

# Information Item

Community Development Committee



Meeting Date: April 15, 2024

## Topic

Draft Land Use Policies and Actions for Objective 4 (natural systems), Objective 7 (climate change)

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## Background

The Community Development Committee (CDC) has reviewed and provided feedback on draft land use objectives for *Imagine 2050*. The most recent discussion at the March 18, 2024, CDC meeting focused on policies and actions for three objectives related to growth management, community safety and wellbeing, and equity. At the April 15th meeting, the Committee will briefly review a comparison of *Thrive MSP 2040* land use policies with proposed *Imagine 2050* language, identifying new themes, approaches, and re-emerging ideas under the objectives. The Committee will review land use policies and actions drafted for *Imagine 2050*, for two objectives:

Objective 4: Prioritize land use and development activities that protect, restore, and enhance natural systems at all scales.

Objective 7: Implement land use and development practices that reduce greenhouse gas emissions, embed climate adaptation, and create resilient communities.

Objective 4 reflects key policy areas critical to natural systems protection, restoration, and enhancement. Objectives 7 focuses on mitigation, adaptation and resilience in the face of climate change in our region. The draft language has been shared with the Regional Development Guide Council Member Work Group and the Council Member Climate Work Group.

The remaining three objectives (below) will be discussed at upcoming CDC meetings to allow for a more robust conversation of key policies and actions related to each objective.

2. Maximize opportunities for growth in places well-served by transit, bicycle, and pedestrian infrastructure.
5. Ensure that in all types of communities, people find housing opportunities that align with their needs.
8. Support the economic wellbeing of our region and its communities.

## Discussion Questions

The Committee will be asked to consider these questions:

- Are new approaches to policies going in the right direction?
- Should existing approaches be refined?
- Are there existing approaches that should not be carried forward?
- Are we missing any approaches in any areas?

## Comparison of land use direction in *Thrive MSP 2040* and *Imagine 2050*

	<i>Thrive MSP 2040</i>	<i>Imagine 2050 Objectives</i>
<b>Growth Management</b>	Orderly and Efficient Land Use: Align land use, development patterns, and infrastructure to make the best use of public and private investment.	Respect the relationship with land and water as a foundation for regional growth.
<b>Transportation</b>	Access, Mobility, and Transportation Choice: Sustain and improve a multimodal transportation system to support regional growth, maintain regional economic competitiveness, and provide choices and reliability for the system's users.	Maximize opportunities for growth in places well-served by transit, bicycle, and pedestrian infrastructure.
<b>Community Wellbeing and Safety</b>	<i>No Thrive MSP 2040 equivalent</i>	Establish vibrant, inclusive, connected, and safe communities for people to live in.
<b>Natural Systems</b>	Natural Resources Protection: Conserve, restore, and protect the region's natural resources to ensure availability, support public health, and maintain a high quality of life.  Water Sustainability: Conserve, restore, and protect the quality and quantity of the region's water resources to ensure ongoing availability, support public health, and maintain a high quality of life.	Ensure that development activities contribute to the fullest protection and restoration of natural systems on every level.
<b>Housing</b>	Housing Affordability and Choice: Promote housing options to give people in all life stages and of all economic means viable choices for safe, stable, and affordable homes.	Ensure that in all types of communities, people find housing opportunities that align with their needs.
<b>Equitable Development</b>	<i>No Thrive MSP 2040 equivalent</i>	Remedy past and present discriminatory land use practices.
<b>Climate Resilience</b>	Building in Resilience: Promote sensitive land use and development patterns to achieve Minnesota's adopted greenhouse gas emissions goals at the regional scale, and to develop local resiliency to the impacts of climate change.	Strengthen the climate resilience of neighborhoods and communities through sustainable land use and development patterns.
<b>Economic Wellbeing</b>	Economic Competitiveness: Foster connected land use options to provide businesses and industries with access to materials, markets, and talent.	Support the economic wellbeing of our region and its communities.

