

Community Development Committee

Meeting date: January 18, 2022

Subject: Community Designations

District(s), Member(s): All

Policy/Legal Reference: Metropolitan Land Planning Act (§473)

Staff Prepared/Presented: Raya Esmaeili, Senior Planner, Local Planning Assistance (651-602-1616);
Angela R. Torres, Manager, Local Planning Assistance (651-602-1566)

Division/Department: Community Development / Regional Planning

Proposed Action

No official action. This item is presented for informational purposes and to seek Committee direction on working with the Council's Land Use Advisory Committee to recommend proposed community designations for the 2050 regional plan.

Background

The Metropolitan Land Planning Act (§473.145) tasks the Council with planning for the orderly and economic growth of the region. Every 10 years, the Council prepares a regional development guide for the seven-county metro area that sets the vision and land use policies that are carried forward in the regional systems and policy plans. Regional land use policies are framed around common characteristics of communities. These characteristics, identified in the current regional development guide, *Thrive MSP 2040* (Thrive), form the basis for the current community designations.

As part of the regional development guide, community designations work in concert with land use policies to guide growth in areas with urban infrastructure; establish distinct land use policies and density expectations; protect agricultural land and natural amenities; and outline strategies to meet the region's forecasted growth. Community designations are further used to plan and implement regional policies at the local level.

Process and Timeframe

This project will evaluate the adopted Thrive community designations to determine their effectiveness in furthering regional policy outcomes. The evaluation will include information gathered through the 2040 comprehensive planning process, analysis related to density, patterns of change in community designations, attributes influencing local policy application, and others. A spatial analysis will be used to determine the need for any adjustment to previous approaches or revisions to the characteristics used to define community designations.

In addition to working closely with the Land Use Advisory Committee (LUAC) in every step of the analysis for their final recommendation to the CDC, this project also includes engagement and partnership with both internal and external stakeholders. Internal partners include staff from all technical areas (Land Use, Housing, Research, Parks, Transit, Transportation, Wastewater, Surface Water, and Water Supply) who can identify the impact of community designations in their respective technical areas. External stakeholders include an established technical working group through partnership with Metro Cities as well as a focus group of local planners, who will be able to provide feedback about the impacts of community designations on regional policies and how they affected local processes.

Staff is planning to engage the Council's Committee of the Whole throughout the year to gather feedback from Council members on the project. Staff will also request guidance from the CDC on the desired frequency and method of communication during the process.

This project is expected to be an iterative process and is aligned with other efforts related to planning for the 2050 regional development guide. The project team will be working closely with the internal cross-divisional planning team, scenario planning activities, regional visioning activities, and land use and forecasts modeling efforts that are in process at the same time. While the project is following an ambitious timeline for LUAC's final recommendation to the CDC by the end of 2022, due to the interconnected nature of all these projects, the timeline will be adjusted as necessary.

Deliverables

This project will result in a set of criteria for defining community designations; proposed community designation(s) for each jurisdiction responsible for planning in the region; descriptions of each community designation; density expectations based on community designation; and maps and shapefiles for community designations.

History of Community Designations

The Council has adopted regional development guides pursuant to the Metropolitan Land Planning Act since 1975, with the most recent, Thrive, adopted in 2014. Policy expectations have been shared with communities using several different approaches over the years. Community designations as the basis for land use policy development have been a part of the regional planning efforts, though before the adoption of Thrive, they were referred to as geographic planning areas.

