

Community Development Committee

Meeting date: October 17, 2016

Subject: MUSA Policy Overview

District(s), Member(s): ALL

Policy/Legal Reference: Minn. Stat. § 473.145 and § 473.851

Staff Prepared/Presented: LisaBeth Barajas, Local Planning Assistance Manager (651-602-1895)

Division/Department: Community Development / Regional Planning

Proposed Action

None. This is an information item only.

Background

Staff will provide an overview of the Metropolitan Urban Service Area (MUSA), how it has evolved over the Council's history, and how it is defined in current policy (*Thrive MSP 2040*). Staff will also discuss the existing MUSA Implementation Guidelines last revised in 2007 (attached), and will proposed next steps in updating the guidelines, as they are used in the review of comprehensive plans and plan amendments.

Revised Metropolitan Urban Service Area (MUSA) Implementation Guidelines

November 2007

Background

Local comprehensive plans for “developing” communities submitted in the 1998 comprehensive plan updates (CPUs) identified the timing and staging of lands available for urban development to 2020; and, in many cases, areas planned for longer-term urbanization, often described as urban reserve areas. These areas planned for new development were expected to ultimately achieve a minimum net residential density of 3 dwelling units per acre when wastewater services became available.

To ensure an adequate supply of urban land to accommodate future regional growth the Council continues to monitor the region’s land supply. Monitoring includes designation of 2020-2030 land uses; enforcement of minimum urban density standards of 3-5 dwelling units per net residential acre in sewered areas; and planning for additional MUSA in the 2008 round of comprehensive plans that extend the planning horizon to 2030. In addition, the Council has a plat monitoring program that reports annually on development density trends in several developing communities and will be required in all developing communities following Council review of the 2008 round of comprehensive plan updates.

Revised Guidelines

In October of 2004 the Council adopted “Guidelines for Evaluating Plan Amendments Proposing Changes to Metropolitan Urban Service Area (MUSA) Timing Staging.” Since early 2007, the Metropolitan Council and Metro Cities staffs have discussed the guidelines relative to the density calculation and the 2008 comprehensive plan reviews. Metro Cities requested that the Council consider revising its implementation guidelines to be more flexible, more responsive to market forces, and to acknowledge the performance of individual communities in achieving the Council’s policy of a minimum of 3 units per net acre.

The Council agreed with Metro Cities’ principles. In an attempt to respond to Metro Cities’ concerns while maintaining the Council’s objective of efficient, economical growth, the guidelines were revised as follows on September 12, 2007:

1. The city’s overall residential density for development since 2000 must be a minimum of three units per developable acre. Determination of this density will be based on constructed residential units and approved preliminary plats.
2. Cities that have participated in the Council’s Plat Monitoring Program beginning in 2000 or submitted the necessary plat data from 2000 will be credited on a 1:1 basis for housing units platted or developed that yield an overall average density in excess of 3 units per net developable acre. The housing unit credits will be applied to areas guided for 2020-2030 urban services and to any other proposed reguided areas. The combined overall average density needs to be a minimum of 3 units per net developable acre based on an acreage average of the city’s actual development and platting since 2000, the lowest allowable density in 2020-2030 guiding, and any reguided land.

3. Without development history from 2000, the Council will use the lowest allowable density on land guided for development from 2020-2030 and any reguided land from within the 2020 MUSA as changed from the city's 1998 CPU.
4. The Council will not figure into the density calculation remaining undeveloped land within the 2020 MUSA per the city's existing 2020 plan, with the exception of areas that are being reguided in the 2030 CPU.
5. If an area is replatted, the Council will not recalculate the density for this area in the plat monitoring program.
6. Existing developments that are part of townships or areas being annexed from townships, or areas that were developed prior to 1985 with failing septic systems and no on site alternative septic locations will not be counted against a city's density calculation.

Implications for Planning

Forecasts/planned growth and minimum density requirements are separate but interrelated issues. The Met Council requires an overall minimum density in MUSA areas of at least 3 units per net developable acre. However, this minimum requirement represents a 'worst case' scenario. In accordance with the Regional Development Framework, cities should plan to meet growth forecasts with density ranges between 3-5 units per acre for the MUSA area within each community. The Council also understands the community's need to plan for what their expectations will be for development patterns to accommodate forecasted growth. It is likely that this will in fact result in density that is greater than the lowest end of a density range. Therefore communities and the Council should plan to meet growth forecasts on the basis of a density somewhere between the lowest and highest numbers in the range of land use guiding.

Example:

Forecast: Growth of 3,000 sewerred housing units, 2020-2030

Guiding: 3-5 units per acre

Question: How much land is needed to accommodate this much development?

Answer: Community may/should plan based on reasonable expectations (e.g., 4 units per acre => 750 acres) rather than lowest allowable (i.e., 3 units per acre => 1,000 acres). The Council is already planning on this basis (ES sewer planning expects 4 units per acre).

Application

For all comprehensive plan amendments, the community needs to complete the comprehensive plan amendment submittal form. If a comprehensive plan amendment proposes a MUSA expansion, change in MUSA timing or staging, or sewer staging changes at less than 3 units/acre, the community will also need to complete the question(s) which address each of the MUSA expansion guidelines. The submittal form can found on the Council's website at <http://www.metrocouncil.org/planning/assistance/resources.htm>.