### Objective 4: New themes, approaches, and re-emerging ideas under the objective

This table includes the policy and action themes that are either proposed to be new in *Imagine 2050*, are similar or the same as *Thrive MSP 2040* policies and actions, or reflect re-emerging or evolving



approaches from previous regional plans.

New Themes	New Approaches	Re-emerging Ideas
<p>Stronger, more coordinated approach to climate change</p> <p>Local &amp; regional renewable energy (solar) investment &amp; development</p> <p>Environmental justice, particularly for indigenous &amp; marginalized communities</p> <p>Urban forest and stormwater management to protect communities most threatened by climate change</p> <p>Green infrastructure, natural landscaping, low impact design, and de-paving</p> <p>Collaborative, metrics-based climate approach</p>	<p>Establish climate action requirements</p> <p>Expand solar development responsibly &amp; ensure it is accessible to energy-burdened households</p> <p>Restore &amp; expand tree canopy coverage</p> <p>Encourage energy-efficient, climate-conscious urban design &amp; green infrastructure</p> <p>Incentives-based program for climate-conscious land stewardship &amp; development</p> <p>Co-develop climate solutions with Native &amp; marginalized communities</p> <p>Supporting local food systems to reduce food insecurity &amp; increase resilience</p>	<p>Mitigation &amp; adaptation goals</p> <p>Compact development &amp; redevelopment increases efficiency and lowers emissions</p> <p>Renovation/retrofitting of old buildings</p> <p>Implementation/expansion of green infrastructure</p> <p>Increase community resilience to changing climate conditions</p> <p>Convening regional discussions on climate concerns and strategies</p> <p>Support for communities engaging in locally relevant climate mitigation &amp; adaptation practices</p> <p>Expansion of climate-related technical assistance for local governments &amp; marginalized populations</p>

### For discussion: Land Use Objective 4 Policies and Actions

#### Objective 4: Prioritize land use and development activities that protect, restore, and enhance natural systems at all scales.

Abundant natural systems contribute to the vibrancy of our region, but stewardship of these regional assets has historically conflicted with growth and development. The Council promotes development and land use stewardship that integrates natural systems in design and implementation. This requires a balancing of natural system protection, restoration, and integration with development practices for mutual benefit. Although regional parks, conservation areas, lakes and rivers stand out as obvious focus areas, preservation and restoration of natural systems must also take place at a more local and site-specific scale. Smaller scale efforts may include implementing environmentally sensitive design practices, integrating green infrastructure, and reducing impervious surfaces. Integrating aspects of the natural environment into urbanized areas helps create livable areas and desirable places to visit, while making sure that biodiversity is enhanced through establishment of wildlife corridors. On a larger scale, protecting contiguous areas of high-quality natural systems from development helps preserve habitat corridors across the region and maintain regional biodiversity.

#### *Policies and Actions Draft Language*

1. Plan, build, and maintain informal public spaces that enhance natural systems features and public safety through community-centered design and stewardship.
  - a. Engage communities in co-designing amenities that enhance both biodiversity and safety.
  - b. Design public spaces to be accessible and welcoming to people of all abilities, ensuring

that everyone in the community can enjoy and benefit from the enhanced green spaces and natural features.