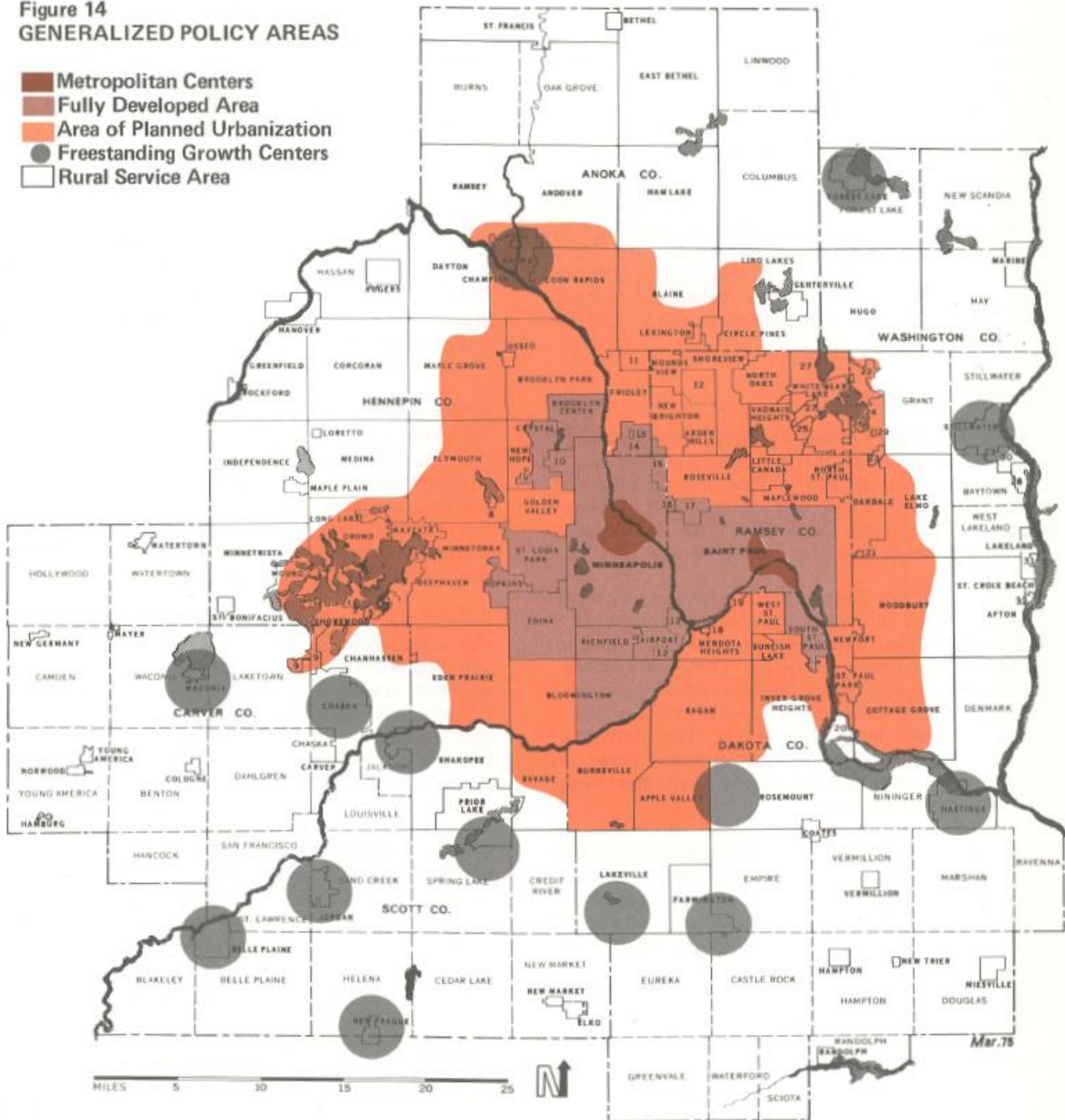
Metropolitan Development Framework Guide, 1975

The Council adopted the first regional development guide, the *Metropolitan Development Framework Guide* (MDF), in 1975. The MDF divided the region into two major service areas: the Urban Service Area and the Rural Service Area, and then developed geographic planning areas described as "Generalized Policy Areas." Figure 1 shows the policy areas defined in the MDF including Metropolitan Centers and Freestanding Growth Centers.

