

Information Item

Committee of the Whole



Meeting date: April 17, 2024

Topic

2050 Land Use Policy Update

District(s), member(s):	ALL
Policy/legal reference:	Minn. Stat § 473.175
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Background

The land use objectives, policies, and actions in *Imagine 2050* provide direction on how the Council plans to manage growth and development within the region. Draft language included within this memo was developed using significant stakeholder feedback as shared with each presentation on *Imagine 2050*. This memo provides in-depth detail for Council review. At the meeting on April 17, 2024, the Council staff will review a high-level summary of the themes, approaches, and policies for the draft land use objectives, which are as follows:

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 in.
4. Prioritize land use and development activities that protect, restore, and enhance natural systems at all scales.
5. Ensure that in all types of communities, people 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 wellbeing of our region and its communities.

Council staff are sharing all of the drafted land use objectives, policies, and actions with the Committee; however, draft language for objectives related to transportation (obj. 2), housing (obj. 5), and economic wellbeing (obj. 8) are still under their initial review with the RDG Councilmember Work Group, the Land Use Advisory Committee (LUAC), and the Community Development Committee (CDC) throughout April and May. Additionally, Council staff continue to work on review of the draft content externally with the Local Government Focus Group, the Regional Planning Advisory Group with Metro Cities, and the Community Leader Technical Advisory Group, among other stakeholders. Internal policy area teams and teams related to equity, environmental justice, climate, natural systems, and others continue to collaborate with this ongoing work as well.

Comparison of land use direction in *Thrive MSP 2040* and *Imagine 2050*

The Committee will briefly review a comparison of *Thrive MSP 2040* land use policies and begin review of key land use policies drafted for *Imagine 2050*.

	<i>Thrive MSP 2040</i>	<i>Imagine 2050 Objectives</i>
Growth Management	Orderly and Efficient Land Use: Align land use, development patterns, and infrastructure to make the best use of public and private investment.	Respect the relationship with land and water as a foundation for regional growth.
Transportation	Access, Mobility, and Transportation Choice: Sustain and improve a multimodal transportation system to support regional growth, maintain regional economic competitiveness, and provide choices and reliability for the system's users.	Maximize opportunities for growth in places well-served by transit, bicycle, and pedestrian infrastructure.
Community Wellbeing and Safety	<i>No Thrive MSP 2040 equivalent</i>	Establish vibrant, inclusive, connected, and safe communities for people to live in.
Natural Systems	Natural Resources Protection: Conserve, restore, and protect the region's natural resources to ensure availability, support public health, and maintain a high quality of life. Water Sustainability: Conserve, restore, and protect the quality and quantity of the region's water resources to ensure ongoing availability, support public health, and maintain a high quality of life.	Ensure that development activities contribute to the fullest protection and restoration of natural systems on every level.
Housing	Housing Affordability and Choice: Promote housing options to give people in all life stages and of all economic means viable choices for safe, stable, and affordable homes.	Ensure that in all types of communities, people find housing opportunities that align with their needs.
Equitable Development	<i>No Thrive MSP 2040 equivalent</i>	Remedy past and present discriminatory land use practices.
Climate Resilience	Building in Resilience: Promote sensitive land use and development patterns to achieve Minnesota's adopted greenhouse gas emissions goals at the regional scale, and to develop local resiliency to the impacts of climate change.	Strengthen the climate resilience of neighborhoods and communities through sustainable land use and development patterns.
Economic Wellbeing	Economic Competitiveness: Foster connected land use options to provide businesses and industries with access to materials, markets, and talent.	Support the economic wellbeing of our region and its communities.



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

Comparison of themes / policies in *Thrive MSP 2040* and *Imagine 2050*

This table includes the policy and action themes that are either proposed to be new in *Imagine 2050*, are similar or the same as *Thrive MSP 2040* policies and actions, or reflect re-emerging or evolving approaches from previous regional plans.

New Themes	Same/Similar Approaches	Re-emerging/Evolving Ideas
Indigenous perspectives visible and integrated	Maximize infrastructure investment	Rolling land supply
Regional land management guidelines	Promote compact development	Minimum density increases with opportunities for flexibility
Establish a Native Partnership Council	Direct growth where infrastructure already exists	MUSA expansions based on defined criteria
Equitable development approaches	Density expectations are based on community designations; additional expectations near transit stations and for affordable housing	
Focus on people, residents, and community benefits rather than public/private benefits	Accommodate growth within the existing MUSA boundary	
Identify forecasted growth and land supply by decade; future land use GIS data provided	Establish minimum density requirements by Community Designation	
Density policies address trends reflecting lower developed densities than required regional minimum density requirements	Protect agricultural and rural areas from urbanization	
Discourage solar developments on prime farmland or farmland of statewide importance	Encourage redevelopment, infill, and adaptive reuse	
Support urban agricultural uses on vacant/underutilized land	Direct growth away from sensitive ecosystems to protect natural systems	
Community-wide growth considers water supply constraints	Prevent groundwater contamination from development	
	Adopt regional guidelines to protect priority waters and aquifers and restore water quality as part of development	
	Local Water Supply Plans demonstrate availability of water where forecasted growth	
	Rural Residential Community Designation is inconsistent regional system plans	



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 needs of all living things in the region. Regional growth requires the orderly and efficient development of land to meet evolving and expanding needs. A development pattern that minimizes the amount of land used to accommodate growth supports this outcome by leveraging the region’s existing resources. Directing growth 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 and Actions Draft Language