- c. Update design guidelines to include landscaping that enhances biodiversity for new public spaces.
  - d. Integrate art installations that complement and enhance the natural surroundings, creating visually appealing spaces that also promote ecological awareness.
  - e. Implement regular maintenance and monitoring programs to ensure proper upkeep of natural features within public spaces.
2. **Prioritize planning practices that support nature as a climate adaptation solution to build community resilience to potential climate impacts.**
    - a. Identify human, built, and natural vulnerabilities to climate change, and prioritize solutions that center nature.
    - b. Integrate green infrastructure and nature-based adaptation features into local planning processes.
    - c. Collaborate with city planners, architects, and developers to ensure that new construction projects and existing infrastructure upgrades prioritize the incorporation of resilient, nature-based elements to effectively reduce the likelihood of potential climate impacts.
    - d. Implement policy incentives and allocate dedicated funding to support the adoption of nature-based climate adaptation solutions at the community level.
  3. **Measure the value of natural systems to assist communities in protection, restoration, and enhancement efforts.**
    - a. Conduct economic studies to quantify the monetary value of natural systems.
    - b. Assess social and cultural values associated with natural systems and develop metrics to track changes in the value of natural systems over time.
  4. **Inventory natural systems within and between communities to assess areas for protection, restoration, and enhancement.**
    - a. Conduct a thorough inventory of natural systems within and between communities, using mapping and data collection methods to inform conservation and land use planning decisions.
    - b. Prioritize areas for protection, restoration, and enhancement based on ecological significance, potential ecosystem improvement, and equity considerations.
    - c. Develop action plans in partnership with communities to implement preservation, restoration, and enhancement and efforts, leveraging resources and monitoring progress.
  5. **Prioritize compact and infill development to preserve high quality natural systems.**
    - a. Update zoning to prioritize environmentally sensitive development patterns to protect sensitive natural areas.
    - b. Develop plans to guide development while preserving, restoring, and enhancing natural systems.
  6. **Protect, restore, and enhance connected habitat and natural systems corridors through development and infrastructure planning.**
    - a. Identify and prioritize key habitat corridors and natural systems through mapping and analysis, considering ecological data and stakeholder input.
    - b. Update land use planning regulations to incorporate measures for protecting, restoring, and enhancing these corridors, such as conservation easements and wildlife-friendly development standards.
    - c. Coordinate infrastructure planning efforts to minimize disruptions to habitat connectivity, integrating wildlife crossings and stormwater management systems into transportation and utility projects.
    - d. Implement water management systems that incorporate sustainable drainage solutions, such as permeable surfaces and water retention features, to mitigate the impact of



urbanization on natural water systems.

7. Protect, restore, and enhance natural systems in areas of environmental justice concern to build community resilience.
  - a. Engage communities in restoration projects tailored to their needs, such as native plantings and stormwater management improvements.
  - b. Create safe and inclusive green spaces for all by enhancing and adding parks and recreational amenities, especially in underserved areas.
  - c. Provide environmental education and capacity-building opportunities for residents to advocate for and participate in protecting natural systems.
8. Partner with State, Tribal, local and watershed planners to build a shared understanding and identify strategies that address risks to public and ecosystem health.
  - a. Facilitate collaborative planning workshops with State, Tribal, local, and watershed planners to understand shared risks to public and ecosystem health.
  - b. Establish an interagency task force to coordinate efforts and develop integrated strategies for addressing environmental risks.
  - c. Support joint research and monitoring programs to collect data and assess ecosystem and community health, informing evidence-based decision-making.
9. Enhance public and private wildlife habitat and native plantings across land uses.
  - a. Adopt environmentally friendly landscaping techniques, such as rain gardens, to reduce water usage and develop wildlife habitat.
  - b. Develop guidelines for wide distribution and integration of pollinator habitat and native plantings across various land uses.
  - c. Offer incentives and technical assistance to encourage public and private landowners to establish and enhance pollinator habitat.
  - d. Collaborate on pollinator corridor initiatives to create interconnected networks of habitat across landscapes.

### For discussion: Land Use Objective 7 Policies and Actions

#### Objective 7: New themes, approaches, and re-emerging ideas under the objective

This table includes the policy and action themes that are either proposed to be new in *Imagine 2050*, are similar or the same as *Thrive MSP 2040* policies and actions, or reflect re-emerging or evolving approaches from previous regional plans.

New Themes	New Approaches	Re-emerging Ideas
Recognize the inherent value of nature, along with its spiritual value to Native communities	Prioritize planning practices that support nature as a climate adaptation solution to build community resilience to potential climate impacts	Incorporation of greenspace & green infrastructure into communities & public spaces
Protection and fostering of biodiversity, especially among native species and pollinators, through preserving/creating habitat connectivity	Quantify the value of natural systems Inventory natural systems to identify key areas for protection, restoration, & enhancement	Value trees for shade, ecological function, & contributions toward community climate resilience
Enhance public and private wildlife habitat and native plantings across land uses	Prioritize compact & infill development	Sustainably manage water use and supply
Large-scale assessment of existing natural resources, areas, and features	Protect, restore, & enhance connected habitat & natural systems corridors through	Protect surface water and groundwater resources





