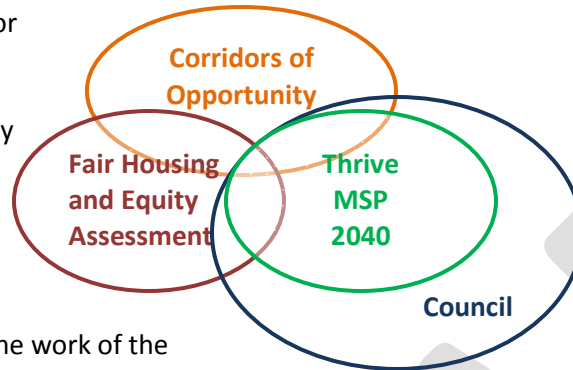


Equity and Balance in *Thrive MSP 2040*

Scope, authority, and roles

Thrive MSP 2040, as a vehicle for policy, is part of a broader examination of impacts and approaches to addressing equity in the region. *Thrive MSP 2040* overlaps with the functions, intent and authority of the [Fair Housing and Equity Assessment](#) (FHEA) and other regional discussions including the work of the [Corridors of Opportunity](#).



According to [state statute](#), *Thrive MSP 2040* shall guide the “the orderly and economical development, public and private, of the metropolitan area” and furthermore “recognize and encompass physical, social, or economic needs of the metropolitan area”.

The Council plays a number of roles through which it can advance equity:

- Service provider (e.g., providing transit and wastewater treatment, and operating the Metro HRA to distribute Section 8 vouchers)
- Regional planner (e.g., developing *Thrive* and the systems and policy plans, and reviewing local comprehensive plans)
- Funder (e.g., distributing Livable Communities Act grants)
- Information provider (e.g., conducting research to understand underutilization of regional parks by communities of color)
- Convener (e.g., convening the Corridors of Opportunity)
- Partner (e.g., participating in Penn Avenue Community Works)
- Employer (e.g., providing summer jobs for Minneapolis high school students through STEP-UP)
- Contractor (e.g., including hiring goals for communities of color among contractors building the Green Line)

Today’s discussion focuses on how the Council can directly advance equity through *Thrive MSP 2040* via the first six roles in the above list.

In fall 2012 and winter 2013, the Council proposed the following **equity** principle for *Thrive MSP 2040*:

- *Connecting all residents to opportunities such as good jobs, transportation choices, safe and stable housing, a range of parks and natural areas, and vibrant public spaces.*
- *The opportunities and challenges of growth and change are equitably shared across our communities, both geographic and cultural.*
- *All residents and communities are involved as full and equal partners in public decision-making. Some residents and communities may require different approaches to ensure full participation and benefit from access to opportunity.*

Today’s equity discussion is strongly connected to past and future *Thrive* discussions, particularly including:

- Economic Competitiveness and Prosperity;
- Geographic Planning Areas;
- Priorities for Affordable Housing;
- Regional Parks and Trails;
- Transportation (Transit Investment).

Existing policy direction

Like climate change and economic competitiveness, equity is a new framing for the work of the Metropolitan Council. Nonetheless, the Council is already engaged in many activities to promote racial and economic equity. In addition to those identified in the previous section, these include:

- Providing higher rent limits in certain cities to allow Section 8 voucher recipients to live in higher income areas of the region;
- Conducting Title VI service equity analyses to ensure that major changes in transit service do not lead to disparate impacts on low-income and communities of color;

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- Requiring that local jurisdictions requesting [Livable Communities TOD grants](#) (see p. 20) adopt an official local controls regarding equity considerations in the TOD area.

Emerging tensions

In 2005, the Brookings Institution produced [Mind the Gap](#), outlining the disparities in the region between socioeconomic status and outcomes for communities of color compared to the white population in the Twin Cities. The Mind the Gap research catalyzed broad policy awareness of the extent of racial disparities in the region.

Over the last few years, transitway planning across the region has surfaced tensions about equity and engagement, beginning with the early plans for the Central Corridor that excluded stops at Western, Victoria and Hamline Avenues. More recently, the discussions of both Southwest LRT and Bottineau LRT have asked how to effectively use transitway investment to increase access to opportunity for the residents of North Minneapolis.

Triggered by the HUD Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant, the [Fair Housing and Equity Assessment](#) has led the region through a process to understand its historical and present geography of race, poverty and opportunity and to explore whether and how public investments can effectively address a legacy of private disinvestment in select neighborhoods. The [Fair Housing and Equity Assessment](#) introduced the focus on racially-concentrated areas of poverty – census tracts where at least half of the population are residents of color and at least 40 percent of the residents live below 185 percent of the federal poverty line.