1. Incorporate indigenous approaches, values, and practices in management of land and water sources.
 - a. Adopt regional land management guidelines co-created with indigenous community partners.
 - b. Establish a Native Partnership Council with authority and dedicated resources to develop and advise on the implementation of land management guidelines in areas of Council influence or ownership.
2. Minimize the amount of land needed to accommodate regional growth and reduce the cost of infrastructure expansion and service improvements through orderly and economical growth.
 - a. Promote more compact development in areas with existing infrastructure. Compact development occurs in all areas with existing infrastructure, from rural downtowns to the growing suburban areas to the most densely developed urban communities. Infrastructure investments at all scales, in all community types, need to be planned for a more compact development pattern. Planning for compact development patterns at all scales maximizes the benefits of investment, mitigates impacts of climate change, and builds localized resilience.
 - b. Plan for a 20-year rolling land supply for to support regional forecasted growth. Requests for new community connection to the regional wastewater system outside of the Council’s long-term sewer service area will be based on the regional need for additional land to accommodate growth.
 - c. New connections to the regional system must meet the minimum density requirement for the local government’s community designation. Flexibility to connect lower density developments will only be considered if the local government has a demonstrated history of exceeding minimum density requirements through the Council’s Plat Monitoring or other development monitoring programs.
 - d. Requests for MUSA expansions within already served communities shall be consistent with regional density policy at the development scale and reviewed against the need for additional land to accommodate forecasted growth.
 - e. Focus growth, both community-wide and in transit station areas, to maximize infrastructure investments.
 - f. Local plans must identify forecasted growth and land supply by decade. Local plans shall designate guided land use shall at the parcel level. Local governments shall submit future land use GIS data to the Council and update it as needed including as part of amendments to plans.
 - g. PLACEHOLDER for Development Expectations by Community Designation. Minimum and maximum densities for both Urban (within the MUSA and Rural Centers) and Rural (outside the MUSA) Service Areas will be included here.
 - Density policies shall address trends in approved plats and existing development patterns that reflect lower developed densities than required regional minimum density requirements.
 - The Council will calculate consistency with Community Designation density expectations by including all land guided to support growth, not just areas of change.



- The Council will consider requests for forecast changes based on the likelihood of development, reasonableness of expectations, conformance with other policies, and consistency with regional systems planning.
 - The Council will update the MUSA Implementation Guidelines, Flexible Development Guidelines, and other resources to align with regional goals and to be consistent with the updated policies in *Imagine 2050*.
 - The Council will use a performance-based approach to allow for consideration of flexibility in determining consistency with minimum planning requirements. Past plans and actions including regional goal and regional policy consistency, existing development patterns, plat monitoring data, adopted plans and ordinances as well as other relevant data will be used to determine eligibility for MUSA expansion, flexible density programs (to be established), or application of density credits.
 - Explore a programmatic approach to flexible application of density requirements to incentivize local implementation of regional goals. Develop a structure and requirements where flexibility may be acceptable in developing communities without jeopardizing conformance/consistency.
 - Establish a “target/goal” for overall community density.
 - h. Encourage orderly annexation agreements between growing Rural Centers and adjacent townships to encourage planned and orderly development in rural areas, where applicable.
 - Local governments may only plan for areas within their municipal boundaries unless an orderly annexation agreement authorizes another jurisdiction to assume planning authority. Planning to utilize the annexation-by-ordinance process does not convey long term planning authority and will not be considered as part of comprehensive plan review.
 - Orderly annexation agreements must encompass the entire planning horizon, and must identify updates that need to occur within the planning period. Plan authorization may only apply to timelines permitted within the orderly annexation agreement.
 - Local planning that encompasses areas outside of jurisdictional authority will not be considered as part of authorization of local comprehensive plans. Local governments need to plan for their forecasted growth within the confines of their jurisdictional authority.
- 3. Minimize urbanization of rural and agricultural areas and retain the ability to provide urban services based on regional system plans and long-term needs.
 - a. Promote enrollment in the Metropolitan Agricultural Preserves Program including supporting legislative changes to strengthen the Metropolitan Agricultural Preserves Program.
 - b. Encourage preservation of land identified as Prime Agricultural Soils from uses other than agricultural production and its ancillary uses. Discourage solar developments on prime farmland or farmland of statewide importance.
 - c. Encourage promulgation of right to farm policies and ordinances at the local level.
 - d. 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. The Council will evaluate how the following can promote long-term agriculture consistent with adopted regional goals in *Imagine 2050*.
 - supporting changes to building code to reduce the barriers for constructing hoopouses and similar agricultural structures on non-farm properties.
 - encouraging creation of small (sub 40 acre) farms within Diversified Rural communities.
 - supporting changes to definition of farm to expand benefits to smaller (sub 10 acre) farmsteads.
 - e. Evaluate the impact of rural development patterns within the Long-term Sewer Service Area, particularly near Rural Centers.
 - f. The Council will not consider any additions or expansions to the Rural Residential Community Designation, as it is a development pattern inconsistent with regional goals. expansion of the designation constitute a substantial departure from regional system plans.



4. Maximize use of the existing built environment by encouraging redevelopment, infill, and adaptive reuse.
 - a. Establish a Redevelopment Monitoring program to track and report on redevelopment trends and evaluate consistency with Council policies.
 - b. Evaluate building permit survey information that may be necessary to inform frequency and success of adaptive reuse of buildings.
 - c. Encourage adaptive reuse of vacant or historic buildings and structures for cultural and community purposes.
5. Direct growth away from sensitive ecosystems to prioritize protection of natural systems.
 - a. Prevent groundwater contamination from development, especially in highly vulnerable Drinking Water Supply Management Areas.
 - b. Community-wide growth shall consider water supply constraints in the management of growth and development across the region.
 - c. Adopt regional guidelines to protect vulnerable, regional priority waters and aquifers from development and restore water quality as part of development practices.
 - d. Local Water Supply Plans, as part of the local comprehensive plan, shall adequately demonstrate availability of clean, safe drinking water in areas where accommodating forecasted growth. Amendments to Local Water Supply Plans are needed when changes exceed the Council-adopted threshold for change which will be established through adopted guidelines for comprehensive plan amendments.

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

New themes, approaches, and re-emerging ideas under the objective

This table includes the policy and action themes that are either proposed into be new in *Imagine 2050*, are similar or the same as *Thrive MSP 2040* policies and actions or reflect re-emerging or evolving approaches from previous regional plans.