New Themes	New Approaches	Re-emerging Ideas
Collaborate with Native and marginalized communities to manage natural systems & ensure their agency within land stewardship strategies & practices	<p>development &amp; infrastructure planning</p> <p>Protect, restore, &amp; enhance natural systems in areas of environmental justice concern to build community resilience</p> <p>Partner with State, Tribal, local &amp; watershed planners to build a shared understanding &amp; address risks to public &amp; ecosystem health</p>	

**Objective 7: Implement land use and development practices that reduce greenhouse gas emissions, embed climate adaptation, and create resilient communities.**

The effects of climate change transcend community boundaries and impact the entire region, at all scales. People organize themselves into all sorts of different communities, from cities, to neighborhoods, ethnic and cultural communities, and communities based around interests or a particular geography. All scales and types of community are affected by climate change impacts. We must also recognize that under resourced and historically disinvested communities often suffer the worst impacts of climate change. Climate change and environmental justice (equity considerations) are inextricably linked. Climate action must center environmental justice outcomes to build community and neighborhood scale resilience. While it is important to implement mitigation measures to stop climate impacts associated with climate change from getting worse, we must also use nature-based and built solutions to adapt to current and future climate impacts and strengthen our resilience in the face of these challenges. The way our region develops impacts our ability to build resilient communities in the face of climate impacts. Development patterns that reduce impervious surface coverage and promote the use of green infrastructure can help reduce flooding during more intense rain events and cool areas impacted by the Urban Heat Island (UHI) effect. Preserving and restoring tree canopies, especially in urban areas, supports cooling efforts while sequestering carbon. Adaptation and mitigation measures work hand in hand to increase climate resilience for communities, which ultimately makes our region more livable, healthy, and economically strong.

***Policies and Actions Draft Language***

1. Engage with local governments to establish fit-for-purpose climate requirements in line with State statute.
  - a. Engage with local governments on their climate planning needs and emerging goals to assist in establishment of climate requirements for the 2050 planning cycle.
  - b. Develop and provide needs-based technical assistance to local governments to meet established climate requirements.
  - c. Establish performance metrics and evaluate implementation measures for reporting at both the local and regional scales.
2. Support local governments in establishing goals to restore and maintain urban tree canopy.
  - a. Conduct urban tree canopy assessments to identify priority areas for restoration and maintenance efforts.
  - b. Develop model urban forest management goals and strategies for protecting and enhancing the tree canopy.
  - c. Provide technical assistance, training, and resources to support local governments and residents in implementing tree planting and maintenance initiatives.



