



2050 Comprehensive Planning Process and Technical Assistance Overview

Committee of the Whole

Amber Turnquest, Emma Dvorak, Peter Wilfahrt, Merritt Clapp Smith, and Angela R. Torres

September 3, 2025



Today's Agenda



Technical Assistance Overview

Decennial System Statements

Local Planning Handbook Update

- Plan Elements, Community Pages, and Checklists
- Water policy and Transportation policy support
- Natural Systems Planning Tool
- Housing Interactive Tool and Implementation Strategy Toolkit
- GHG Emissions Reduction Tool and Climate Action Toolkit

PlanIt Program Update

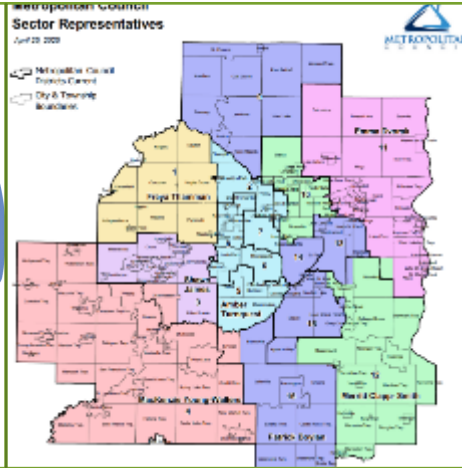
Sector Representatives and Technical Teams

Planning Assistance Grants and Small Communities Planning Program

Support Local Governments in Implementing Regional Policies



System Statement issuance kicks off the local planning process



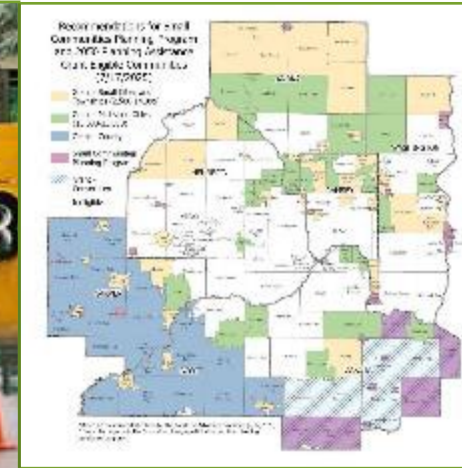
Sector Representatives provide individualized technical assistance to local planning staff



Local Planning Handbook update is your one-stop shop for comprehensive planning assistance



Tools and resources to assist with new requirements related to Climate Strategies, GHG Emissions, and Natural Systems planning



2050 Local Planning Assistance Grant Program and the **Small Communities Planning Program**



PlanIt: A training and education program to provide topic-based programming throughout the local comprehensive planning process

(Photo courtesy Minn. Dept. of Transportation.)

Regional Planning Cycle



Decennial System Statements

Purpose

- Decennial communication to each local unit of government
- Includes forecasted growth, development expectations, and key changes to regional plans
- Customized for each community, detailing system plan impacts specific to the municipality
- Required by the MLPA (Minn. Stat. [§473.856](#))



Decennial System Statements

Purpose

- Individualized for the local unit of government
- Explains the implications of system plans and capital budgets *in that community*
- Includes forecasted growth and general development expectations

Content

- Vision, Values, and Goals
- Community designation(s) and forecasted growth
- Future affordable housing need allocation
- Regional parks and trails
- Metropolitan sewer service, surface water, water supply
- Metropolitan highway system and transit system, aviation system
- Other planning considerations

Timeline

- Distributed in mid-September 2025
- Opportunity to resolve questions or disputes with system statements
- 2050 comp planning starts with December 31, 2028, submittal deadline

Decennial System Statements



- Community designations
- Forecasted growth
- Affordable housing
- Climate

Vision, Values, and Goals

- Metropolitan highways
- Transit routes and facilities
- Aviation

Transportation

- Metropolitan sewer service
- Subsurface treatment systems
- Surface water

Water Policy

- Regional parks
- Regional trails

Regional Parks and Trails



Decennial System Statements



Discussion and Resolution of Disputes

- If no questions or concerns, the system statement is considered final after 60 days of issuance.
- Certified mail and emails will be to the communities in mid-September
- Discuss any concerns with Sector Representative
 - Resolution of any concerns typically occurs at this point
- If agreement is unable to be reached, the Local government may:
 - Submit a resolution to request a hearing within 60 days of receipt of Systems Statement
 - Request must include:
 - Resolution that describes disagreement
 - Specific proposed amendments

[Minn. Stat. § 473.857](#)

Decennial System Statements

System Statement Dispute Procedure



Decennial System Statements

Timeline and Next Steps

September 2025

Distribution of
Decennial System
Statements

December 2025

System Statements
are considered final
60 days after issuance
if no hearing is
requested.

January 2026

For any hearings,
reports must be
submitted to the Met
Council for final
decisions within 30
days of hearings.

December 31, 2028

Local governments
have three years to
complete their local
comprehensive plan
after system
statements are final.