Figure 1: Geographic Policy Areas in the Metropolitan Development Framework Guide, 1975

Figure 14
GENERALIZED POLICY AREAS

- Metropolitan Centers
- Fully Developed Area
- Area of Planned Urbanization
- Freestanding Growth Centers
- Rural Service Area



- | | | | |
|--------------------|---------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| 1 SPRING PARK | 9 VICTORIA | 17 FALCON HEIGHTS | 25 GEN LAKE |
| 2 ORONO | 10 ROBBINSDALE | 18 MENDOTA | 26 BINCHWOOD |
| 3 MINNETONKA BEACH | 11 SPRING LAKE PARK | 19 LILYDALE | 27 WHITE BEAR |
| 4 TONKA BAY | 12 U. S. GOVT. | 20 GREY CLOUD | 28 BAYPORT |
| 5 EXCELSIOR | 13 HILLTOP | 21 LANDFALL | 29 WILLEBRIE |
| 6 GREENWOOD | 14 COLUMBIA HEIGHTS | 22 DELLWOOD | 30 OAK PARK HEIGHTS |
| 7 WOODLAND | 15 ST. ANTHONY | 23 FIRE SPRINGS | 31 LAKELAND SHORES |
| 8 MEDICINE LAKE | 16 LAUDERDALE | 24 WANTONEDI | 32 ST. MARY'S POINT |

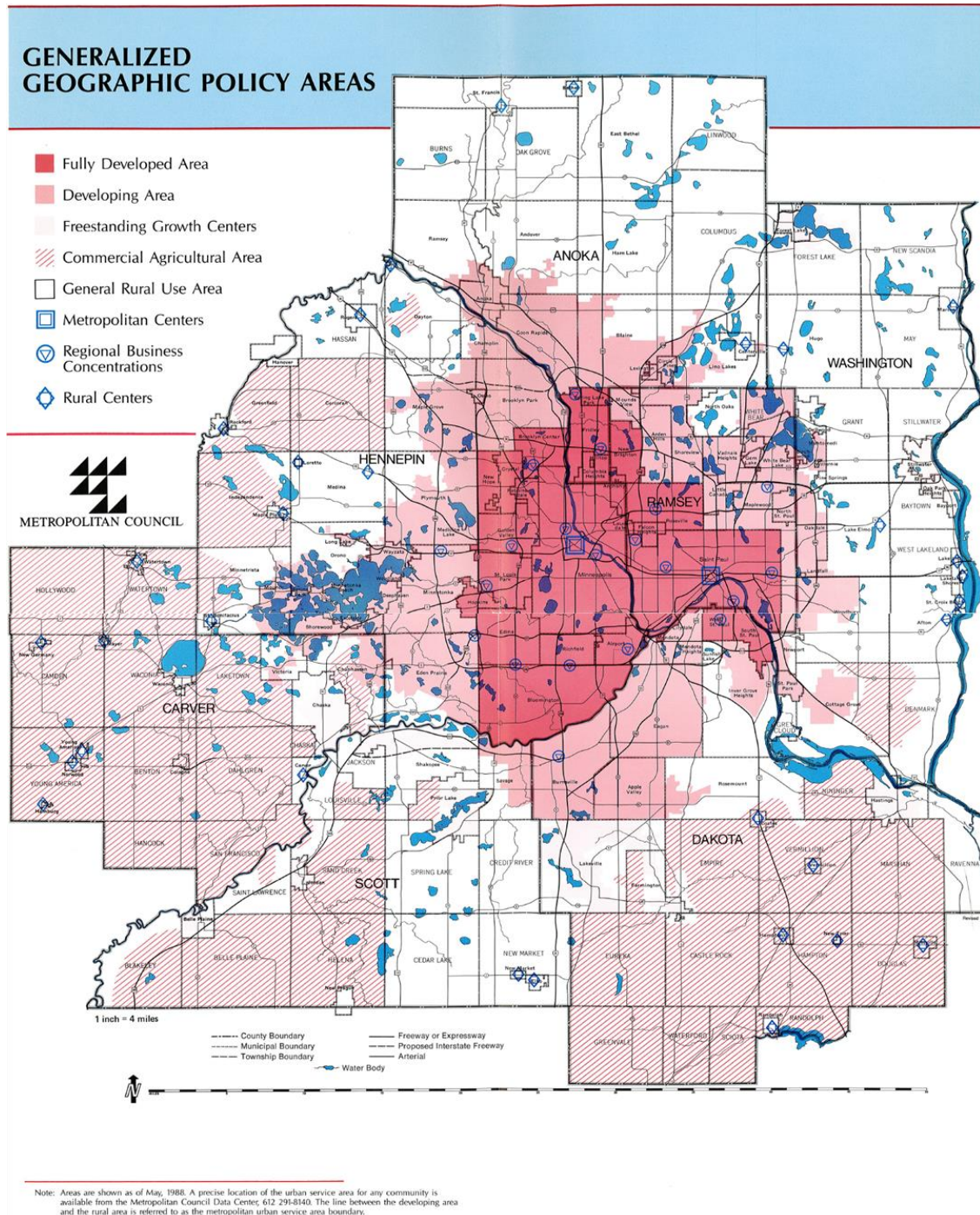
- ANOKA — County Boundary
- ORONO — Municipal Boundary
- CARVER — Township Boundary