New Themes	New Approaches	Same/Similar Approaches
<p>Support for planning processes that incorporate communities, prevent displacement, and weave multiple investments together to achieve multiple goals.</p> <p>Considering the beneficial effects of transit, bike, and pedestrian-friendly land uses on objectives in other policy areas, such as VMT reduction, water usage, and housing choice.</p>	<p>More specific language and support for pedestrian/ bikeable/ transit-friendly areas, aligning the full range of facilities and activities needed to build a supportive environment.</p> <p>Increased consideration for forward-looking alignment of land use effects on other regional responsibilities.</p> <p>Stronger language about supporting regional centers of economic activity.</p>	<p>Partnership between the region and local jurisdictions.</p> <p>Land use impacts on residents' ability to access jobs and services in the region.</p> <p>Aligning impacts between land use and transportation system</p> <p>Importance of land use and transportation systems in supporting regional economic performance.</p> <p>Multi-modal approach to linking land use and community needs.</p>



New Themes	New Approaches	Same/Similar Approaches
		Land development density expectations that leverage transportation investments.

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

The region includes existing and planned regional transit, bicycle, and walking/rolling infrastructure. Many residents use transit, bicycle, or walk/roll for some or all their daily travel needs due to cost, ability, health goals or simple preference. Additional housing, jobs, and services in places that support these uses 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 in several ways. Comprehensive Plans and other local plans often call out these places specifically. Transit Market Areas, an analysis maintained at the Council, identify areas with favorable density, walkability, and levels of car ownership. Population analysis such as age (children/elderly), ability, income, and personal preferences can also identify areas with likely non-automobile using residents.

Communities in the region can support and reinforce 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 of local planning is the development of interconnected local streets 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 to be.

Policies and Actions Draft Language

1. 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.
 - a. 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.
 - b. Identify appropriate mitigation measures for different scales of development to provide a consistent and transparent level of planning and engagement.
 - c. Consider implementation of new policies or retrofitting existing ones to better meet the needs of communities vulnerable to displacement resulting from public investments.
 - d. Support community-centered engagement practices and community-led decision-making as part of development and public investment.
2. Focus planned residential and commercial development near available and planned transit and transportation infrastructure.
 - a. Develop and implement transit-oriented development (TOD) policies and design at all levels of development (site plan, subdivision, long-range plan).
 - b. Plan higher density residential developments around public transportation hubs and corridors.
 - c. Provide technical assistance for retrofitting/transitioning from one transit market area to another.
 - d. Provide technical resources related to accommodating additional density, reducing parking and parking impacts, travel demand management (TDM), placemaking/placekeeping, pedestrian networks, and related considerations.



3. Plan for and build an interconnected system of local streets, pedestrian, and bicycle facilities that prioritize the individual experience in planning for transit, bicycling, walking, and rolling.
 - a. Invest in local efforts to encourage growth in locations that support improved access, such as strategic land acquisitions, infrastructure investments, and community/developer engagement.
 - b. Identify regional, state, and federal funding sources to pair with local efforts to access funding through programs like Regional Solicitation for Transportation funding, regional trail acquisition and development funding, federal programs, and new opportunities as they become available.
 - c. Include market studies in local implementation strategies and priorities.
 - d. Support a comprehensive pedestrian network assessment for integration into land use planning and development projects.
 - e. Address network connectivity gaps to improve accessibility and personal safety.
 - f. Pursue partnerships to collaborate on funding programs that enhance biking, walking, and rolling access to centers of economic activity.
4. Support regional centers of economic activity through land acquisition for public investment, pollution cleanup, preservation, accessibility improvements, and other planning support.
 - a. Coordinate with Council programs including Livable Communities programs, water quality grant programs, transportation funding, and housing investments.
5. Prioritize the preservation, restoration, and enhancement of environmental and natural resources near transportation features and areas where transit is available.
 - a. Integrate environmental and natural features in road rights-of-way, along highways and corridors, and other public transportation features, including near transit where available.
 - b. Integrate planning for non-motorized access to transit locations, neighborhoods, employment centers, and parks through various regional, state, and federal funding sources.
 - c. 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.

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

Approach to community design and wellbeing in land use policies and actions

This land use objective and its accompanying policies and actions do not have a direct comparison to *Thrive MSP 2040* land use policies. In *Thrive*, Outcomes were identified including stewardship, prosperity, equity, livability, and sustainability. *Thrive* identified Outcomes to encourage an integrated planning approach expecting that the five Outcomes when implemented together would have a greater impact than any single Outcome.

The approach in *Imagine 2050* land use objectives, policies, and actions intentionally center the voices of community members that have participated in the regional planning process, contextualizing their shared stories to understand the individual perspective, and to construct policies that not only meet statutory obligations to “recognize and encompass physical, social, or economic needs of the metropolitan area” (Minn. Stat. § 473.145), but also achieve the Council’s endorsed regional goals.

Land use policy development started at the regional goal statements and considered first and foremost what it might take to achieve the regional goals. Content was drafted to not only address key land use and regional growth issues, but each objective is intended to impact more than one regional goal so as to be as effective as possible. Below is the draft language for Objective 3.

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

Peoples’ experiences of the places in which 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, offering residents access to many of the things they desire close to home. Planning for future growth presents the opportunity to design places where new and existing residents can gather, interact, and connect. Communities can use these spaces to celebrate local culture and history through



events that bring together people from different backgrounds. While community connection impacts feelings of safety within a community, land use decisions also create a built environment that supports safety, physical activity, and access to amenities and services, contributing to the notion that residents can conveniently access many of their needs and desires within their own community.