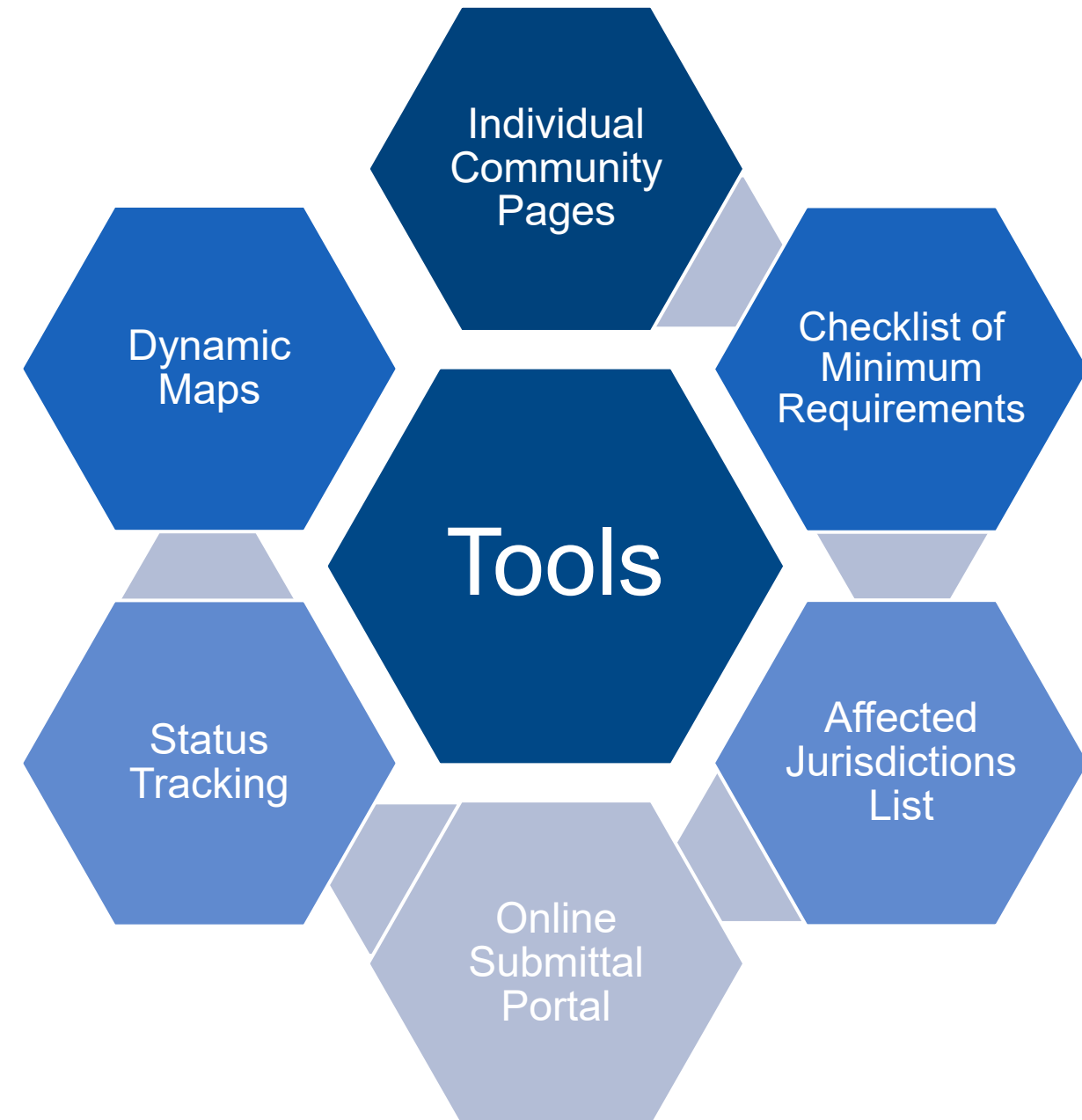
Local Planning Handbook Update



Local Planning Handbook

The One-Stop-Shop for Comprehensive Planning

- Designed to support communities with the update of their local comprehensive plans.
- Clear guidance on minimum requirements and how to meet them
- Tools, maps, resources, and technical assistance
 - To help meet minimum requirements
 - To get more out of their local planning process
 - To help with a variety of planning issues of interest to communities across the region
- Community-specific information and checklists
- Training and resources beyond the minimum requirements



2050 Local Planning Handbook Update

Process and Timeline

Aug
2024

- Internal scoping and planning
- Test the user experience (current site)
- Engagement with local governments on clarity and comprehension of minimum requirements checklists, user testing of website, and overall functionality feedback
- Internal content audit and coordination
- Update tools, content, and online platform to reflect Imagine 2050 policy direction
- Test user experience on new platform
- Local Planning Handbook in Launched August 28th 2025!



