



Imagine 2050 Land Use Policy: Public Comment Summary

Angela R. Torres, Senior Manager
Local Planning Assistance

Community Development Committee

December 2, 2024



Today's Agenda



- Who did we hear from on Land Use during the public comment period?
- What did we hear on Land Use during the public comment period?
- Proposed changes to Community Designations
- Proposed text and policy changes
- Discussion and policy direction

Who did we hear from on Land Use during the public comment period?



Participants in the public comment period related to land use policy

Who participated?

- Local governments represented 56% of land use commenters and 75% of total land use comments
 - Of local govts that submitted a public comment letter, 93% submitted comments on land use. Land use and transportation were the most mentioned.
- Residents represented 35% of land use commenters and 18% of total land use comments
- State Agencies and Advocacy groups represented 9% of land use commenters and 7% of total land use comments

How did they participate?

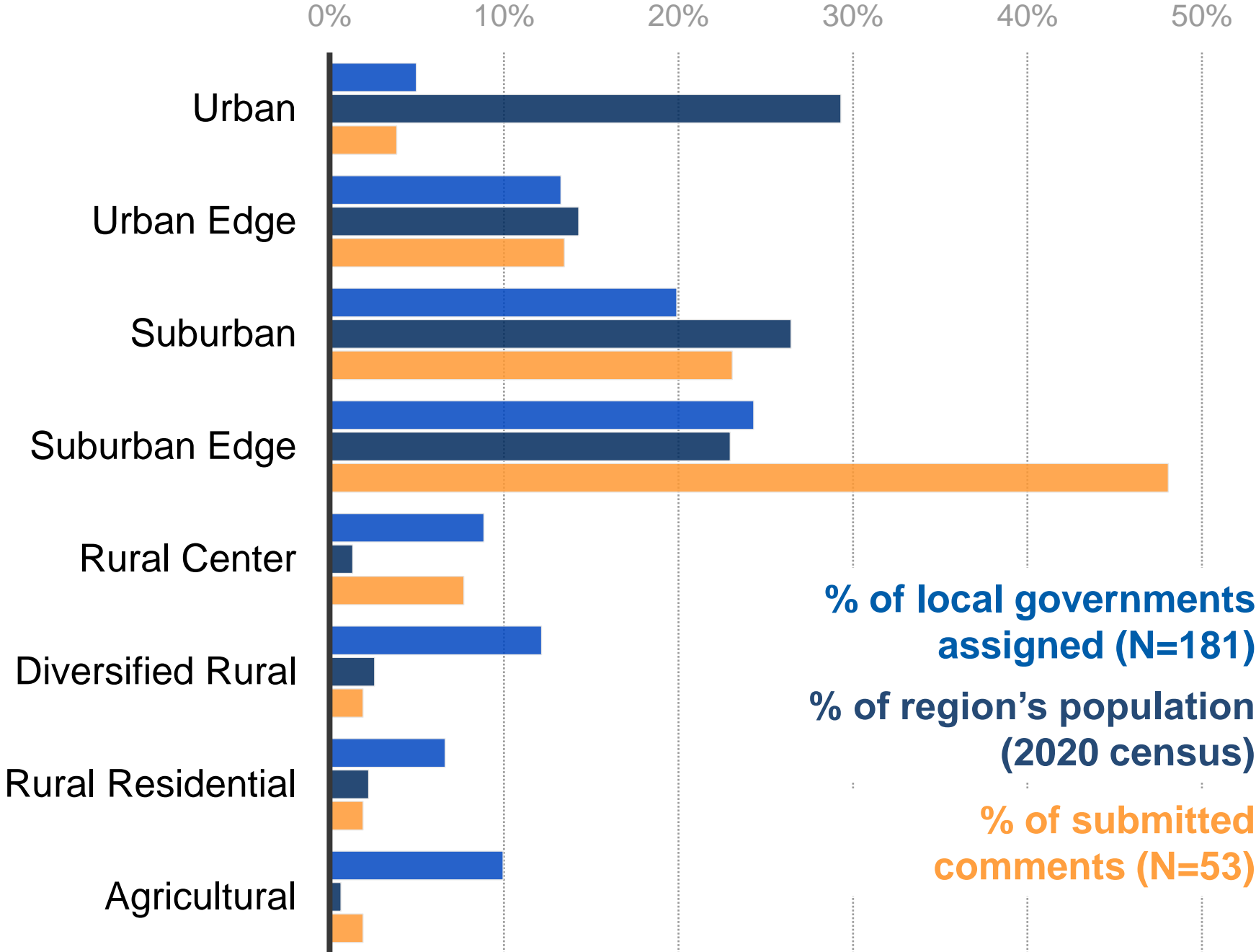
- Online via engage.metrocouncil.org
- Email
- Mail
- In-person
 - Art + Policy events
 - Community events
 - Public Hearing



Local government participation

Summary of Public Comment Period (only)

- 53 cities and townships submitted formal public comments
 - 10 additional did not submit a public comment letter but met with Sector Reps.
- Levels of participation
 - High: 48% of submitted letters came from Suburban Edge communities, and another 23% from Suburban communities.
 - Medium: Another 13% of letters submitted came from Urban Edge (13%) communities, followed by Rural Centers (8%)
 - Low: Urban communities submitted 4% of letters, and Diversified Rural, Rural Residential, and Agricultural communities <2% each.