Metropolitan Development and Investment Framework, 1986

The Council adopted the *Metropolitan Development and Investment Framework (MDIF)* in 1986, reaffirming the urban/rural service area concept detailed in the Metropolitan Development Guide and extended the Metropolitan Urban Service Area (MUSA) to the year 2000. Figure 2 shows the Geographic Policy Areas in the MDIF.

The MDIF retained the policy approach for Metropolitan Centers and Freestanding Growth Centers from the MDF and added Regional Business Concentrations to the urban area. The MDIF also refined the policy areas for commercial agricultural areas.

Figure 2: Geographic Policy Areas in the Metropolitan Development and Investment Framework, 1986

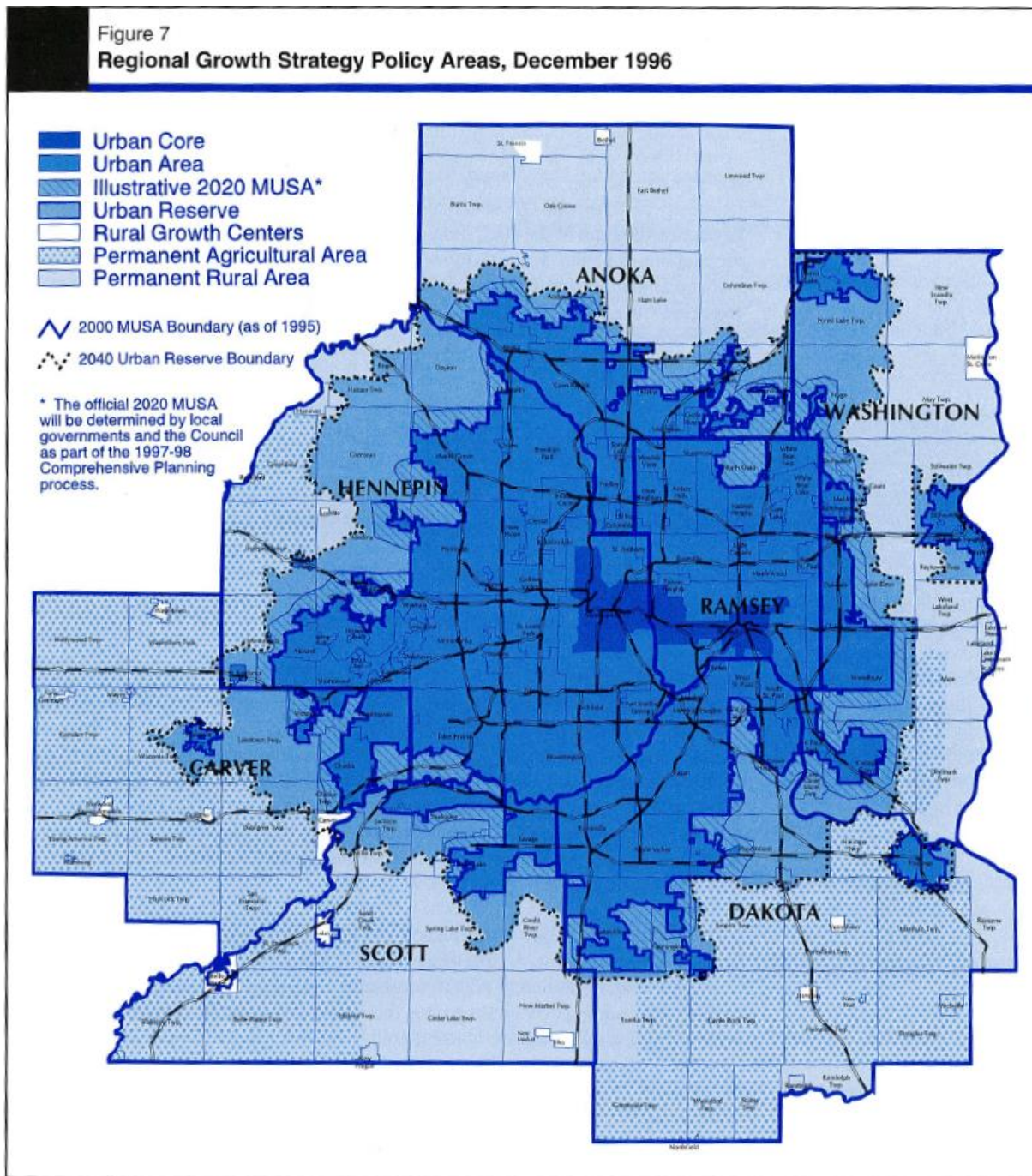


Regional Blueprint, 1996

The Council adopted the *Regional Blueprint* in 1996. The *Regional Blueprint* continued the concept of the Metropolitan Urban Service Area and further defined the boundary as the maximum long-term service area for regional services between the time of adoption and the year 2040. Land outside of the 2040 urban reserve boundary was planned to remain permanently rural or permanently agricultural. The Growth Strategy Policy Areas defined in the *Regional Blueprint* are shown in Figure 3.

The *Regional Blueprint* discontinued defining centers or regional business concentrations as part of the urban area.