**LOCAL
PLANNING
HANDBOOK**



Aug
2025

Checklist of Minimum Requirements

One of the most critical resources in the Handbook

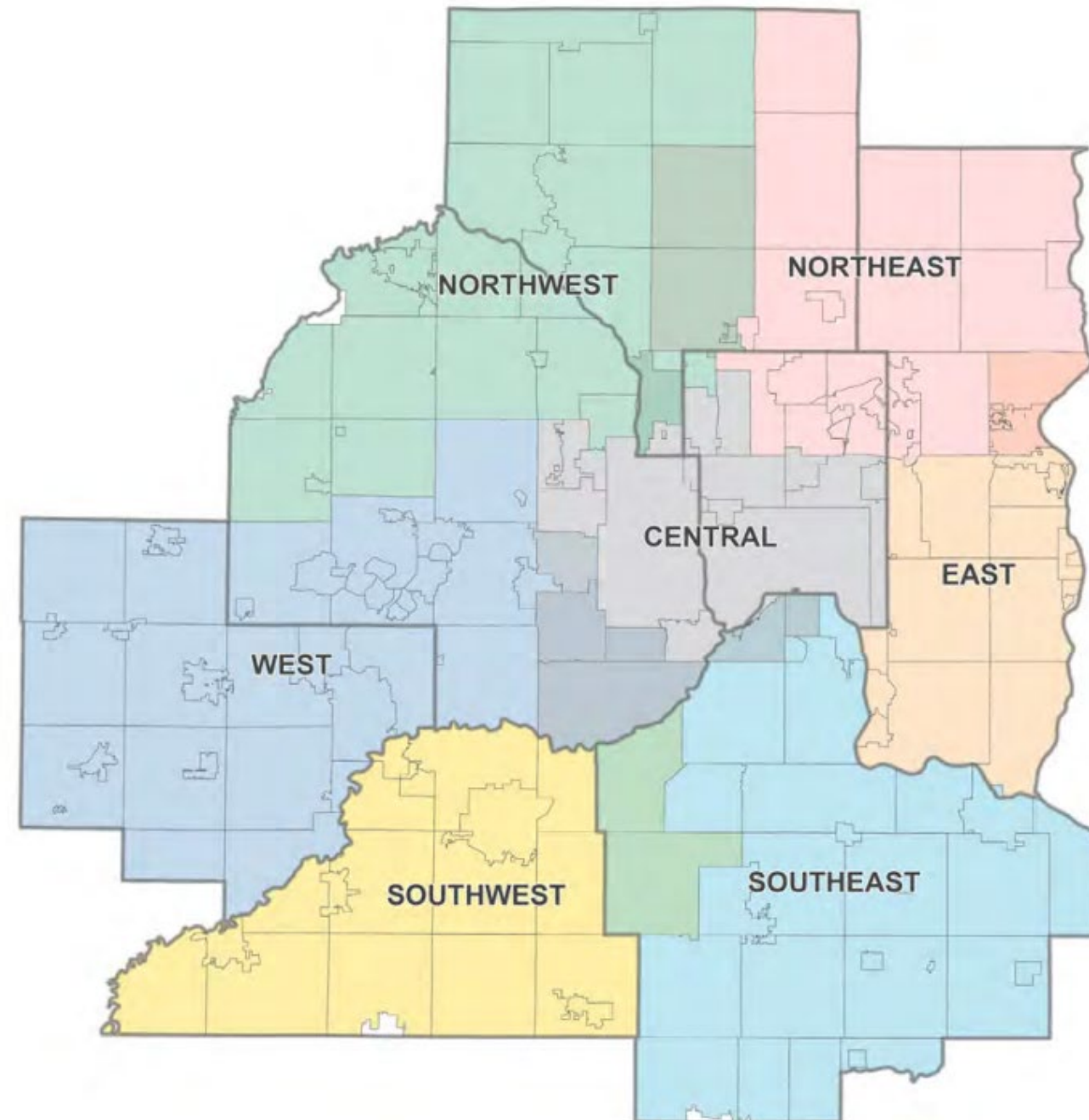
- The ***Minimum Requirements Checklist*** is a key resource in the Local Planning Handbook and must be clear and user-friendly.
- Each community (188 total) will receive a customized checklist
- Focus groups convened to:
 - Improve clarity and accessibility of requirements
 - Identify resource gaps



Water Resources Planning Tools

Providing guidance and supporting collaboration for local plan updates

- “How to” guidance for completing minimum requirements
- Templates for water-related plan content, including a water chapter template
- Best practices and example ordinances and water planning components
- Conferences and workshops, including joint event with DNR on local water supply plan updates
- Convening subregional planning groups



Transportation planning resources



Topic-based assistance for minimum requirements

- Roadways
- Transit
- Biking/Pedestrian
- Freight and Aviation

Planning beyond the minimums

- Integrated connections to equity & environmental justice and climate & natural systems
- TOD Guide Update
- Travel Demand Management strategies and approaches

Local Planning Handbook Demonstration



Natural Systems Planning Tools

Providing a natural systems regional planning framework

A mapping tool will help cities meet their requirements by connecting data to planning concepts.

A story map will provide context for the mapping tool.

Natural systems strategies will be part of the climate action toolkit.

Select a City:

Select a City

Click a city on the map or choose from the dropdown.

Data Categories

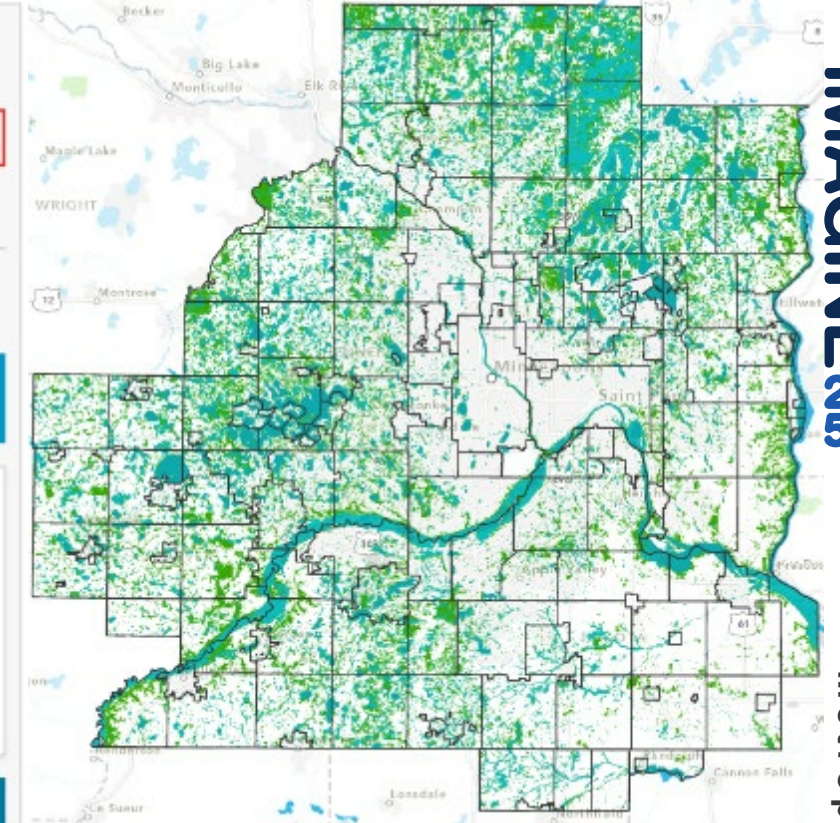
Getting Started	Existing Natural Systems	Significant and Sensitive Areas	Commonly Protected Areas	Opportunity Areas
-----------------	--------------------------	---------------------------------	--------------------------	-------------------

Existing Natural Systems are critical to inventory for the purposes of protecting and improving habitats. This layer contains data for terrestrial and aquatic systems.

