



Agricultural Policy: Proposed Policy Direction

For confirmation June 26, 2013

Preservation of agricultural land

The Metropolitan Council supports the preservation of agricultural land to protect the region's agricultural economy, to provide economic opportunities for farmers, and to promote local food production. The Metropolitan Council limits urbanization in rural areas to reduce development pressure on agricultural lands and to avoid the premature expansion of metropolitan systems. Specific strategies, with responsibility shared between the Council and local jurisdictions, are to:

- Promote the use of the Agricultural Preserves program to preserve prime agricultural lands.
- Adopt zoning ordinances and/or official controls to maintain appropriate agricultural densities.
- Develop and implement strategies for protecting farmlands, such as exclusive agricultural zoning, agricultural security districts, and lower residential densities.
- Minimize conflicts between agricultural and non-farm uses through local ordinances and official controls.

Some of the region's agricultural lands are identified as part of the Council's long-term service area for post-2040 sewered development, giving the Council greater authority to ensure long-term agricultural uses and avoid premature development until urban densities are needed to accommodate regional growth.

Infrastructure investment in agricultural areas

In areas where agriculture is expected to be the primary long-term land use, the Council will invest in infrastructure such as roads, wastewater treatment, and parks and open space to provide rural levels of service consistent with the intent to maintain agriculture, including transportation infrastructure consistent with market access and the agribusiness needs of the area.

Agricultural uses outside of agricultural areas

The Council recognizes that agricultural land uses, particularly small-scale farming associated with farmer's markets, exist across the region beyond the land explicitly designated for long-term agricultural uses. The Council appreciates the role that these agricultural uses play in creating economic opportunities for farmers and promoting local food production and will work with local jurisdictions to support these smaller agricultural uses.

Additional detail about agricultural policy will be discussed with future conversations about water supply, wastewater service, Metropolitan Urban Services Area and Geographic Planning Areas as well as in the Transportation Policy Plan and the Water Resources Policy Plan.