

Information Item

Community Development Committee



Meeting Date: July 15, 2024

Topic

Livable Communities Act Program Update

District(s), Member(s):	All
Policy/Legal Reference:	Minn. Stat. § 473.25
Staff Prepared/Presented:	Sarah Berke, Senior Manager, Livable Communities, 651-602-1198
Division/Department:	Community Development/LCA

Background

In March 2024, Committee members discussed a planned approach to considering possible program changes for Livable Communities Act (LCA) grant programs in 2025. As part of this approach, the Committee discussed and approved goals for the process, and a plan to hire a consultant. The consultant would provide program evaluation, facilitation, and planning services, ultimately delivering a report evaluating the impact of the LCA program and opportunities for improvement to better meet the two identified goals:

1. Ensuring the **alignment** of program design with the regional goals identified for the forthcoming [Imagine 2050](#) regional development guide:
 - Our region is equitable and inclusive
 - Our communities are healthy and safe
 - Our region is dynamic and resilient
 - We lead on addressing climate change
 - We protect and restore natural systems
2. Encouraging broad **participation** from communities in the region and reducing barriers to entry to the grant programs

This information item provides an update on the timeline and proposed outcomes for this project, and progress to date.

References

The Committee's 2024 work plan for LCA program updates follows on from Committee workshop discussions on [July 17](#), [August 21](#), and [October 2](#), 2023, and discussions on [December 4](#), [December 18](#), [January 18](#), [February 5](#), [February 14](#), and [March 18](#), 2024.

Progress and Timeline Update

The Community Development budget included funding for a consultant in 2024 to support the LCA Program Update. After the conclusion of an RFP process conducted from April-June, we are pleased to have identified a consulting team led by Ellen Watters Consulting. This team was approved to begin work on July 9, 2024, and will conclude their scope of work in late 2024.

In addition to the consultant team's planned scope of work, in recent months staff have continued

and expanded outreach and program evaluation activities with communities in the region, including:

- Conducting an annual survey of participants in the program about their experiences in the last program year
- Conducting interviews with eight (8) communities in the region to understand incentives and barriers to participation, including both current participants and non-participants, and across a range of community designations (3 – Emerging/Suburban Edge; 1 – Rural Center; 3 – Suburban; 1 – small Urban Center city),
- Partnering with MetroCities to set up a series of two workshops in late July to engage with communities in the region on LCA program design

The consulting team will facilitate workshops with Community Development Committee members and external partners, analyze and synthesize program data, and develop an analysis of findings to be delivered as a final report.

The final report will be presented to the Committee in late fall 2024, outlining the current approach's strengths, strategies to enhance participation, and opportunities to align the LCA program with statutory and Imagine 2050 objectives over the next several years.

At the March 18, 2024, CDC meeting, Committee Members noted the tight timeframe for the work. Staff are working to adjust expectations and timelines accordingly.

While some recommended changes may be immediately incorporated into the 2025 Fund Distribution Plan – outlining funding priorities for the next program year - we also anticipate that some proposed changes may have a larger impact and would require more time to properly vet with Council Members, LCA participants/potential participants, development partners, and other stakeholders, before implementation.

Committee Members have also expressed a desire to receive regular reports with LCA program data.

In response, staff will work with the consultant, Committee members, and external constituents of the program, to identify key goals against which program outcomes can be tracked, evaluated, and reported over the course of multiple years.

Project Milestones

April-June 2024

- ✓ RFP published
- ✓ Consultant selected
- ✓ Key informant interviews conducted by staff

July-August 2024

- ✓ Consulting team begins work
- Metro Cities-hosted workshops with communities in the region: July 22, 29
- Consulting team conducts analysis of program data

September-October 2024

- Working discussion(s) at Community Development Committee
- Consulting team develops written analysis of findings

October - November 2024 (tentative)

- Final report delivered to Community Development Committee

December 2024

- Committee previews Fund Distribution Plan for 2025 (for approval in January/February 2025)
- Committee provides direction for evaluating program outcomes over the course of 3-5 years