Emerging Thrive policy direction

Through its summer of *Thrive* policy discussions, the Council has defined policy directions to advance racial and economic equity:

- [Economic Competitiveness and Prosperity](#): The Council indicated interest in pursuing a metrowide inventory of industrial land that

includes accessibility to potential workers.

- [Geographic Planning Areas](#): The Council expressed interest in reflecting Racially Concentrated Areas of Poverty as a geography relevant to *Thrive* policy.
- [Priorities for Affordable Housing](#): The Council wants to preserve a mix of housing affordability along the region's transitways to help ensure that low-income households benefit from the transit investments. The Council will use its resources to help create and preserve racially-integrated, mixed-income neighborhoods across the region. Where ill-functioning markets are leading to concentrations of race, poverty and affordable housing, the Council will work with communities to create more balanced neighborhoods, including strategically targeted subsidies to develop market-rate housing.
- [Regional Parks and Trails](#): The Council will collaborate with local, regional and state partners to strengthen equitable usage of regional parks and trails.
- [Transportation \(Transit Investment\)](#): The Council will continue to strongly support and grow transit connections between lower-income or disadvantaged residents and opportunities such as jobs and education, including improving access to opportunity for residents of racially concentrated areas of poverty.

Questions for discussion

- A. **Elevating an integrated approach to public participation** Under federal guidelines, the quadrennial Transportation Policy Plan must include a [Public Participation Plan](#). The Public Participation Plan included with the Transportation Policy Plan focuses solely on transportation planning. No other systems or policy plan has a mandatory element of public participation beyond a public hearing although all have public processes. Should the Council elevate its policy guidance on public participation to the *Thrive* level? Options:
 - Stay with the status quo and keep the Public Participation Plan with the Transportation Policy Plan; OR

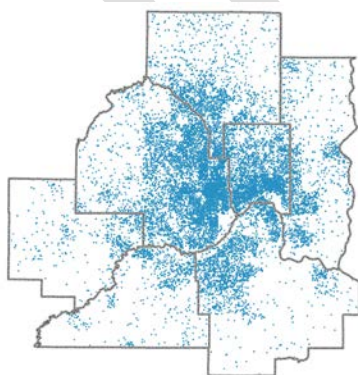
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- Elevate the Public Participation Plan to a Council-wide level in order to develop robust, deeper and more aligned attention on engagement within and across the Council;
- Explore with members of the community, including historically-underrepresented communities, what practices should be included in the Council's Public Participation Plan and reflect the engagement lessons learned from the Corridors of Opportunity;
- Adopt the Public Participation Plan parallel to *Thrive*.

- B. Refining the Council's definition of equity** The Council developed its current definition of the equity principle – including both geographic and cultural equity – through Committee of the Whole discussions last winter. Since then, Council staff have been working to integrate the equity principle through the systems and policy plans and have found that the principle's current definition provides unclear direction about the Council's priorities. What definition of equity will the Council advance through *Thrive*?
- Proposal: Develop a definition of **regional balance** addressing the distribution of goods and services; and a parallel definition of **equity** addressing disparities across race, ethnicity, income, disability and immigrant status (specific language to be proposed later)

- C. Advancing regional balance** What is the Council willing to do to advance regional balance in order to serve all residents of the region while being an effective steward of public resources?

- Define common base criteria for infrastructure investment and grant priorities implemented transparently and consistently across the region, acknowledging that some areas will compete more effectively than others;
- Create set-asides to ensure regional balance similar to the Council's current guidelines that



state that up to 40 percent of Livable Communities Demonstration Account grant funds may be awarded to projects located in Minneapolis and St. Paul.

- D. Advancing racial and economic equity through grants and investment priorities** How should the Council use its financial tools to advance racial and economic equity across the region?

- Use Livable Communities Act resources to catalyze private investment in Racially-Concentrated Areas of Poverty:
 - Invest in market-rate housing to increase income diversity;
 - Allow cities to use Tax Base Revitalization Account funds to clean up polluted land prior to an identified development project, thereby making it easier to redevelop polluted brownfield land quickly
- Prioritize transitway investments that serve lower-income areas;
- Ask applicants for Council grants to explain how their projects help residents of Racially-Concentrated Areas of Poverty;
- Use equity as a lens to evaluate the Council's operational and planning decisions.

- E. Improving the alignment between the Council's affordable housing strategy and its transit investment strategy** The Council's current housing priorities encourage new affordable housing in suburban communities, creating expectations of new transit service independent of development patterns. Funding priorities for affordable housing, however, benefit locations already well-served by transit, frustrating communities interested in additional affordable housing but who do not have significant transit service. How can the Council more effectively integrate transit policy and affordable housing policy?

- Prioritize and encourage affordable housing investment in areas already well-served by existing transit;
- Discourage expectations of new transit service associated with affordable housing investment;
- Encourage local governments to focus new affordable housing along corridors with existing transit or the potential for future transit.