Policies and Actions Draft Language

1. Prioritize planning practices that support mixed-use development, walkable neighborhoods, and easy access to public transportation.
 - a. Develop transportation, land use, and open space plans that prioritize human-scale urban planning.
 - b. Reevaluate parking requirements for new developments to encourage alternative modes of transportation.
 - c. Consider form-based codes to ensure that new developments contribute positively to the overall urban fabric.
 - d. Implement a holistic infrastructure design review process for coherent and connected public spaces.
 - e. Adopt a *Complete Streets* policy in the land use plan and integrate this policy into zoning ordinances, transportation plans, and development regulations to ensure its consistent application in all projects and street redesigns.
 - f. Incorporate *Crime Prevention through Environmental Design* principles into new developments.
2. Plan and maintain public spaces for community gatherings.
 - a. Incorporate 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.
 - b. Facilitate creation and maintenance of free and accessible public gathering spaces.
 - c. Facilitate update of zoning ordinances that allow for public spaces, including specific locations with access to water, restrooms, public transit, and parking.
 - d. Support culturally significant design elements that animate the urban landscape.
 - e. Support public art installations that draw residents to public spaces.
3. Prioritize and plan for creation and preservation of green public spaces in urban areas.
 - a. Support neighborhood scale public open space and use of green spaces for community benefit.
 - b. Consider innovative and emerging practices to adapt underutilized land or buildings for development of green infrastructure.
 - c. Incentivize preservation and integration of existing green spaces in new developments or redevelopments for public use.
 - d. Incentivize and support the development of community-based urban agriculture initiatives.
4. Center community engagement in the planning process to build community trust and ownership.
 - a. Utilize public and private partnerships to implement projects, including community groups, neighborhood organizations, and schools, to enhance context sensitive design and foster community identity.
 - b. Invest in community-led development initiatives that support the long-term affordability and stability of gentrifying neighborhoods.
5. Protect historic and cultural assets.
 - a. Local governments must identify historic and cultural assets within their community.
 - b. Local governments must develop policies to protect and preserve historic and cultural assets within their community.
 - c. Local governments should adopt culturally expansive ordinances for the preservation, protection, and restoration of historic and cultural assets.
 - d. Provide technical assistance to local governments on culturally expansive historic preservation practices.
6. Incorporate inclusive design principles that consider the needs of all community members including various cultural backgrounds, age groups, languages, and gender identities.
 - a. Plan for developments that meet or exceed the minimum ADA standards to fully meet the needs of people with disabilities.



- b. Collaborate with educational institutions to implement safety measures around schools.
 - c. Incorporate designated Safe Routes to Schools into urban planning strategies to enhance infrastructure and safety measures, as well as optimize land use around educational institutions.
7. Integrate sustainable water management strategies into the design of vibrant public spaces.
- a. Incorporate water conservation practices such as wastewater and stormwater reuse, and low-impact development practices when designing public spaces.

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

New themes, approaches, and re-emerging ideas under the objective

This table includes the policy and action themes that are either proposed to be new in *Imagine 2050*, are similar or the same as *Thrive MSP 2040* policies and actions or reflect re-emerging or evolving approaches from previous regional plans.

New Themes	New Approaches	Re-emerging Ideas
Stronger, more coordinated approach to climate change	Establish climate action requirements	Mitigation & adaptation goals
Local & regional renewable energy (solar) investment & development	Expand solar development responsibly & ensure it is accessible to energy-burdened households	Compact development & redevelopment increases efficiency and lowers emissions
Environmental justice, particularly for indigenous & marginalized communities	Restore & expand tree canopy coverage	Renovation/retrofitting of old buildings
Urban forest and stormwater management to protect communities most threatened by climate change	Encourage energy-efficient, climate-conscious urban design & green infrastructure	Implementation/expansion of green infrastructure
Green infrastructure, natural landscaping, low impact design, and de-paving	Incentives-based program for climate-conscious land stewardship & development	Increase community resilience to changing climate conditions.
Collaborative, metrics-based climate approach	Co-develop climate solutions with Native & marginalized communities	Convening regional discussions on climate concerns and strategies
	Supporting local food systems to reduce food insecurity & increase resilience	Support for communities engaging in locally relevant climate mitigation & adaptation practices
		Expansion of climate-related technical assistance for local governments & marginalized populations

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 Council promotes development and land use stewardship that integrates natural systems in design and implementation. This requires a balancing of natural system protection, restoration, and integration with development practices for



mutual benefit. Although regional parks, conservation areas, 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, 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.

Policies and Actions Draft Language

1. Plan, build, and maintain informal public spaces that enhance natural systems features and public safety through community-centered design and stewardship.
 - a. Engage communities in co-designing amenities that enhance both biodiversity and safety.
 - b. Design public spaces to be accessible and welcoming to people of all abilities, ensuring that everyone in the community can enjoy and benefit from the enhanced green spaces and natural features.
 - c. Update design guidelines to include landscaping that enhances biodiversity for new public spaces.
 - d. Integrate art installations that complement and enhance the natural surroundings, creating visually appealing spaces that also promote ecological awareness.
 - e. Implement regular maintenance and monitoring programs to ensure proper upkeep of natural features within public spaces.
2. Prioritize planning practices that support nature as a climate adaptation solution to build community resilience to potential climate impacts.
 - a. Identify human, built, and natural vulnerabilities to climate change, and prioritize solutions that center nature.
 - b. Integrate green infrastructure and nature-based adaptation features into local planning processes.
 - c. Collaborate with city planners, architects, and developers to ensure that new construction projects and existing infrastructure upgrades prioritize the incorporation of resilient, nature-based elements to effectively reduce the likelihood of potential climate impacts.
 - d. Implement policy incentives and allocate dedicated funding to support the adoption of nature-based climate adaptation solutions at the community level.
3. Measure the value of natural systems to assist communities in protection, restoration, and enhancement efforts.
 - a. Conduct economic studies to quantify the monetary value of natural systems.
 - b. Assess social and cultural values associated with natural systems and develop metrics to track changes in the value of natural systems over time.
4. Inventory natural systems within and between communities to assess areas for protection, restoration, and enhancement.
 - a. Conduct a thorough inventory of natural systems within and between communities, using mapping and data collection methods to inform conservation and land use planning decisions.
 - b. Prioritize areas for protection, restoration, and enhancement based on ecological significance, potential ecosystem improvement, and equity considerations.
 - c. Develop action plans in partnership with communities to implement preservation, restoration, and enhancement and efforts, leveraging resources and monitoring progress.
5. Prioritize compact and infill development to preserve high quality natural systems.
 - a. Update zoning to prioritize environmentally sensitive development patterns to protect sensitive natural areas.



