

Community Development Committee

Meeting date: December 20, 2021

Subject: 2040 Comprehensive Plan Amendment Report

District(s), Member(s): ALL

Policy/Legal Reference: Minn. Stat. § 473.864, subd. 2

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Division/Department: Community Development/ Regional Planning

Proposed Action

No action necessary. This is an information item only.

Background

As the Committee members are aware, local governments may amend their 2040 comprehensive plans from time to time as the need arises. Most amendments are related to development proposals that are supported by the City but are not consistent with the current guiding land use or other policies in their adopted Plan. Other reasons for amending plans include the incorporation of more detailed planning (e.g., neighborhood or station area plans); refinement of policy; or changes in the timing, location, or staging of development. Council staff review these amendments for conformance with regional system plans, consistency with regional policy, and compatibility with affected jurisdictions. Many of these are reviewed administratively by staff, but amendments with larger impacts require consideration by the Community Development Committee and full Council, consistent with the Council's adopted Administrative Review Guidelines.

Council staff have been compiling information related to comprehensive plan amendments to better understand and report on themes related to amendments. This work builds off the Comprehensive Plan Composite analysis, which was first presented to the Council's Committee of the Whole on April 7, 2021. The ongoing inventory and analysis of amendments may help staff provide assistance to cities as well as help craft future regional policies and practices. In particular, this information is likely to assist our work with discussion of future community designations as part of the 2050 regional development guide.

Types of Amendments

The amendments submitted by communities often have multiple components. They may include one or more of the following:

- Changing guiding land uses:
 - Parcel-specific changes to accommodate development proposals (most common amendment)
 - Modifying many parcels as a result of a small area planning exercise
 - Assigning a guiding land use as a result of annexation (infrequent)
 - "Correcting" a guiding land use to better match the existing use (uncommon)

- Adjusting MUSA or staging areas of the Plan based on development interest or lack thereof.
- Adjusting the density range of an existing guiding land use based on market conditions.
- Increasing the community's forecasts related to a development proposal and/or policy changes that create more favorable conditions for development given market demand.

Less common amendments also occur, such as the following:

- Creation of a new guiding land use category.
- Infrastructure-related amendments, such as the incorporation of a new bicycle plan.
- Change in Community Designation for a parcel(s).

Findings

When communities submit amendments for our review, they might include multiple policy changes or actions. For example, a city might submit a review for the reguiding of properties for two unrelated developments. Council staff have disaggregated this information for reporting and analysis. Our data accounts for 169 actions through October 13, 2021.

The following are some key findings from our inventory:

- Frequency of amendments:
 - Among the 181 communities and 7 counties in the region that require comprehensive plans, only one-quarter have amended their plans.
 - Twelve cities with the most amendments account for 50% of the amendments.
 - Emerging Suburban Edge communities account for a plurality of amendments including the vast majority of MUSA-related changes.
- Land use impacts:
 - Amendments have increased residential development capacity across all community designations, but to the greatest degree in Suburban communities.
 - Nearly three-quarters of amendments that impacted residential density resulted in an increase.
 - The average size of a development project supported by an amendment was 110 units (ranging from 1 to 549).
 - Ten amendments changed residential guidance to non-residential.
- Regional policy issues:
 - Five communities had amendments that involved changes to Community Designation for the subject property.
 - Four amendments created inconsistencies with regional housing policy, one of which was resolved through a subsequent amendment.
 - One amendment was found inconsistent with regional policy for agricultural preserves.
 - One amendment was found inconsistent with regional policies for natural resources.

Discussion

At the December 20, 2021, Community Development Committee meeting, staff will present an overview of this information with additional data, graphs, and brief case examples about both typical and atypical amendments.

We are interested in your reaction and questions about this data, and what you think would warrant further investigation and reporting. We will continue to build upon this effort so that we have an ongoing means to track and report on trends in amendments. For example, we would expect the number of development-related amendments to decrease if the housing market cools off. We might expect to see

additional small area planning work if market conditions change and/or as new ideas and needs arise over time.