



Equity and Regional Balance: Proposed Policy Direction

For confirmation October 30, 2013

Overall direction

The Metropolitan Council will intentionally use its resources, roles and authorities to advance both equity and regional balance across the metropolitan area.

Separating “equity” and “regional balance”

The Council will address both *equity* and *regional balance*:

- equity focuses on investments that mitigate and eliminate the place-based component of disparities by race, ethnicity, income, immigrant status and disability;
- regional balance focuses on balancing the portfolio of investments and activity across the region.

Equity and regional balance do interact – for example, a lack of regional balance could lead to private disinvestment in some parts of the region that then become impoverished. Equity and regional balance are also different concepts. For example, Carver and Washington Counties have similar levels of wealth and demographic profiles but are on opposite sides of the region; a balanced approach to investments in these counties could advance regional balance but not equity. Conversely, developing investment strategies that address how the racial and economic profile of Brooklyn Center varies from Maple Grove could advance equity without addressing regional balance. Calling out both equity and regional balance as separate ideas will help the Council address both issues in its policymaking.

Advancing equity

The Council believes that the region can become more equitable across race, ethnicity, income, immigrant status and disability status. The Council will use equity as a lens to evaluate its operational, planning, and investment decisions. By using public investment to catalyze private investment in areas that have seen chronic private disinvestment – such as the Racially-Concentrated Areas of Poverty identified through the Fair Housing and Equity Assessment – the Council will seek to help the region grow and prosper more equitably.

The Council will use its financial tools to advance equity across the region, including:

- Using Livable Communities Act resources to catalyze private investment in Racially-Concentrated Areas of Poverty;
- Investing in affordable housing construction and preservation in higher-income areas of the region;
- Prioritizing transportation investments, including transitways, strategic highway capacity improvements, and bicycle / pedestrian infrastructure, that connect lower-income areas to job opportunities;
- Asking funding applicants to explain how their projects, if funded, would advance equity, including by helping residents of Racially-Concentrated Areas of Poverty and/or lower-income households;
- Strengthening usage of regional parks and trails by households of color.

Because the challenges of equity requires aligning efforts, the Council will convene multiple partners, including cities, counties, school districts, non-profits and philanthropy, to develop shared plans and investment strategies to address the issues of Racially-Concentrated Areas of Poverty. The Council will play a leadership role in this strategy, bringing data to the table and co-convening conversations with partner institutions. Out of these conversations, the Council may explore creating funding set-asides or special investment resources to create opportunities in Racially-Concentrated Areas of Poverty.

Public Participation Plan

The Council will develop a Councilwide Public Participation Plan parallel with the adoption of *Thrive* to deepen the robustness and alignment of the Council's engagement work. In the development of this Public Participation Plan, the Council will:

- Define consistent expectations of how the Council will engage;
- Build on the conversations held in the Council's Equity Working Group;
- Evaluate what types of policy, planning and operational decisions need what levels of engagement, recognizing that not all decisions need and merit the same intensity of engagement;
- Incorporate the learnings of and best practices from the Corridors of Opportunity community engagement work;
- Consult with members of the community, including the Community Engagement Steering Committee;
- Focus on developing lasting relationships rather than transactional approaches;
- Work toward making decisions with people, not for people.

Council staff will develop the Public Participation Plan in the first quarter of 2014, working toward a formal Council adoption in the late spring or early summer, prior to the completion of the Transportation Policy Plan that requires an adopted Public Participation Plan.

Advancing regional balance

The Council will intentionally consider regional balance in its planning, operational, investment decisions to ensure that no part of the region is consistently favored or consistently ignored. Regional balance is an issue in multiple dimensions; sometimes the issue is north vs. south or east vs. west, other times the issue is developing suburbs vs. older suburbs vs. the urban core. Because development patterns vary across the region, advancing regional balance does not guarantee that all parts of the region will receive the same level or intensity of investments; rather, advancing regional balance will be a consideration that works toward all parts of the region receiving the investments that best fit their stage and level of development.

Additional detail about equity will be developed and adopted in the Housing Policy Plan, the Regional Parks Policy Plan, the Transportation Policy Plan, and the Water Resources Policy Plan.