Relevant Imagine 2050 Natural Systems Minimum Requirement: # 1

Identify existing natural systems in your community by mapping terrestrial areas and water bodies.

✓ Existing Natural Systems
Landcover MLCCS (Terrestrial)
Lakes & Rivers (Aquatic)
National Wetlands Inventory (Aquatic)



IMAGINE 2050

Metropolitan Council

Natural Systems Planning Tool Demo: [Natural-systems-mapping-tool-test](#)

Housing Interactive Tool and Implementation Strategies Toolkit

Local housing data

- Comprehensive plan requirements include an assessment of existing housing conditions
- Met Council will provide all required data as well as:
 - historical trends
 - downloadable charts
 - explanations about how the data can be used to determine local housing needs
 - connections to local and regional housing policies

Helping local governments to identify implementation strategies

- Provide a technical resource to assist local government partners in identifying housing actions for their comprehensive plans
- Toolkit of housing policies, programs and fiscal devices connected to various local and regional housing needs, each tool will have:
 - Considerations for implementation
 - Local examples and best practices
 - Ease/barriers to implementation
 - Met Council funding availability
 - Additional resources

IMAGINE 2000

Metropolitan Council

- 19

Building emissions (Metric tons of CO₂-equivalence)

Eagan

300k
250k
200k
150k
100k
50k
0

2005 2010 2015 2020 2025 2030 2035 2040 2045 2050

Year

..... Business-as-usual
Natural Gas
Electricity

Climate Action Toolkit

Name of the Sector

Title of the Action

Meets ____ Requirements

Supports ____ Plan Elements

This will be a description of the action. Consider including if there are actions a city needs to take before implementing the profile action or if there are other climate actions that pair well with this action. Aim for this description section to be about 150 words.

Duis aute irure dolor in reprehenderit in voluptate velit esse cillum dolore eu fugiat nulla pariatur. Excepteur sint occaecat cupidatat non proident, sunt in culpa qui officia deserunt mollit anim id est laborum. Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua. Ut enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exercitation ullamco laboris nisi ut aliquip.

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua. Ut enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exercitation ullamco laboris nisi ut aliquip ex ea commodo consequat.

Case Study or Local Regional Examples

This section can either include a single case study about one community in the region OR bullet points of three to five communities in the region who have completed this action with a sentence about their program/project. Aim for examples to be from the 7-County region as much as possible. If featuring a single community, consider highlighting key enabling actions, partnerships, or best practices. If featuring multiple communities, consider highlight different community types and what makes a community's approach to this action unique. In total, this section should be about 100-125 words.

Resources for Implementation

- This will be a resource for implementation. Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit.
- Sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua.
- Ut enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exercitation ullamco laboris nisi ut aliquip ex ea commodo consequat.
- Duis aute irure dolor in reprehenderit in voluptate velit esse cillum.

Action Impacts



Greenhouse Gas Emissions



Extreme Heat



Localized Flooding



Public Health



Economic Growth



Equity



Resilient Infrastructure



Biodiversity



Water Quality

Ease of Implementation



Low Risk

High Ambition

Potential Partners:

Community Designation



Environmental Justice/Community Considerations

This will pull community feedback on this actions and/or general themes from community engagement on climate action broadly. Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua. Ut enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exercitation ullamco laboris nisi ut aliquip ex ea commodo consequat. Duis aute irure dolor in reprehenderit in voluptate velit esse cillum dolore eu fugiat nulla pariatur.

Profiling example climate actions

- Purpose: Provide a technical resource to assist local government partners in identifying climate actions for their comprehensive plans
- Toolkit of climate actions covering all required mitigation and adaptation sectors, detailing:
 - Action impact
 - Case studies or examples
 - Environmental justice considerations
 - Ease of implementation
 - Additional resources