Figure 3: Regional Growth Strategy Policy Areas in the Regional Blueprint, 1996

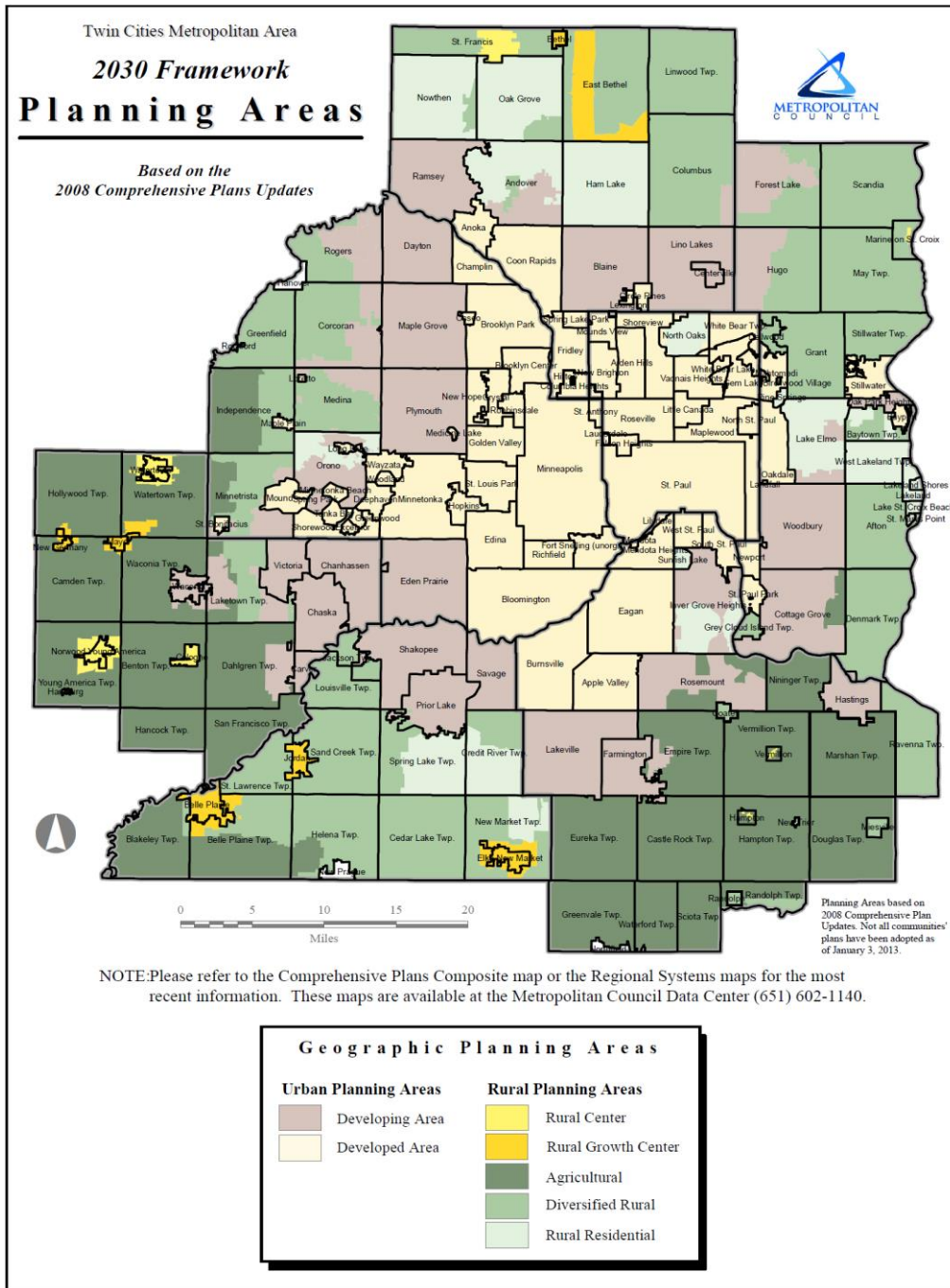


Regional Development Framework, 2004

The Council adopted *Regional Development Framework (Framework)* in 2004 and defined geographic planning areas as developed or developing areas, as well as a variety of rural planning areas (Figure 2). The map reflects changes to planning areas made during the review of the 2030 comprehensive plans.

The *Framework* continued to apply distinctions between urban and rural areas and to identify specific rural areas. Unlike previous regional development guides, the *Framework* did not include varying levels of protection for agricultural land, nor did it reconstitute designations for centers or regional business concentrations as part of the urban area which were discontinued in the *Regional Blueprint* (Figure 3).