- b. Develop plans to guide development while preserving, restoring, and enhancing natural systems.
- 6. Protect, restore, and enhance connected habitat and natural systems corridors through development and infrastructure planning.
 - a. Identify and prioritize key habitat corridors and natural systems through mapping and analysis, considering ecological data and stakeholder input.
 - b. Update land use planning regulations to incorporate measures for protecting, restoring, and enhancing these corridors, such as conservation easements and wildlife-friendly development standards.
 - c. Coordinate infrastructure planning efforts to minimize disruptions to habitat connectivity, integrating wildlife crossings and stormwater management systems into transportation and utility projects.
 - d. Implement water management systems that incorporate sustainable drainage solutions, such as permeable surfaces and water retention features, to mitigate the impact of urbanization on natural water systems.
- 7. Protect, restore, and enhance natural systems in areas of environmental justice concern to build community resilience.
 - a. Engage communities in restoration projects tailored to their needs, such as native plantings and stormwater management improvements.
 - b. Create safe and inclusive green spaces for all by enhancing and adding parks and recreational amenities, especially in underserved areas.
 - c. Provide environmental education and capacity-building opportunities for residents to advocate for and participate in protecting natural systems.
- 8. Partner with State, Tribal, local and watershed planners to build a shared understanding and identify strategies that address risks to public and ecosystem health.
 - a. Facilitate collaborative planning workshops with State, Tribal, local, and watershed planners to understand shared risks to public and ecosystem health.
 - b. Establish an interagency task force to coordinate efforts and develop integrated strategies for addressing environmental risks.
 - c. Support joint research and monitoring programs to collect data and assess ecosystem and community health, informing evidence-based decision-making.
- 9. Enhance public and private wildlife habitat and native plantings across land uses.
 - a. Adopt environmentally friendly landscaping techniques, such as rain gardens, to reduce water usage and develop wildlife habitat.
 - b. Develop guidelines for wide distribution and integration of pollinator habitat and native plantings across various land uses.
 - c. Offer incentives and technical assistance to encourage public and private landowners to establish and enhance pollinator habitat.
 - d. Collaborate on pollinator corridor initiatives to create interconnected networks of habitat across landscapes.

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

New themes, approaches, and re-emerging ideas under the objective

This table includes the policy and action themes that are either proposed to be new in *Imagine 2050*, are similar or the same as *Thrive MSP 2040* policies and actions or reflect re-emerging or evolving approaches from previous regional plans.



New Themes	New Approaches	Same/Similar Approaches
<p>Inclusive and diverse housing options.</p> <p>Inclusive and equitable decision-making, engagement, and approach.</p> <p>Stronger emphasis on community connection and belonging, and consideration and integration of cultural norms and values in housing needs.</p> <p>Repurposing/redevelopment of existing infrastructure.</p>	<p>Collaborate and co-create with community in decision-making processes.</p> <p>Stronger acknowledgement of housing needs for diverse households including multigenerational households, seniors, people with disabilities, and indigenous people and communities of color.</p> <p>Stronger, more coordinated approach to promote housing choice across the region to allow people to choose where they live.</p> <p>Recognize, reflect on, and remedy historical land use and housing discriminatory practices.</p>	<p>Focus on promoting housing options for diverse needs.</p> <p>Proximity to job centers and economic opportunities.</p> <p>Partner with internal and external stakeholders to provide guidance and technical assistance to communities.</p> <p>Collaborate with internal and external housing stakeholders to analyze local markets and identify housing needs.</p> <p>Participation in regional programs and grant funding.</p>

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

The housing affordability crisis that persists in our region limits people from choosing the location and type of housing in which they want to live. Instead, people must look outside of their desired community for stable and affordable housing options. The issue is further compounded for those who use housing vouchers or are disabled, because they are already severely limited in their housing options. Planning for a diverse housing stock supports housing choice by providing options for all ages, incomes, and abilities. Lower cost units help meet affordable housing needs, while housing variety allows people to transition to housing that better meets their evolving needs. The location of housing types within a community impacts choice regardless of its diverse housing stock.

A diverse housing stock facilitates lifelong residence within one's community and enables people to remain in place as long as desired which deepens community connections. Essential to this vision is the availability of an ample supply of affordable housing distributed across the region and within communities, with the freedom for people to have housing choices. Embracing a diverse range of housing options within a community facilitates individuals' ability to stay rooted in their preferred neighborhoods across different life stages.

To cultivate strong community connections and foster a sense of belonging, people need to be at the center of decision-making. This necessitates implementation of inclusive land use planning policies, inclusive approaches and zoning to implement land use policies, and community-centered engagement practices to reflect the diverse perspectives and lifestyles of our region. Policies need to be expansive, consciously steering away from imposing norms derived solely from the dominant culture and class values.

Council research has shown that single family neighborhoods, both existing and planned, dominate the residential landscape. The lack of residential diversity within neighborhoods limits a household's ability to stay in neighborhoods as their lifestyle needs change. By embracing equitable development practices in land use planning and policymaking, the needs and preferences of all residents are integrated into the built form. Inclusive housing options for diverse populations, including seniors,



people with disabilities, multigenerational households, and communities of color involves creating housing that accommodates different family structures and individual needs. When affordable housing options are located near job centers, people are further enabled to live near their workplace and this intersection of land uses supports familial relationships.

Policies and Actions Draft Language

1. Support the creation of diverse housing types which are integrated and connected within neighborhoods.
 - a. Encourage land use categories which support more than one housing type to allow for higher densities, mixed uses, and mixed income developments.
 - b. Support local controls and fiscal devices which allow mixed use developments and diverse housing types by right, including modular homes in single-family districts, cooperative housing, and multi-generational housing options.
 - c. Accommodate manufactured home communities and educate residents about modular housing benefits.
 - d. Support local land use controls and fiscal devices that incentivize the creation of affordable homeownership opportunities.
 - e. Support fair housing initiatives and housing programs that remediate historic inequities in land use policy implementation and development practices.
 - f. Support revision of local regulations and fiscal controls as well as local policies, procedures, and practices to remedy historic land use and housing discriminatory practices.
 - g. Provide guidance and technical assistance to support housing and land use policy implementation in local comprehensive planning.
2. Identify the specific housing needs of the region's growing aging population and people living with disabilities.
 - a. Support the integration of supportive services within or near housing developments such as healthcare facilities, social services, and recreational programs.
 - b. Promote universal design for residential uses of all types to provide more opportunities for seniors and people with disabilities.
3. 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.
 - a. Improve transportation choices to connect senior housing and affordable housing to essential services, healthcare facilities, and recreational amenities.
 - b. Design and retrofit neighborhoods to reduce auto-dependency.
 - c. Incentivize public transportation hubs and multimodal connections within and adjacent to housing developments, where transit services are available.
4. Repurpose existing vacant or underutilized buildings for affordable housing.
 - a. Explore opportunities for adaptive reuse of existing buildings, such as repurposing vacant schools or commercial properties into affordable or senior housing developments.
 - b. Identify opportunities to streamline local development review processes, programs, and incentives that may help realize adaptive reuse for affordable or senior housing developments.