Plant Program Update





2026 – 2028 PlanIt Program: Comprehensive planning technical assistance

Webinars

Workshops

Conference

Tutorials/Demos

NewsBlasts



Internal Coordination Continues



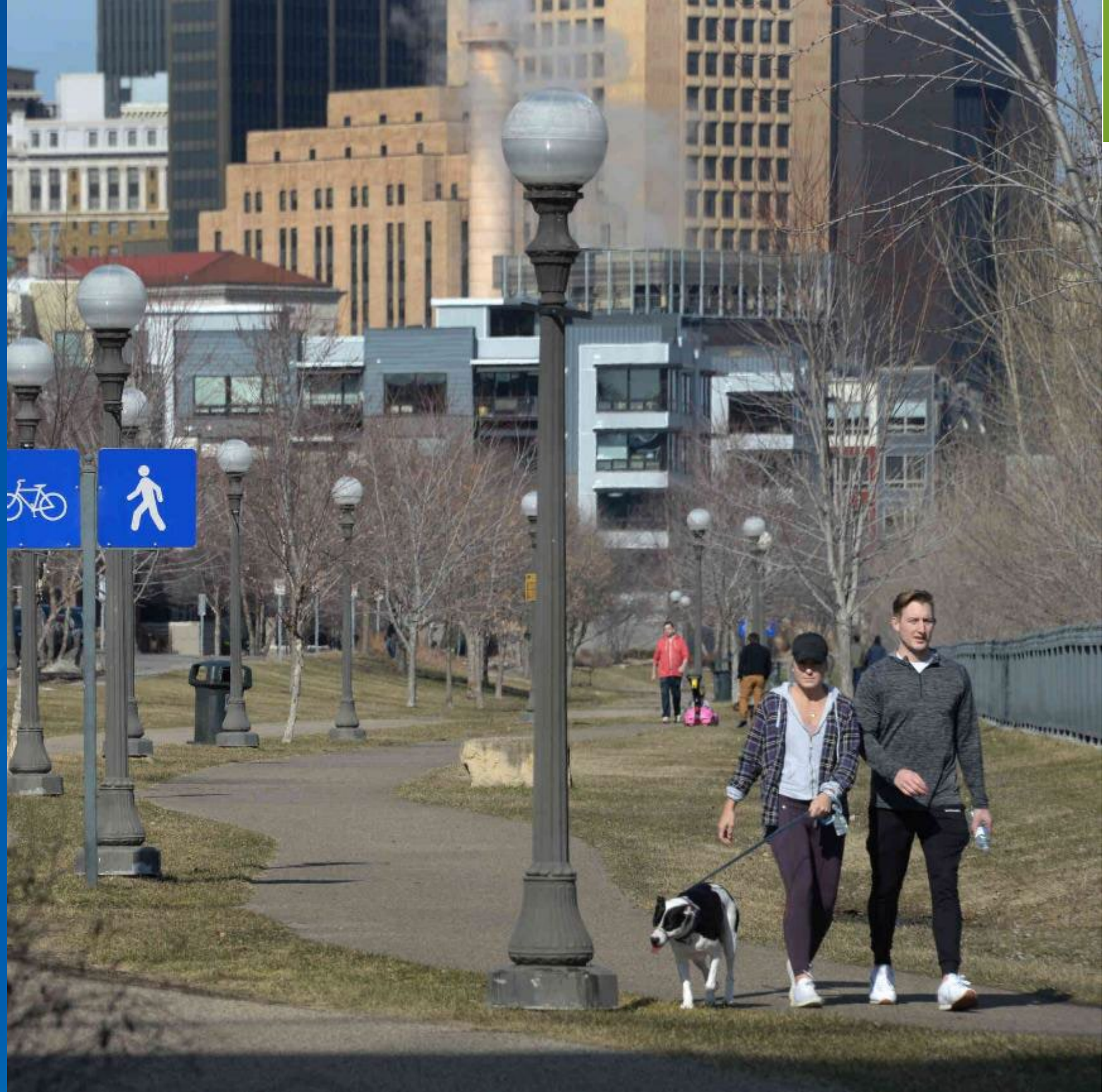
PlanIt Logo and
Branding materials

Continued coordination
and planning with PlanIt
leads

PlanIt 2026 Program
Overview will be posted
on the PlanIt site this
Fall

PlanIt training and education program scheduled to begin in early 2026.