Figure 4: Geographic Planning Areas in the Regional Development Framework, 2004



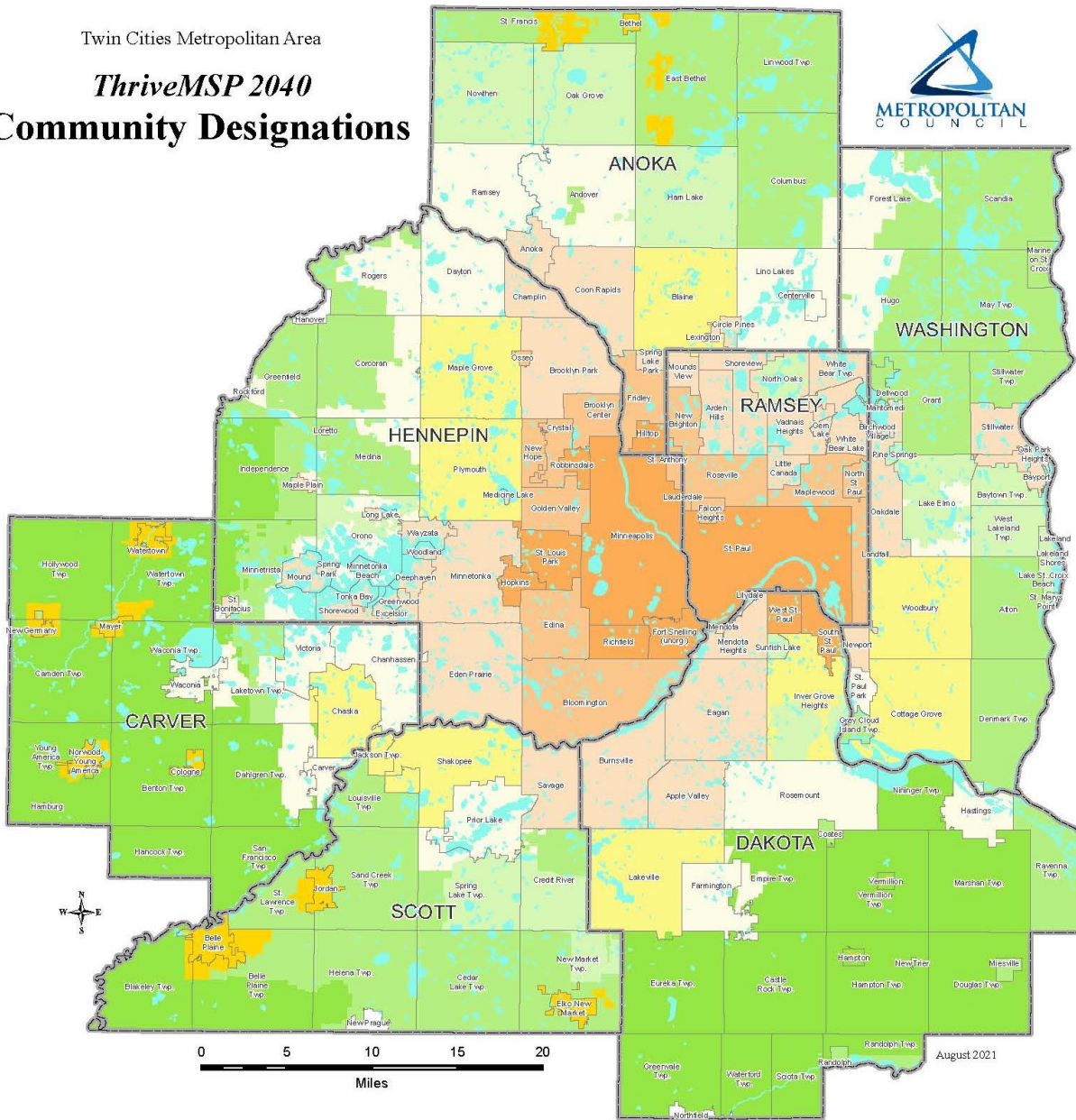
Community Designations in Thrive MSP 2040

The Council adopted the most recent regional development guide, *Thrive MSP 2040*, in May 2014. Geographic planning areas were referred to as community designations in Thrive and are currently defined within the urban service area as urban center, urban, suburban, suburban edge, and emerging suburban edge. The rural service area community designations are rural center, diversified rural, rural residential, and agricultural as shown in Figure 5. The map also reflects changes made during the review of the 2040 comprehensive plans and any subsequent amendments.

In response to communities' requests for a more individualized approach, Thrive adopted a more refined approach within the urban service area. Community designations for each city and township were based on five factors: the Metropolitan Urban Service Area (MUSA); the percentage of developable land committed to urban uses; the age of the housing stock, which is a proxy for age of infrastructure and general development patterns; intersection density, which indicates connectivity, urban form, and accessibility; and the Long-term Wastewater Service Area.

Figure 5: Current Community Designations in *Thrive MSP 2040*, as of August 2021

Twin Cities Metropolitan Area
ThriveMSP 2040
Community Designations



Community Designations

Urban Service Areas

- Urban Center
- Urban
- Suburban
- Suburban Edge
- Emerging Suburban Edge

Rural Service Areas

- Rural Center
- Diversified Rural
- Rural Residential
- Agricultural

- County Boundaries
- City and Township Boundaries
- Lakes and Rivers

Hanover, New Prague, Northfield, and Rockford are outside the Council's planning authority.