- d. Assess the adaptation and mitigation value of the regional urban tree canopy and communicate this information to local governments to support decision-making and policy creation.
3. Incentivize urban design and development that maximizes renewable energy readiness and enhances energy efficiency.
  - a. Implement incentive programs to encourage renewable energy and energy-efficient design in urban development projects.
  - b. Promote green building certification to encourage sustainable construction practices.
  - c. Provide support for energy benchmarking through partnerships and provision of technical assistance to local communities.
  - d. Administer grants to local governments to accelerate building decarbonization through weatherization and building retrofits.
  - e. Assess the need and provide support for renewable energy and energy efficiency measures in lower-income communities and affordable housing.
4. Encourage de-paving and replacement with natural landscaping to enhance climate adaptation and resilience.
  - a. Implement technical assistance and incentive measures for community de-paving and natural landscaping initiatives.
  - b. Conduct community workshops and educational events to raise awareness and promote de-paving and natural landscaping practices.
  - c. Update zoning and land use regulations to incentivize de-paving and natural landscaping in infill and redevelopment opportunities.
5. Install solar panels in underutilized land areas, on industrial land, and accessory to complimentary uses (protect Ag areas, and encourage co-location, integration of solar within sites).
  - a. Identify suitable sites and simplify permitting for solar panel deployment on underutilized land, industrial sites, large roofs, on parking ramps and compatible land uses.
  - b. Form public-private partnerships to finance and develop solar energy projects, leveraging resources and expertise.
  - c. Promote co-location of solar panels with compatible land uses to maximize efficiency, renewable deployment, and minimize land use conflicts.
  - d. Provide technical assistance to local governments on methods and means to maximize solar energy access.
6. Increase renewable energy systems deployment and energy storage in communities, especially for high energy-burdened households.
  - a. Establish a target percentage of the community's energy needs to be met by sustainable energy produced within the city by the end of the plan period.
  - b. Implement equity-focused renewable energy programs to support renewable energy deployment for energy-burdened households.
  - c. Support community solar initiatives to expand access to renewable energy, facilitating shared benefits for residents and businesses.
  - d. Establish energy storage incentive programs to encourage deployment in underserved areas, prioritizing resilience and emergency preparedness.
7. Support low impact design and integration of climate adaptation measures into development to prepare for current and projected climate impacts on our region.
  - a. Implement technical assistance to encourage community implementation of adaptation measures to reduce the effects of extreme heat, manage stormwater, and lessen human vulnerability.
  - b. Provide incentives through grant programs for projects integrating climate adaptation solutions, to encourage wider adoption.
  - c. Conduct outreach and education campaigns to raise awareness and engage stakeholders in promoting low impact design and climate adaptation solutions.



8. Create an incentives-based program for climate-focused land stewardship and development.
  - a. Develop financial incentives like grants to encourage climate-focused land stewardship and development practices.
  - b. Offer technical assistance and resources to support stakeholders in implementing climate-focused land stewardship practices.
  - c. Establish clear performance criteria to measure and evaluate the success of projects, guiding program improvements and funding priorities.
9. Partner with Native and environmental justice communities to collaborate on climate solutions.
  - a. Facilitate regular forums for knowledge-sharing between Tribal Nations, indigenous communities, and other environmental justice stakeholders to integrate their perspectives into climate and natural systems work.
  - b. Co-develop climate solutions with indigenous communities, incorporating traditional ecological knowledge and practices into adaptation and mitigation strategies.
  - c. Strengthen partnerships and agreements with Tribal Nations to support collaborative climate and natural systems work, respecting tribal sovereignty and self-determination.
10. Deepen partnerships with State agencies and academic institutions to develop climate-related technical assistance and resources to serve the needs of local governments as well as historically underrepresented and marginalized populations.
  - a. Customize technical assistance programs for local governments, offering training and resources tailored to their climate-related needs.
  - b. Ensure equitable access to resources for marginalized communities through targeted outreach and support to community-based organizations.
  - c. Develop culturally relevant and linguistically accessible climate resources to empower diverse populations in climate action and resilience building.
  - d. Communicate climate measures in technical assistance in terminology that is clear, concise, and accessible to the public.
  - e. Share resources and capacity across State agencies and academic institutions to build out technical assistance resources that are accessible, fit-for-purpose, and needs-based.
11. Integrate local food systems and land use planning to build community resilience, access to healthy food, and food security.
  - a. Implement urban agriculture zoning and policies to designate areas for community gardens and urban farms, streamlining permitting processes and providing incentives.
  - b. Support farm-to-table initiatives and local food markets, facilitating direct connections between producers and consumers and promoting regional food systems.
  - c. Establish food policy councils and engage stakeholders to coordinate efforts, gather input, and develop action plans for building community resilience and improving food access and security.
  - d. Partner with immigrant groups, Tribal Nations, and indigenous communities to establish coalitions that address urban agriculture and foraging that respects cultures and spiritual practice.
12. Develop guidance and support for resilience hub concepts and implementation in community planning, with particular focus on extreme heat, air quality, and localized flooding hazards.
  - a. Host workshops for community planners on planning for hazard mitigation.
  - b. In partnership with communities and other stakeholders, launch pilot projects to test resilience hub models in select communities.
  - c. Create resources focusing on hazard preparedness and social cohesion to support development of community-based resilience practices.