Sector Representatives and Technical Teams




Sector Representatives

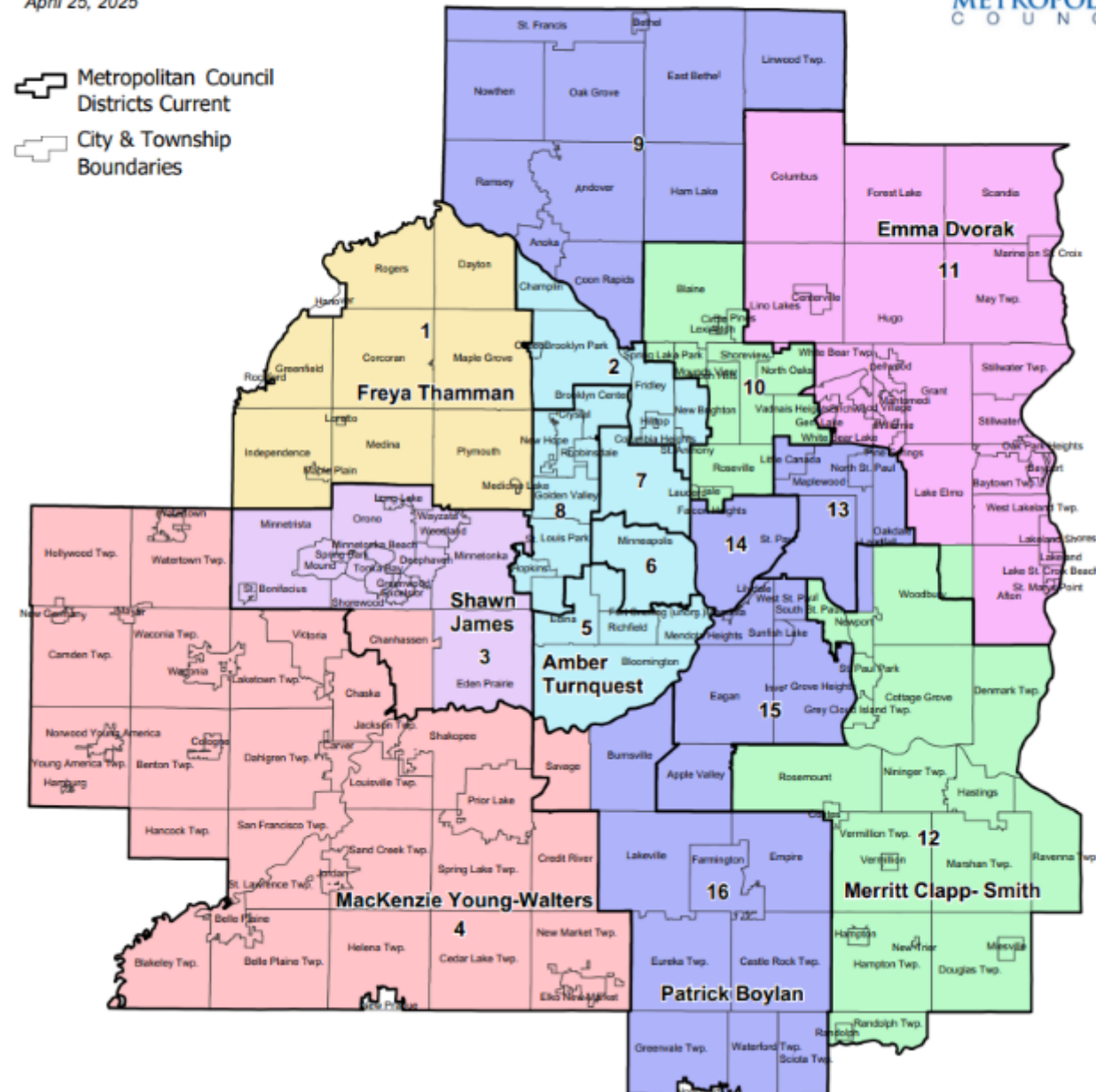
Sector Representatives

- Communicate across boundaries and work units
- Provide technical assistance to local governments
- Coordinate the Council's review process
- Develop and implement regional policy
- [Link to Current Sector Representatives Map](#)

Metropolitan Council Sector Representatives

April 25, 2025

-  Metropolitan Council Districts Current
-  City & Township Boundaries



Internal technical reviewer training

Comprehensive Plan Review Training and Criteria Development

Training program for technical reviewers

- Prepare for the 2050 process
- Develop and hold periodic “refresher” events
- Train and onboarding new staff throughout the process.

Goals

1. **Shared understanding:** knowledge of the standards and criteria for conducting reviews
2. **Communicate:** share reasoning behind review determinations internally
3. **Efficiency and Transparency:** Identifying the errors and how to best communicate to local governments

Planning Assistance Grants and the Small Communities Planning Program



Statutory Authorization

Minn. Stat. §473.191 Local Planning Assistance, subd. 1

- Enables the Council to enter into contracts or make other arrangements with local governments units to provide services or assist with comprehensive planning.
- Primary purpose:
 - local comprehensive plans
 - fiscal devices
 - official controls

Minn. Stat. §473.867 Planning Assistance; Grants; Loans

- Establishes the Planning Assistance Fund
- States that in making grants and loans, the Council shall base its decisions on the recipient's demonstrated need and available financial resources.*
- Directs the Council to give priority for the use of funds for comprehensive plans, fiscal devices, and official controls.

**Underlining added to slide for emphasis*

Targeted Assistance

What we learned from the 2040 Plan Update Cycle

1. Very small communities struggled to update plans, even with planning grant assistance
2. Grants alone were not sufficient to help the small communities complete their plans.
3. Growth didn't appear to impact the effort communities undertook to update their plan.
4. Total planning expenditures for grantee communities varied widely, even across communities of similar size and conditions.

Indicators of Need

1. Population is a strong indicator of local capacity to plan – staffing and budgets increase with population
2. Financial capacity relative to similarly sized communities
3. Planning for fast growth or for infill & redevelopment are similarly challenging

Proposal for a Small Communities Planning Program



Program Intent

- Provide direct professional planning and engineering services to the region's smallest communities to help update local comprehensive plans.

Program Goal

- Reduce burden of comprehensive plan updates for the communities with the least capacity to manage them.

Program Method

- Create staff capacity In Local Planning Assistance to lead technical work of comprehensive plan updates for about 30 communities. Communities would still lead vision, priority setting, and policy decisions.

Eligibility Criteria Analysis Considerations

Who Needs Help?

Outreach to staff and planning consultants who worked with a range of communities during 2040.

- Population and financial capacity identified as biggest determinants of need.

Simplify Options

Reduce overlap in eligibility between options.

- Revised grant eligibility to better serve small and medium size communities.
- Proposed development of a Small Communities Planning Program to help the smallest communities.

Analytics

Under revised grant options, focus of support shifts.

- Same number of communities eligible for grants (68*).
- More small and medium size communities served; largest cities not eligible.
- More older, slower growing, and financially constrained communities served.

** An additional 20 townships are served under the “County” grants to Scott and Carver.*

Eligibility Criteria Analysis Considerations

“On the Cusp”

- 3% variation in current population would NOT change who is eligible
- 3% variation in net tax capacity per capita would NOT change who is eligible

2024 Population

- In June, Met Council updated current population from 2023 to 2024
- Change impacted who was eligible based on population criteria and net tax capacity per capita criteria:
 - Grant eligible communities increased from 63 to 68
 - Small Communities Program eligible communities increased from 30 to 32