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

Approach to Equity in land use policies and actions

This land use objective and its accompanying policies and actions do not have a direct comparison to *Thrive MSP 2040* land use policies. In *Thrive*, equity was an identified Outcome, along with stewardship, prosperity, livability, and sustainability. *Thrive* identified Outcomes to encourage an integrated planning approach expecting that the five Outcomes when implemented together would have a greater impact than any single Outcome. Equity in *Thrive* was often referred to as “access to opportunity.” While considered ambitious in its time, we know that equitable outcomes require far more than access to opportunities for the region to overcome deep-seeded disparities experienced by vulnerable, underrepresented, and underserved populations. To understand more about equity in



Thrive, Council staff gave a [presentation](#) and report of “[Progress on Equity Commitments in Thrive MSP 2040](#)” at the April 27, 2022, Metropolitan Council meeting.

The approach in *Imagine 2050* land use objectives, policies, and actions intentionally center the voices of community members that have participated in the regional planning process, contextualizing their shared stories to understand the individual perspective, and to construct policies that not only meet statutory obligations to “recognize and encompass physical, social, or economic needs of the metropolitan area” (Minn. Stat. § 473.145), but also achieve the Council’s endorsed regional goals. The regional Equity goal states:

Our Region is Equitable and Inclusive

Racial inequities and injustices experienced by historically marginalized communities have been eliminated; and every person feels welcome, included, and empowered.

Land use policy development started at the regional goal statements and considered first and foremost what it might take to achieve the regional goals. Content was drafted to not only address key land use and regional growth issues, but each objective is intended to impact more than one regional goal so as to be as effective as possible.

This objective with its policies and actions suggests the Council continue its internal work to model how government at any scale can implement changes to policies, practices, and procedures to eliminate inequities, barriers, and methods of work that perpetuate long-held systems of racism. Draft language is clearer that equity is a development and land use issue, not only because people exist within the built environment, but the landscape has been constructed over time based on substantially discriminatory land use laws. Those practices are persistent, and the built form is slow to change. Below is the draft language for Objective 6.

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

Our region has a history of discriminatory planning and policy decisions that contributed to persisting inequities and disparities. Discriminatory practices such as redlining, racially restrictive covenants, and disproportionate investment have left lasting impacts on Black, Indigenous, and people of color across the entire region. Such practices have resulted in:

- Disparities in income and homeownership rates,
- Hindrance to generational wealth building opportunities
- Disparities in generational wealth between white and Black, Indigenous, and people of color
- Disproportionate exposure to environmental injustices that contribute to health disparities,
- Inadequate provisions and access to green spaces,
- Stifled community connection and cultural connection
- Adverse impacts on job access and educational opportunities, and
- Constrained transportation options across the region

Although the government has prohibited overly discriminatory planning and policy decisions, gaps between white people and Black, Indigenous, and people of color continue to widen. These policies have been replaced by seemingly neutral policies that reinforce barriers to more equitable outcomes. As we move forward, it is imperative to not only acknowledge the historical faults embedded in our land use policies but also actively engage in collaboration with communities that have borne the brunt of discriminatory decisions to work towards a more equitable region.

Policies and Actions Draft Language

1. Take ownership of past harms, provide transparent communication, and hold governments accountable to plans and actions.
 - a. Provide technical assistance for equitable land use planning and development practices.
 - b. Develop a public dashboard to share progress toward equity goals.
 - c. Provide technical assistance for developing and implementing decision-making tools to prioritize equitable outcomes across capital projects.
 - d. Acknowledge inequities and disparities that exist within local jurisdictions and across the region and identify strategies to address them.



- e. Partner with Just Deeds to discharge racially restrictive covenants from housing deeds.
 - f. Evaluate existing and proposed programs, policies, and procedures for disproportionate impacts on marginalized and underrepresented communities.
2. Prioritize engagement and collaborate with underrepresented populations to develop plans, policies, and programs responsive to and reflective of community needs.
 - a. Expand representation of marginalized and underrepresented populations on boards, commissions, and committees.
 - b. Partner with organizations that represent marginalized and underrepresented populations to inform program and policy development with a focus on cultivating trust and forming long-standing relationships.
 - c. Partner with community organizations to support building community capacity to understand and engage successfully with local and regional government processes.
 - d. Identify and eliminate barriers to engagement participation including location, timing, and access to childcare.
 - e. Build capacity to conduct culturally responsive and inclusive engagement, including language services, ADA services, community assessments, and best practices.
 - f. Reimburse community members participating in engagement for their time and expertise.
 3. Promote equitable distribution of public investments to benefit communities disproportionately harmed by past and present planning practices and to eliminate racial disparities and discrimination.
 - a. Develop strategies to restore community connections in areas negatively impacted by planning and investment decisions.
 - b. Explore the opportunity to establish a reparative actions fund to finance mitigation measures for known and acknowledged past harms to the environment, to native communities, to black communities, and communities of color unjustly harmed by past local or Council actions.
 - c. Apply the Anti-Displacement Framework to ensure Metropolitan Council investments and policies center and empower communities and reduce harm.
 - d. Provide technical assistance to create an analysis methodology and equity/environmental justice framework to evaluate how projects benefit or harm different communities and demographics.
 4. Center the native experience in decision-making and implement the actions included the Council's acknowledgment statement that all land in this region is Dakota land.
 - a. Engage in Tribal consultation with adjacent and affected Tribal governments throughout the planning process.
 - b. Create a power sharing structure to partner with urban Indian organizations and community members in planning processes identified in the land acknowledgment actions.
 - c. Update the Council's processes for tribal consultation and native community engagement.

