

Information Item

Community Development Committee



Meeting Date: April 17, 2023

Topic

Regional Growth Scenarios

District(s), Member(s):	All
Policy/Legal Reference:	Metropolitan Land Planning Act (Minn. Stat. §473.145)
Staff Prepared/Presented:	Baris Gumus-Dawes, Planning Analyst (651-602-1331) Angela R. Torres, Senior Manager, Local Planning Assistance (651-602-1566)
Division/Department:	Community Development/Regional Planning

Background

At the Community Development Committee meeting on April 17, 2023, the Committee will continue to explore scenario planning and how the analysis can be used as part of regional policy development. This discussion will continue the discussion to prepare for more in-depth policy explorations as part of the 2050 Regional Development Guide (RDG). Future discussions will focus on opportunities and challenges associated with crosscutting issues through the lens of scenario planning.

At the meeting, staff will also describe the land use scenarios that emerged out of its scenario modeling exercise and report land use findings. Informed by these findings, the Committee will then explore their land use policy implications. Discussion will include consideration of how land use policies can help achieve desired regional outcomes and how land use policies impact crucial regional issues. Future analysis will explore intersections of land use with transportation, housing, water resources, and regional parks to inform policy discussions on regional growth and development through 2050.

Scenario Planning

Based on the Metropolitan Land Planning Act (§473), the Metropolitan Council (Council) is tasked with the orderly and economic growth of the region through long-range planning. Every ten years, the Council prepares a regional development guide and policy plans that set the vision and policies for the seven-county metro area. The regional development guide (currently *Thrive MSP 2040*) should “encompass physical, social, or economic needs of the metropolitan area and [...] future developments.” To better prepare for future uncertainties, during the 2050 regional planning process, the Council is using scenario planning as a tool to explore multiple possibilities in the future.

Already used by many regional agencies across the country, scenario planning focuses on understanding the larger trends and uncertainties that may shape the future of the region and explores alternative choices for policies and investments. Scenario planning helps evaluate different policy alternatives with respect to the Council’s level of authority and investment. It is also an effective tool to evaluate equity impacts of policy choices. Through rigorous engagement with internal experts, and Council committees and advisory groups, staff have gathered data to develop scenario models and explored interconnections between policy teams working on the 2050 RDG.

Staff continues to evaluate the impact of potential policy choices. Scenario planning is integrated in different aspects of the 2050 regional planning process. The outcomes of this planning exercise help better understand possible impacts of policy decisions.

The location and extent of regional growth are important uncertainties from a regional planning perspective. “Which parts of the region will experience growth?” and “How much will the population of the region grow?” are foundational questions in this scenario planning exercise. The Council needs to know how many residents need to access to regional services and where those services are needed before making significant investment decisions to provide services to the region’s residents.

Regional Growth Scenarios

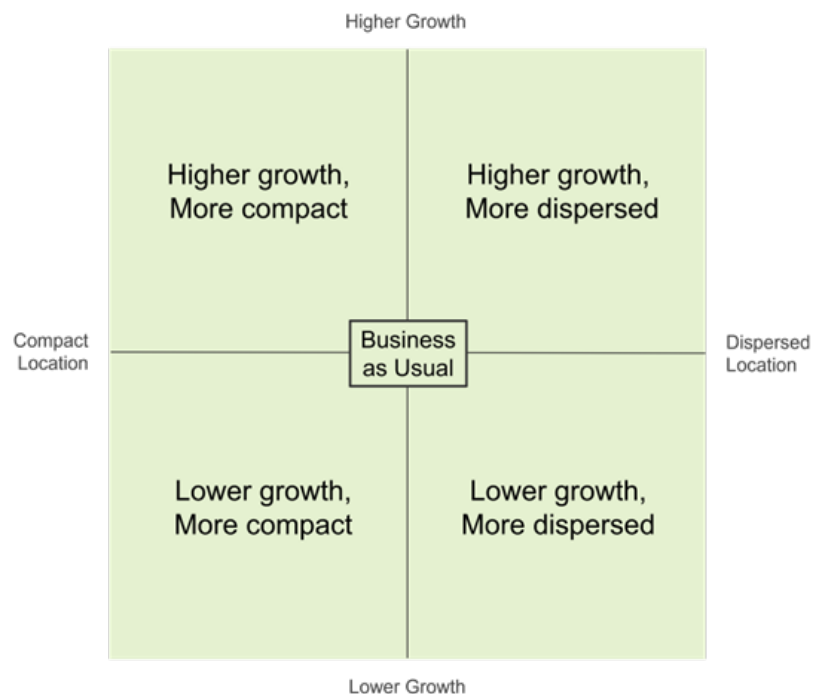
The main variables used to create five planning scenarios include the amount of growth and the spatial distribution of growth. One scenario is considered “business-as-usual,” which assumes that current growth patterns will continue in the future. This scenario also serves as a baseline to evaluate the impact of any change in future uncertainties.