2025 Net Tax Capacity

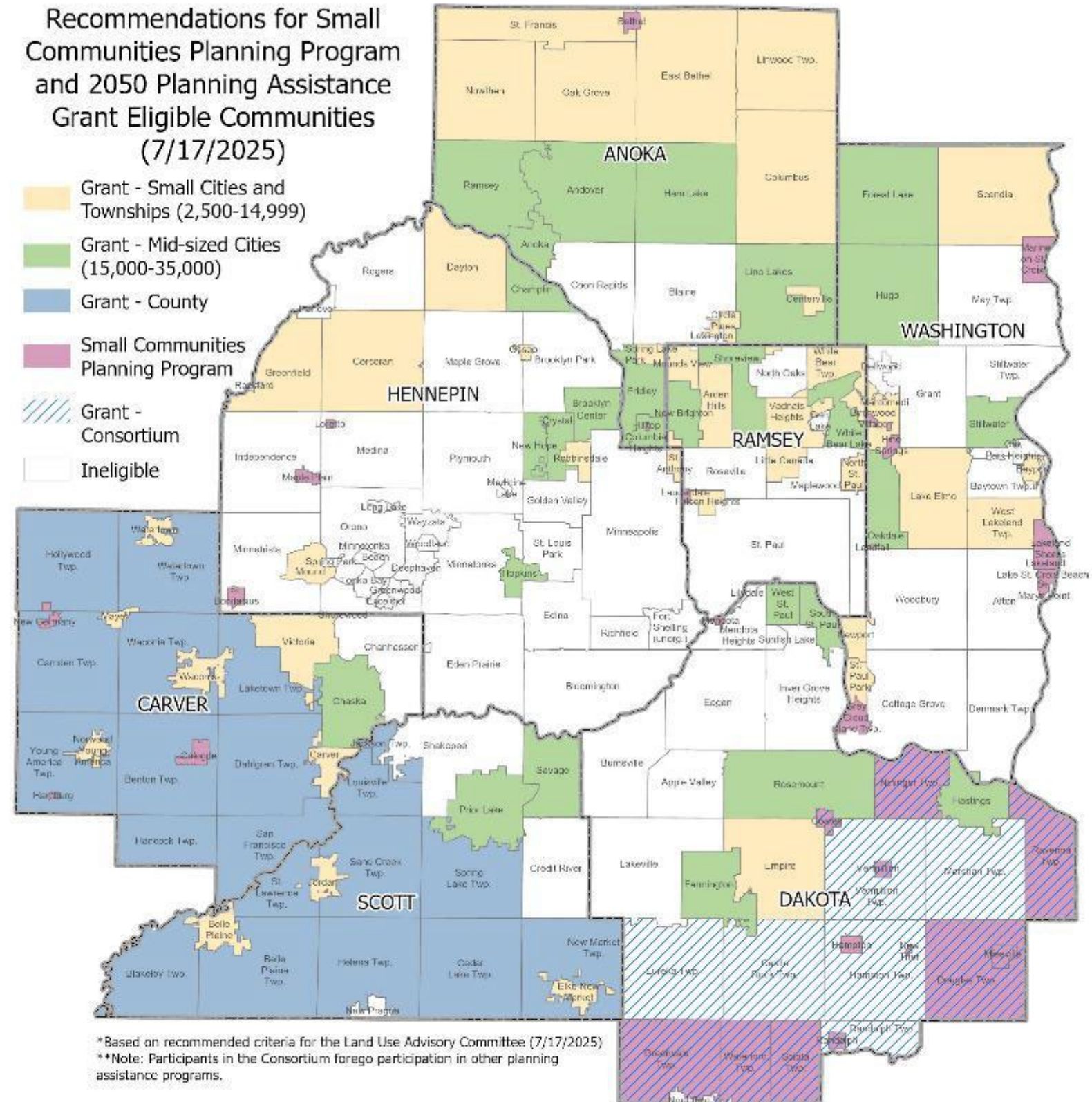
- In late July, MN Dept of Revenue will release 2025 Net Tax Capacity data for communities
- In August, staff will update the eligibility analysis based on changes to Net Tax Capacity per Capita calculations
- It is VERY likely that list of eligible communities will change

** An additional 20 townships are served under the “County” grants to Scott and Carver.*

Analysis results

Recommendations for Small Communities Planning Program and 2050 Planning Assistance Grant Eligible Communities (7/17/2025)

- Grant - Small Cities and Townships (2,500-14,999)
- Grant - Mid-sized Cities (15,000-35,000)
- Grant - County
- Small Communities Planning Program
- Grant - Consortium
- Ineligible



*Based on recommended criteria for the Land Use Advisory Committee (7/17/2025)

**Note: Participants in the Consortium forego participation in other planning assistance programs.

Recommendations for 2050 Small Communities Program Eligibility Criteria

2050 Small Communities Program Recommendations

	Current Population (2024)	Net Tax Capacity Per Capita (metro median = 100%)	# of Communities Eligible by Criteria	Total # of Communities Eligible for the Program
General Eligibility Criteria	Under 500	Less/equal to 175% metro median	13	32
	OR			
	500 to 999	Less/equal to 150% metro median	11	
	OR			
	1,000 to 2,500	Less/equal to 125% metro median	8	

IMAGINE 2050

35

Recommendations for Small Communities Planning Program
Eligible Communities
 (7/17/2025)

Small Communities Planning Program
 Ineligible

HENNEPIN
ANOKA
RAMSEY
WASHINGTON
CARVER
SCOTT
DAKOTA

*Based on recommended criteria for the Land Use Advisory Committee (7/17/2025)

*Based on recommended criteria for the Land Use Advisory Committee (7/17/2025)