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

New themes, approaches, and re-emerging ideas under the objective

This table includes the policy and action themes that are either proposed to be new in *Imagine 2050*, are similar or the same as *Thrive MSP 2040* policies and actions, or reflect re-emerging or evolving approaches from previous regional plans.

New Themes	New Approaches	Re-emerging Ideas
Recognize the inherent value of nature, along with its spiritual value to Native communities	Prioritize planning practices that support nature as a climate adaptation solution to build community resilience to potential climate impacts	Incorporation of greenspace & green infrastructure into communities & public spaces



New Themes	New Approaches	Re-emerging Ideas
<p>Protection and fostering of biodiversity, especially among native species and pollinators, through preserving/creating habitat connectivity</p> <p>Enhance public and private wildlife habitat and native plantings across land uses</p> <p>Large-scale assessment of existing natural resources, areas, and features</p> <p>Collaborate with Native and marginalized communities to manage natural systems & ensure their agency within land stewardship strategies & practices</p>	<p>Quantify the value of natural systems.</p> <p>Inventory natural systems to identify key areas for protection, restoration, & enhancement</p> <p>Prioritize compact & infill development</p> <p>Protect, restore, & enhance connected habitat & natural systems corridors through development & infrastructure planning</p> <p>Protect, restore, & enhance natural systems in areas of environmental justice concern to build community resilience</p> <p>Partner with State, Tribal, local & watershed planners to build a shared understanding & address risks to public & ecosystem health</p>	<p>Value trees for shade, ecological function, & contributions toward community climate resilience</p> <p>Sustainably manage water use and supply</p> <p>Protect surface water and groundwater resources</p>

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 community 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. While it is important to implement mitigation measures to stop climate impacts associated with climate change from getting worse, we must also use nature-based and built solutions to adapt to current and future climate impacts and strengthen our resilience in the face of these challenges. The way our region develops impacts our ability to build resilient communities 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 for communities, which ultimately makes our region more livable, healthy, and economically strong.

Policies and Actions Draft Language

1. Engage with local governments to establish fit-for-purpose climate requirements in line with State statute.
 - a. Engage with local governments on their climate planning needs and emerging goals to



- assist in establishment of climate requirements for the 2050 planning cycle.
 - b. Develop and provide needs-based technical assistance to local governments to meet established climate requirements.
 - c. Establish performance metrics and evaluate implementation measures for reporting at both the local and regional scales.
- 2. Support local governments in establishing goals to restore and maintain urban tree canopy.
 - a. Conduct urban tree canopy assessments to identify priority areas for restoration and maintenance efforts.
 - b. Develop model urban forest management goals and strategies for protecting and enhancing the tree canopy.
 - c. Provide technical assistance, training, and resources to support local governments and residents in implementing tree planting and maintenance initiatives.
 - d. Assess the adaptation and mitigation value of the regional urban tree canopy and communicate this information to local governments to support decision-making and policy creation.
- 3. Incentivize urban design and development that maximizes renewable energy readiness and enhances energy efficiency.
 - a. Implement incentive programs to encourage renewable energy and energy-efficient design in urban development projects.
 - b. Promote green building certification to encourage sustainable construction practices.
 - c. Provide support for energy benchmarking through partnerships and provision of technical assistance to local communities.
 - d. Administer grants to local governments to accelerate building decarbonization through weatherization and building retrofits.
 - e. Assess the need and provide support for renewable energy and energy efficiency measures in lower-income communities and affordable housing.
- 4. Encourage de-paving and replacement with natural landscaping to enhance climate adaptation and resilience.
 - a. Implement technical assistance and incentive measures for community de-paving and natural landscaping initiatives.
 - b. Conduct community workshops and educational events to raise awareness and promote de-paving and natural landscaping practices.
 - c. Update zoning and land use regulations to incentivize de-paving and natural landscaping in infill and redevelopment opportunities.
- 5. Install solar panels in underutilized land areas, on industrial land, and accessory to complimentary uses (protect Ag areas, and encourage co-location, integration of solar within sites).
 - a. Identify suitable sites and simplify permitting for solar panel deployment on underutilized land, industrial sites, large roofs, on parking ramps and compatible land uses.
 - b. Form public-private partnerships to finance and develop solar energy projects, leveraging resources and expertise.
 - c. Promote co-location of solar panels with compatible land uses to maximize efficiency, renewable deployment, and minimize land use conflicts.
 - d. Provide technical assistance to local governments on methods and means to maximize solar energy access.
- 6. Increase renewable energy systems deployment and energy storage in communities, especially for high energy-burdened households.
 - a. Establish a target percentage of the community's energy needs to be met by sustainable energy produced within the city by the end of the plan period.
 - b. Implement equity-focused renewable energy programs to support renewable energy deployment for energy-burdened households.
 - c. Support community solar initiatives to expand access to renewable energy, facilitating