What did we hear
on Land Use
during the public
comment period?



What did we hear by Land Use Objective

Growth Mgmt.

Supportive of the broadening of rural and agricultural policies.

Appreciated clarity on MUSA expansion and supportive language for areas with OAAs.

While supportive of flexibility, clarification on what that means was commonly requested along with clarification on implementation.

Minimum density requirements in Suburban Edge areas were the most received area of concern/opposition.

Few comments on minimum density requirements for other community designations, around transit station areas, or for affordable housing.

Transportation

Strong support for the coordination of land use and transportation planning to achieve regional goals, especially by improving quality of life and reducing VMT and GHG emissions.

Many comments focused on how to achieve the intent of the policy, rather than questioning the rationale of the policy.

Clarification of the intent or application of policies and actions. Concern that all of the policies and actions applied to every community.

Some concerns about increasing required densities (from 3 to 4 u/a) would overwhelm local roads.

Concerns about funding availability for transportation infrastructure.

Community Wellbeing & Safety

Strong support for providing local public spaces that are vibrant, accessible, safe, and broadly appealing.

Strong support for providing local public spaces that are vibrant, accessible, safe, and broadly appealing.

Desire for Met Council funding support to improve public places and enhance amenities

Natural Systems

Support for prioritizing the protection, enhancement, and restoration of natural systems.

Interest on what is meant by natural system corridors and specifics on how to achieve policies.

Concern that accommodating density means foregoing natural systems protections or that protecting corridors would constitute a "taking" in some cases.

What did we hear by Land Use Objective

Housing

Consistent focus on the need for diverse housing options to address affordability and accessibility challenges.

Acknowledge importance of equitable access to housing and economic opportunities for marginalized communities.

Concern about policies requiring multiple housing types within single land use categories and tension between regional policy and local autonomy.

Opportunity to provide more practical guidance including clear definitions and funding mechanisms

Equity

Support for equity related policies and Met Council's commitment to achieving equitable outcomes

Clarification on expectation to implement equity related policies by local governments

Opportunity to provide technical assistance to encourage curiosity from questions like “What does that look like?”

Climate Change

Strong support for the mitigation adaptation commitments, especially from local govts and energy NGOs.

Positive reaction to inclusion of food security/access

Clarification on terminology, like the phrase ‘nature-based solutions. Clarification on requirements to dedicate financial resources to complete climate work.

Local governments requested support for this new body of work

Economic Wellbeing

Acknowledgement of the importance of addressing economic equity but questions about the lack of legal authority to implement in the private sector.

Concerns about resources or capacity to implement initiatives effectively, esp. where there may be a limited local regulatory role.

Questions about engagement requirements in the comp plan process

Need for clearer, more specific policy language to ensure practical implementation and alignment with local capacities.

Land Use comments by participant type – Advocacy/Non-Profits



Advocacy Organizations

High-level supportive comments about density:

- Increasing minimum density requirements will be better for climate change mitigation efforts
- Increasing minimum density requirements will be better for affordable housing options
- Increasing minimum density requirements will better support anticipated growth in the region

Recommendations for density requirements implementation include:

- Allowing flexibility in density requirements
- Building higher density housing near transit stations, job centers, and areas with access to infrastructure and amenities
- Set performance metrics and indicators
- Streamline and guaranteed approval of affordable development permits

Land Use comments by participant type – Local Govts areas of support



Most common supportive comments

Indicated **appreciation** for:

- Flexible application of density requirements (most common of all comments)
- Collaboration and engagement efforts
- Connections made across Council systems in planning (e.g., land use and transportation)

They were **supportive** of:

- The Met Council taking a role in resolution of annexation issues
- The goal of mixed-use development and walkability
- Well-articulated details such as how MUSA expansion will be evaluated
- Efforts to protect natural systems
- The goal of more and diverse types of housing, including affordable housing
- Climate resiliency goals
- Generally, the vision of Imagine 2050
- The support of historically marginalized and vulnerable communities is strategically important for the region

