

## Community Development Committee

Meeting date: April 20, 2015

**Subject:** Regional Economic Competitiveness – Research, Information, and Technical Assistance for Planning

**District(s), Members:** All

**Policy/Legal Reference:** Minn. Stat. § 473.867

**Staff Prepared/Presented:** Ryan Garcia, AICP, Senior Planner (651) 602-1832

**Division/Department:** Community Development/Local Planning Assistance

### Proposed Action

Information item only.

### Overview

*THRIVE MSP 2040* acknowledges regional economic competitiveness as a core element of the region's sustained prosperity. Our prosperity depends upon strategic, long-term and well-informed public and private planning and policies that build on and grow our region's unique strengths and advantages. Collectively, the region must provide great locations for businesses to succeed – particularly those industries that export products or services beyond the metropolitan area and bring revenue and jobs to the region.

Drawing upon input received at informational workshops held in the third and fourth quarter of 2014, Community Development staff committed the first quarter of 2015 to the development of information and research products relating to the region's economic competitiveness. These resources are primarily intended for local communities who choose to voluntarily integrate economic competitiveness into their 2016-2018 comprehensive plan updates, and work continues on all elements of the research agenda. Our first quarter work culminated with a March 26 Focus Session on two of the six primary elements of the 2015 research agenda<sup>1</sup>: “**Key Industry Clusters**” and “**Occupations**”. The convening event drew 30 attendees from across the 7-County Region, including city and county planning and administrative staff, economic development professionals, and partners such as GREATER MSP and MetroCities.

This presentation highlights selected research findings and work products, summarizes participant feedback from the March 26 focus sessions, and introduces the remainder of the 2015 research agenda – all of which are important components as we frame the economic competitiveness research agenda as a valuable component of the Local Planning Handbook and local comprehensive planning. For additional detail, committee members are encouraged to visit the project website at: <http://metro council.org/Communities/Services/Research-Info-and-Technical-Assistance.aspx>.

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<sup>1</sup> The six elements of the 2015 research agenda are: 1) key industry clusters; 2) real estate requirements of key industry clusters; 3) sites for economic growth; 4) freight and logistics; 5) occupations; 6) access to jobs.

## 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2015 – Accomplishments of Note

- Launched the project web page at <http://metro council.org/Communities/Services/Research-Info-and-Technical-Assistance.aspx>, to serve as an online portal for the program as it matures.
- Prepared a 2015 Research Agenda, which will focus on 6 primary components (see footnote on Page 1). This agenda is based upon the insights and suggestions given at 2014 events by local and county planning and economic development professionals.
- Began developing a catalog of detailed information about the 7-county region's industry mix and employment dynamics, which has helped to inform the "Key Industry Clusters" and "Occupations" elements of the project especially. This dataset is made available through a data sharing agreement with the state's Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED), and will continue to be maintained.
- Prepared "The Economic Competitiveness of the Twin Cities Region". This MetroStats report provides a level of economic information that is unmatched in recent Council publications, and will serve to inform a shared local and regional understanding of the region's strengths, resiliencies, and challenges as we approach the upcoming comprehensive plan update process. See <http://metro council.org/METC/files/97/9778ef1c-9c29-44e4-9cf7-43f30b8c58e9.pdf>.
- Coordinated with the University of Minnesota's Humphrey School of Public Affairs on the mutual advancement of the "Key Industry Clusters" research element.
- Engaged (and continue to engage) site selection professionals across the public and private sectors through one-to-one contacts and administration of a "Site Selection Survey". Although still at an early stage, these efforts will inform two of the core elements of the 2015 research agenda: "Real Estate Requirements of Key Industry Clusters" and "Sites for Economic Growth".
- Established a cross-departmental work team (Community Development and MTS) to advance the research agenda on the "Freight and Logistics" element. In addition, Council staff has coordinated with MnDOT to share information and resources on this element.
- Contributions of content and framework elements of the "Economic Competitiveness" section of the Local Planning Handbook (in development).
- Conducted Spring Focus Sessions on March 26 to consider Council-produced research products in the "Key Industry Clusters" and "Occupations" research elements and their applicability to comprehensive planning.

## Schedule and Status

So far in 2015, this program has generated significant opportunities for collaboration with stakeholders throughout the region, and shows promise to align with and supplement local strategies and programs moving forward. The research agenda has and will continue to evolve, in order to be a useful resource in the 2016-2018 Comprehensive Planning cycle and beyond. Staff is coordinating additional information updates to the CDC this year, to include additional detail on industry clusters and access to jobs, research tools related to understanding real estate and site selection issues, and the integration of economic competitiveness into the local planning handbook.