have slightly different titles on the day of the meeting.

Order of Presentations:

1. *Philosophy of the Project and Overview of Activities*: Council Interns Mulki Haile, Nicholai Jost-Epp, Magaly Ruiz-Barrios
2. *Pedestrian safety, farmland conservation, affordable housing*: 4H (Scott County)
3. *Housing affordability and community inclusion*: Raíces Latinas (Hennepin County)
4. *Parks conditions and access; habitat conservation and community gardens in land use*: Environmental Stewardship Institute (Ramsey County)
5. *Transportation access and housing affordability*: Esperanza United (Dakota County)
6. *Transportation safety and the effect of housing unaffordability on community cohesion and safety*: World Youth Connect (Ramsey County)

Implications

Young people experience life in the region much differently from older people, but their voices are typically less heard and valued. Young people are busy; they often work (sometimes multiple jobs), go to school, and have family commitments. They face many challenges in navigating life in the region. Nonetheless, the Young Leaders Collaboration will reveal important findings about their experience as young people in the region.

Their experiences will be unique from those of any previous generation, and they want their ideas to inform the Regional Development Guide. Young people bring truths rooted in their experiences that can inform policy makers and staff. Particularly, young leaders focused on Council authorities in their recommendations. These include:

- How housing affordability impacts the ability to feel seen in a truly welcoming and safe community.
- How they define and prioritize community safety, the importance of public spaces and small businesses to build cultural connection, and habitat conservation in the future of the region.
- How connection to culture is highly valued by immigrant communities across the region.
- How suburban pedestrian and transit infrastructure is needed for youth safety, social development, and well-being.
- How parks and open spaces are highly desired amenities for healthy communities and community connection.

We look forward to welcoming young leaders to the Council's Committee of the Whole meeting on May 17.