- shared benefits for residents and businesses.
 - d. Establish energy storage incentive programs to encourage deployment in underserved areas, prioritizing resilience and emergency preparedness.
7. Support low impact design and integration of climate adaptation measures into development to prepare for current and projected climate impacts on our region.
 - a. Implement technical assistance to encourage community implementation of adaptation measures to reduce the effects of extreme heat, manage stormwater, and lessen human vulnerability.
 - b. Provide incentives through grant programs for projects integrating climate adaptation solutions, to encourage wider adoption.
 - c. Conduct outreach and education campaigns to raise awareness and engage stakeholders in promoting low impact design and climate adaptation solutions.
 8. Create an incentives-based program for climate-focused land stewardship and development.
 - a. Develop financial incentives like grants to encourage climate-focused land stewardship and development practices.
 - b. Offer technical assistance and resources to support stakeholders in implementing climate-focused land stewardship practices.
 - c. Establish clear performance criteria to measure and evaluate the success of projects, guiding program improvements and funding priorities.
 9. Partner with Native and environmental justice communities to collaborate on climate solutions.
 - a. Facilitate regular forums for knowledge-sharing between Tribal Nations, indigenous communities, and other environmental justice stakeholders to integrate their perspectives into climate and natural systems work.
 - b. Co-develop climate solutions with indigenous communities, incorporating traditional ecological knowledge and practices into adaptation and mitigation strategies.
 - c. Strengthen partnerships and agreements with Tribal Nations to support collaborative climate and natural systems work, respecting tribal sovereignty and self-determination.
 10. Deepen partnerships with State agencies and academic institutions to develop climate-related technical assistance and resources to serve the needs of local governments as well as historically underrepresented and marginalized populations.
 - a. Customize technical assistance programs for local governments, offering training and resources tailored to their climate-related needs.
 - b. Ensure equitable access to resources for marginalized communities through targeted outreach and support to community-based organizations.
 - c. Develop culturally relevant and linguistically accessible climate resources to empower diverse populations in climate action and resilience building.
 - d. Communicate climate measures in technical assistance in terminology that is clear, concise, and accessible to the public.
 - e. Share resources and capacity across State agencies and academic institutions to build out technical assistance resources that are accessible, fit-for-purpose, and needs-based.
 11. Integrate local food systems and land use planning to build community resilience, access to healthy food, and food security.
 - a. Implement urban agriculture zoning and policies to designate areas for community gardens and urban farms, streamlining permitting processes and providing incentives.
 - b. Support farm-to-table initiatives and local food markets, facilitating direct connections between producers and consumers and promoting regional food systems.
 - c. Establish food policy councils and engage stakeholders to coordinate efforts, gather input, and develop action plans for building community resilience and improving food access and security.
 - d. Partner with immigrant groups, Tribal Nations, and indigenous communities to establish coalitions that address urban agriculture and foraging that respects cultures and spiritual practice.



12. Develop guidance and support for resilience hub concepts and implementation in community planning, with particular focus on extreme heat, air quality, and localized flooding hazards.
 - a. Host workshops for community planners on planning for hazard mitigation.
 - b. In partnership with communities and other stakeholders, launch pilot projects to test resilience hub models in select communities.
 - c. Create resources focusing on hazard preparedness and social cohesion to support development of community-based resilience practices.

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

New themes, approaches, and re-emerging ideas under the objective

This table includes the policy and action themes that are either proposed to be new in *Imagine 2050*, are similar or the same as *Thrive MSP 2040* policies and actions or reflect re-emerging or evolving approaches from previous regional plans.

New Themes	New Approaches	Re-emerging Ideas
<p>Emphasis on racial equity by reducing and eliminating economic disparities and injustices in the region.</p> <p>Prioritization of workforce development strategies and resources.</p> <p>Greater emphasis on climate change and environmental sustainability.</p>	<p>Place-based support to ensure economic wellbeing and vitality.</p> <p>Increasing equitable access to a diverse range of jobs and workforce development resources.</p> <p>Integration and consideration of culture and art to preserve cultural assets and support business districts in communities of color.</p>	<p>Focus and integration of economic competitiveness strategies in the region.</p> <p>Collaboration and partnerships with agencies, stakeholders, and communities to promote economic wellbeing.</p> <p>Plan, partner, and provide research to understand regional economic needs.</p>

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

The region historically has had a robust and diverse economy, often leading our peer regions with growing industries that have competitive advantages. However, racial economic disparities, and economic injustice are significant and chronic challenges that our region must confront. Disparities in employment, poverty, income, and homeownership by race and ethnicity persist in the Twin Cities and—in some cases—are the largest nationwide. As our region continues to grow in racial diversity, it is imperative to address these disparities in a meaningful way to ensure prosperity for all residents of the region. This dynamic becomes even more important as we recognize that job relocations to the region, as well as international immigration, have been waning. Regional and local economic conditions have significant impacts on the wellbeing of places important to our region and communities. These include our downtowns, other regional job and industrial centers, local main streets, and neighborhoods.

The economic vitality of our region requires active support of the region's economic assets, such as export industries and sectors of strength. We must commit to addressing the place-based and accessibility needs of industries and businesses, recognizing the importance of equitable access to resources and opportunities especially for emerging entrepreneurs and small businesses. The Metropolitan Council should actively promote reinvestment and innovation in underutilized areas, aiming to revitalize and maximize the potential of these communities. We must 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 strive 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 and Actions Draft Language

1. Support efforts to keep the region affordable for residents, travelers, and businesses.
 - a. Conduct ongoing research to understand the place-based and accessibility needs of the region's industries, businesses, and communities.
 - b. Disseminate research both conducted by the Council and by others related to the dynamics of the regional economy and its needs.
 - c. Develop and/or support programming that preserves the affordability of housing and commercial space in places experiencing significant private investment.
 - d. Develop programming (e.g. grants) that reduces the cost-burden and uncertainties for industries, businesses, and entrepreneurs seeking to locate and/or expand in fully developed areas (i.e., redevelopment / renovation / re-use).
2. Support industries that directly contribute to addressing climate change and promoting environmental sustainability.
 - a. Partner and collaborate with other agencies and regional stakeholders to expand workforce development opportunities across climate and environmental sustainability fields.
 - b. Partner with others to 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.
3. Value and promote economic growth and wellbeing of black, indigenous, people of color, immigrants, people of all ages, and all abilities in the region through equitable access to economic resources.
 - a. 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 Council will model skill building, mentorship, and internship programs that support equitable workforce development.
 - b. Expand culturally responsive access to financial services and resources for underserved communities, including immigrants and people of color (ex. credit building, sharia compliant financing, etc.).
 - c. Collaborate with agencies and other regional stakeholders on planning and programming that promote the economic wellbeing of the region, prioritizing efforts that reduce racial economic disparities.
4. Advance economic equity and wellbeing in historically underserved communities by fostering growth of small and local businesses, entrepreneurship, and diverse industries.
 - a. 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.
 - b. Preserve and support business districts in communities of color.
 - c. Encourage businesses and developers to adopt diversity and inclusion initiatives aimed at recruiting, retaining, and promoting employees from diverse racial and immigrant backgrounds.
 - d. Collaborate with historically underserved communities to identify community economic development strategies that preserve and support their local business districts and resources.
 - e. Establish local controls and fiscal devices to preserve business districts that have historically served and been focused on the needs of historically marginalized or vulnerable communities.
 - f. Create opportunities for the Council to support and 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.