Recommendations for 2050 Planning Assistance Grant Program Eligibility Criteria

2050 Planning Assistance Grant Program Recommendations

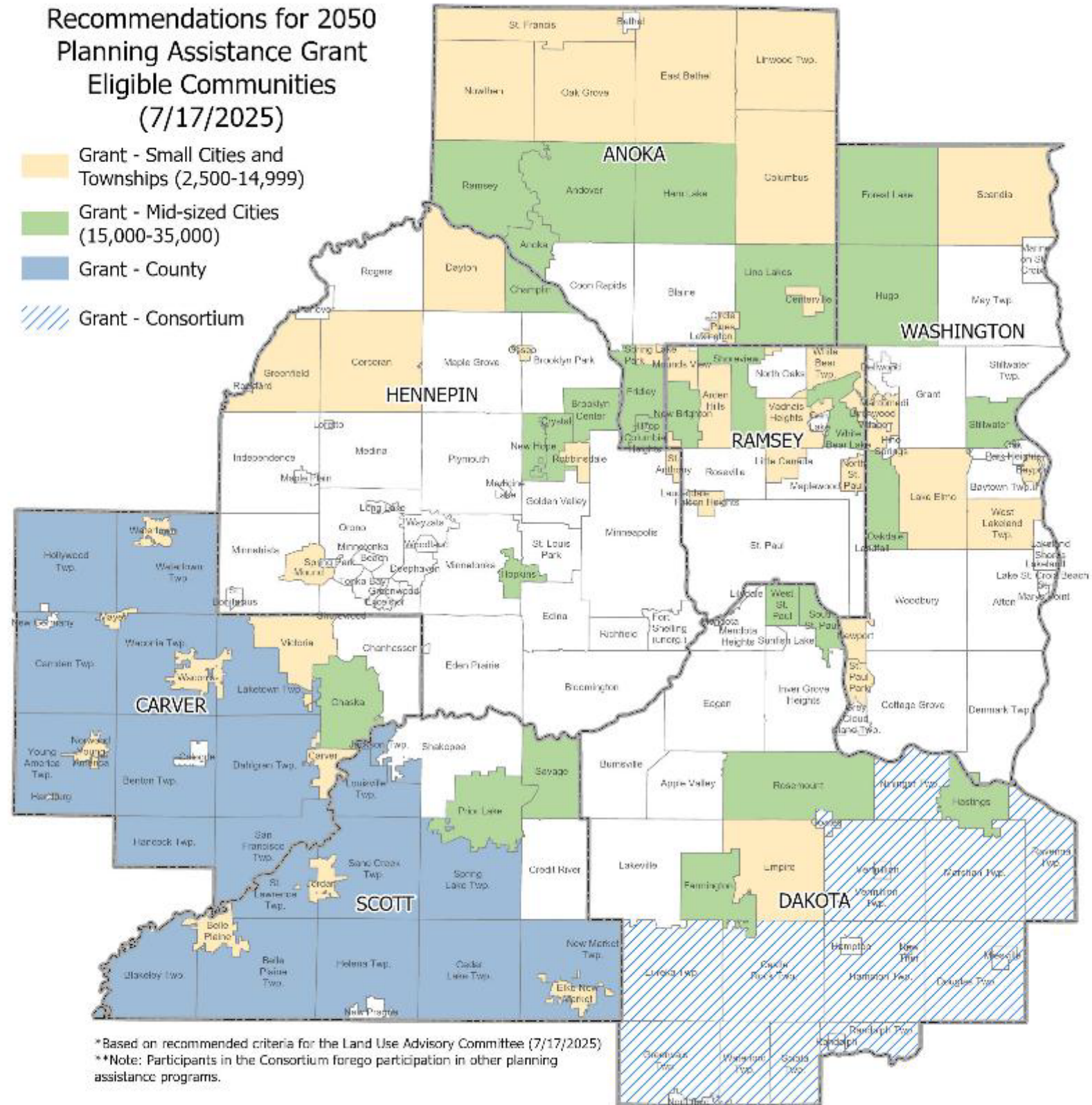
	Current Population	Net Tax Capacity Per Capita (metro median = 100%)	# of Communities Eligible by Criteria	# Eligible for Planning Assistance Grant
General Eligibility Criteria	2,500 to 14,999	Less/equal to 125% metro median	41	68
	OR			
	15,000 to 35,000	Less/equal to 100% metro median	27	
County or Consortium Eligibility Criteria	County with land use planning authority for townships within their jurisdiction		20	2 jurisdictions
	OR			
	Consortium of 5 or more Dakota County communities in the Rural Service Area working collaboratively on their comprehensive plan updates*		17	1 group

**Note: Participants in the Consortium forego participation in other planning assistance programs.*

Map of Recommendations for 2050 Planning Assistance Grant Eligible Communities

Recommendations for 2050 Planning Assistance Grant Eligible Communities (7/17/2025)

- Grant - Small Cities and Townships (2,500-14,999)
- Grant - Mid-sized Cities (15,000-35,000)
- Grant - County
- Grant - Consortium



*Based on recommended criteria for the Land Use Advisory Committee (7/17/2025)
 **Note: Participants in the Consortium forego participation in other planning assistance programs.

Upcoming discussions with the Land Use Advisory Committee

Incentive Opportunities

For grant-eligible communities, provides an opportunity to add to their total grant award by opting into incentive programs related to:

- Advancing Regional Goals (equity, healthy & safe communities, etc.)
- Early Plan completion

Funding Priorities for Grant Awards

Need confirmation of funding priorities to guide staff recommendations to CDC on distribution of funding.

- Award categories proposed to remain the same (sewered, unsewered, county/consortium)
- Serve as many communities as practical with approximately the same/similar awards, adjusting for inflation

Small Community Program Considerations

Program budget constraints, especially for engineering costs related to wastewater, water supply, and surface water management. Considerations

- Regional sewer service, local sewer service, or unsewered
- Local water supplier, or not
- Watershed Districts and impaired waters
- Other agency planning requirements / timelines (DNR, watersheds, etc.)
- Local cost-share options

Discussion



Question Prompts

- What other questions do you have about the comprehensive planning process?
 - System statements
 - Local Planning Handbook and other technical assistance
 - Funding and planning support programs
- How can we support you as you work with local governments through the comprehensive planning process?

Thank you

Amber Turnquest, Senior Planner
Amber.Turnquest@metc.state.mn.us

Emma Dvorak, Senior Planner
Emma.Dvorak@metc.state.mn.us

Peter Wilfahrt, Principal Researcher
emma.dvorak@metc.state.mn.us

Merritt Clapp-Smith, Senior Planner
Merritt.Clapp-Smith@metc.state.mn.us

Angela R. Torres, Senior Manager
Angela.Torres@metc.state.mn.us