Uncertainties in growth patterns can create either compact growth, occurring primarily in already developed areas of the region, or dispersed growth, taking place across the region’s lesser-developed and lower-density suburban and rural areas. Uncertainty in the amount of population and job growth can create lower or higher growth than business-as-usual. The four additional scenarios are:

- a rapidly growing region developing in compact ways;
- a rapidly growing region developing in a dispersed pattern;
- a slowly growing region developing in compact ways; and
- a slowly growing region displays a dispersed development pattern.

This scenario planning exercise compares these four scenarios with the business-as-usual scenario to examine what happens if the region moves away from current growth trends to any of the other four scenarios. Figure 1 below demonstrates the five scenarios in relation to each other.

Figure 1. Regional Growth Scenarios

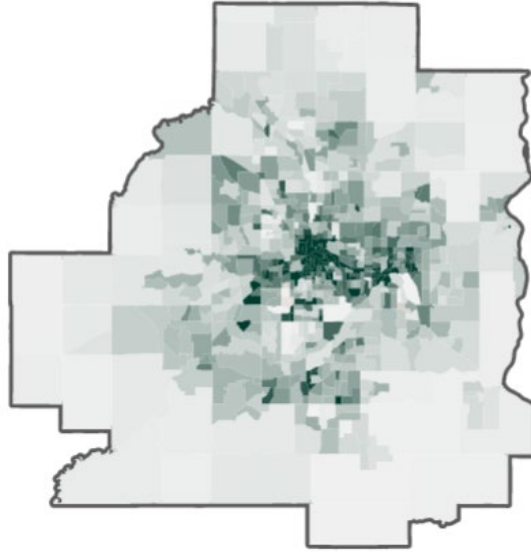


The five scenarios demonstrate possible alternative futures with various and sometimes overlapping opportunities and challenges. The purpose of this tool and exercise is not to choose a future among the future. Rather, the goal is to evaluate all possibilities in order to draft one set of policies that promote beneficial outcomes and address challenges associated with these uncertainties.

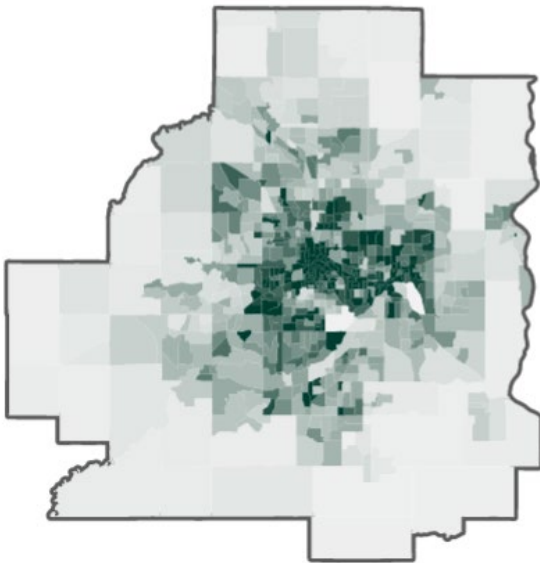


Figure 2. Location of growth in Regional Growth Scenarios

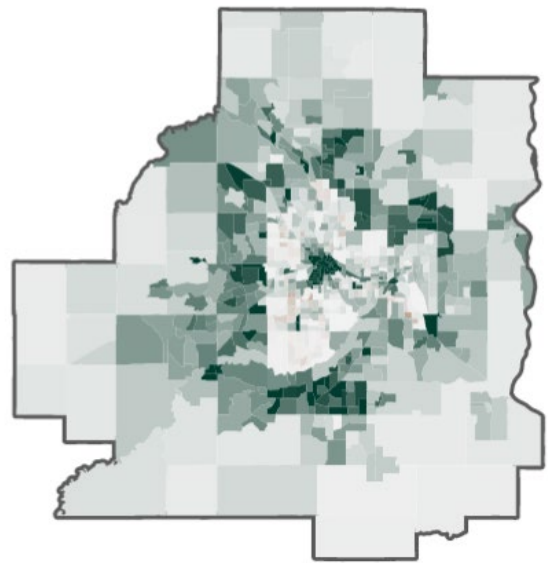
Business-As-Usual



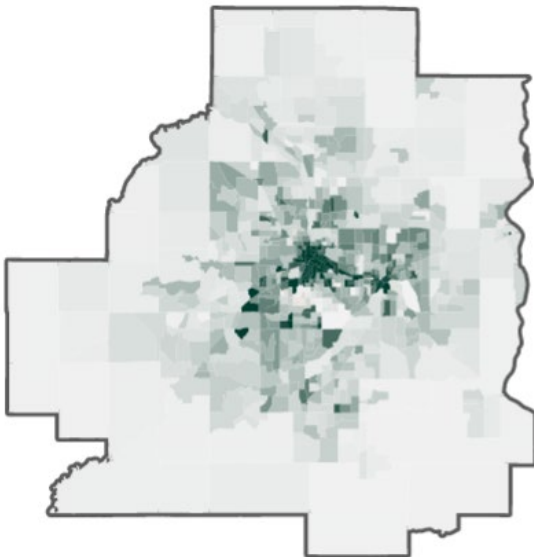
High growth, compact



High growth, dispersed



Low growth, compact



Low growth, dispersed