Land Use comments by participant type – Local Govts areas of concern



Most common concerns expressed

- Inadequate infrastructure or services for required density.
- Density requirements will harm community character.
- New density requirements will not work in current forecasted, market, and/or political conditions.
- Density requirements should allow flexibility.
- New density requirements will have negative outcomes.
 - Forcing harmful development in sensitive natural areas like wetlands or lakes
 - Increases in VMT because more people will be commuting to work
 - Increased development costs impeding affordable housing goals

Takeaways on land use and density from participating local govts

Comments on land use and density

- 82% of communities across the region did not express opposition to the density requirement changes.
 - Including 52% of Suburban Edge communities
- 16 (of 53) communities that submitted letters did not oppose density changes.
- Within the comment letters, Agricultural, Rural Center, Urban Edge and Urban communities expressed less opposition to density requirement changes.
- Suburban communities were about evenly divided as it related to density policy.
- Rural Residential, Diversified Rural, and Suburban Edge local govts expressed more concern about density policy than other communities.
- 31 communities (21 from Suburban Edge) expressed concern or opposition to the minimum density requirements.
 - The local govts expressing concern or opposition represent 17% of all local govts in the region.

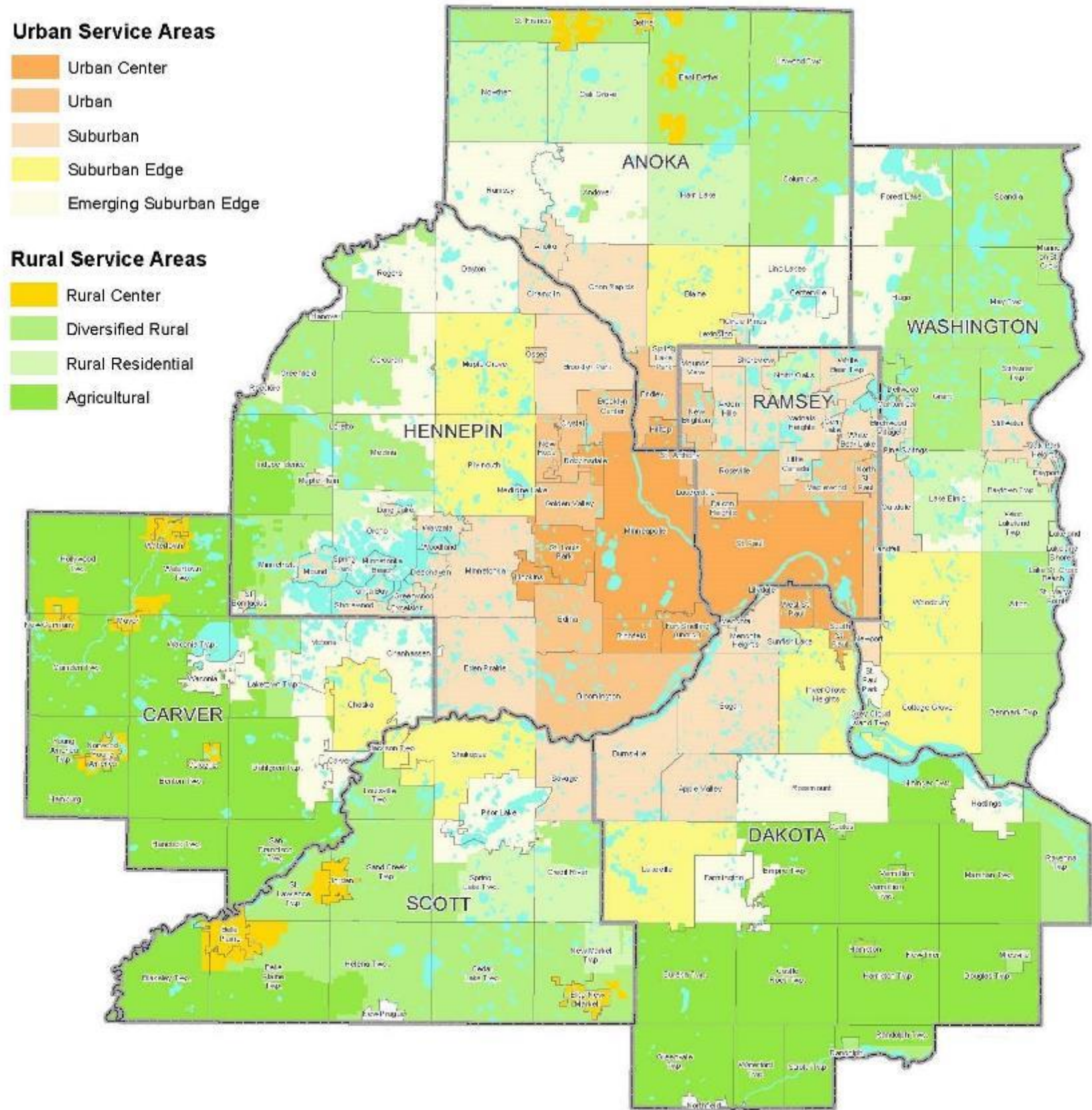


Proposed Changes to Community Designations



Thrive MSP 2040

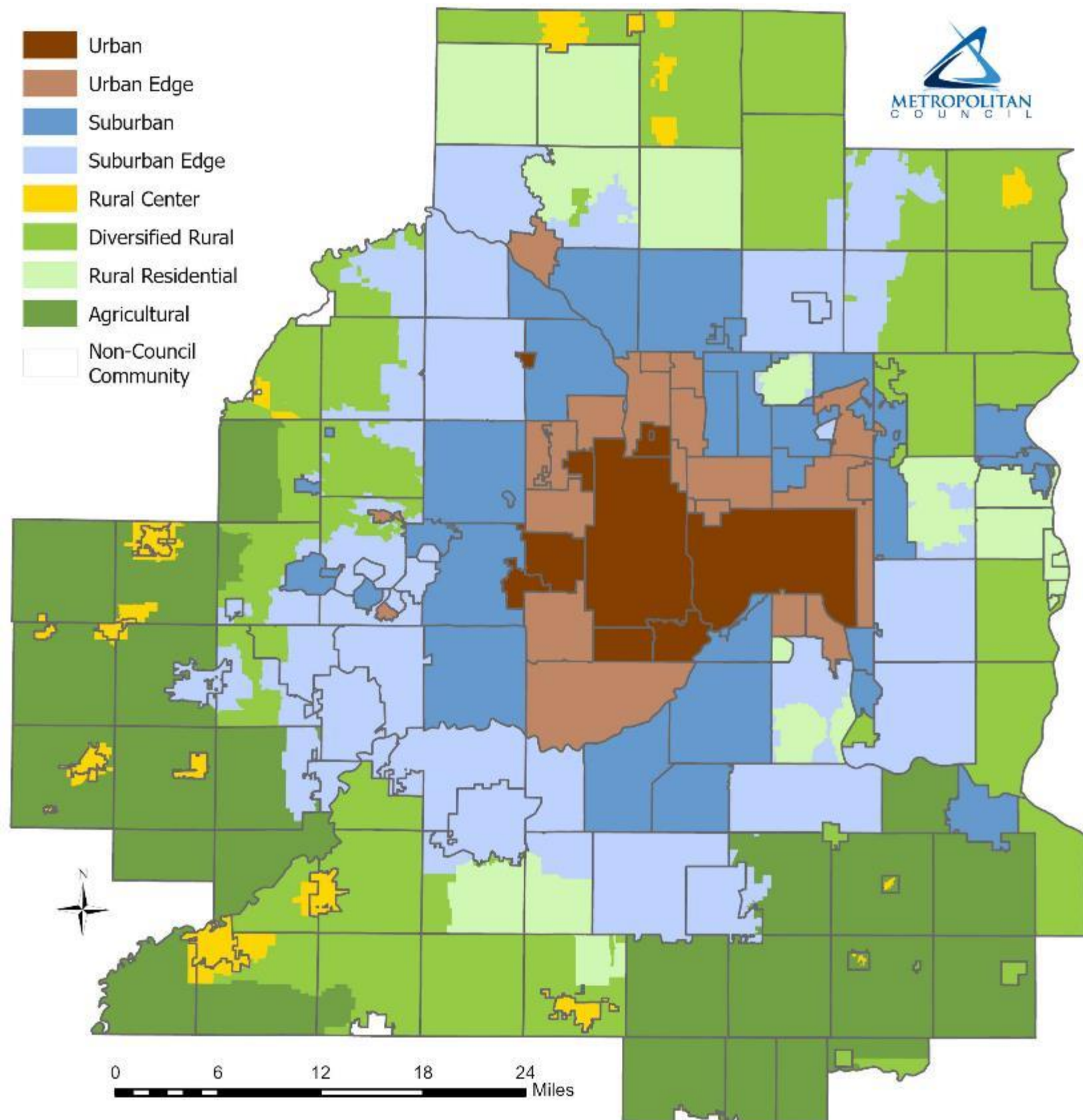
1. Metropolitan Urban Service Area (MUSA)
2. Percentage of developable land
3. Age of the housing stock
4. Intersection density
5. Long-term Wastewater Service Area



90% Draft Designations

1. Metropolitan Urban Service Area (MUSA)
2. Age of the housing stock
3. Intersection density
4. Planned residential density

Endorsed by the Met Council on March 15, 2023



Community-specific changes

Community Designation Changes Proposed in Draft for Adoption

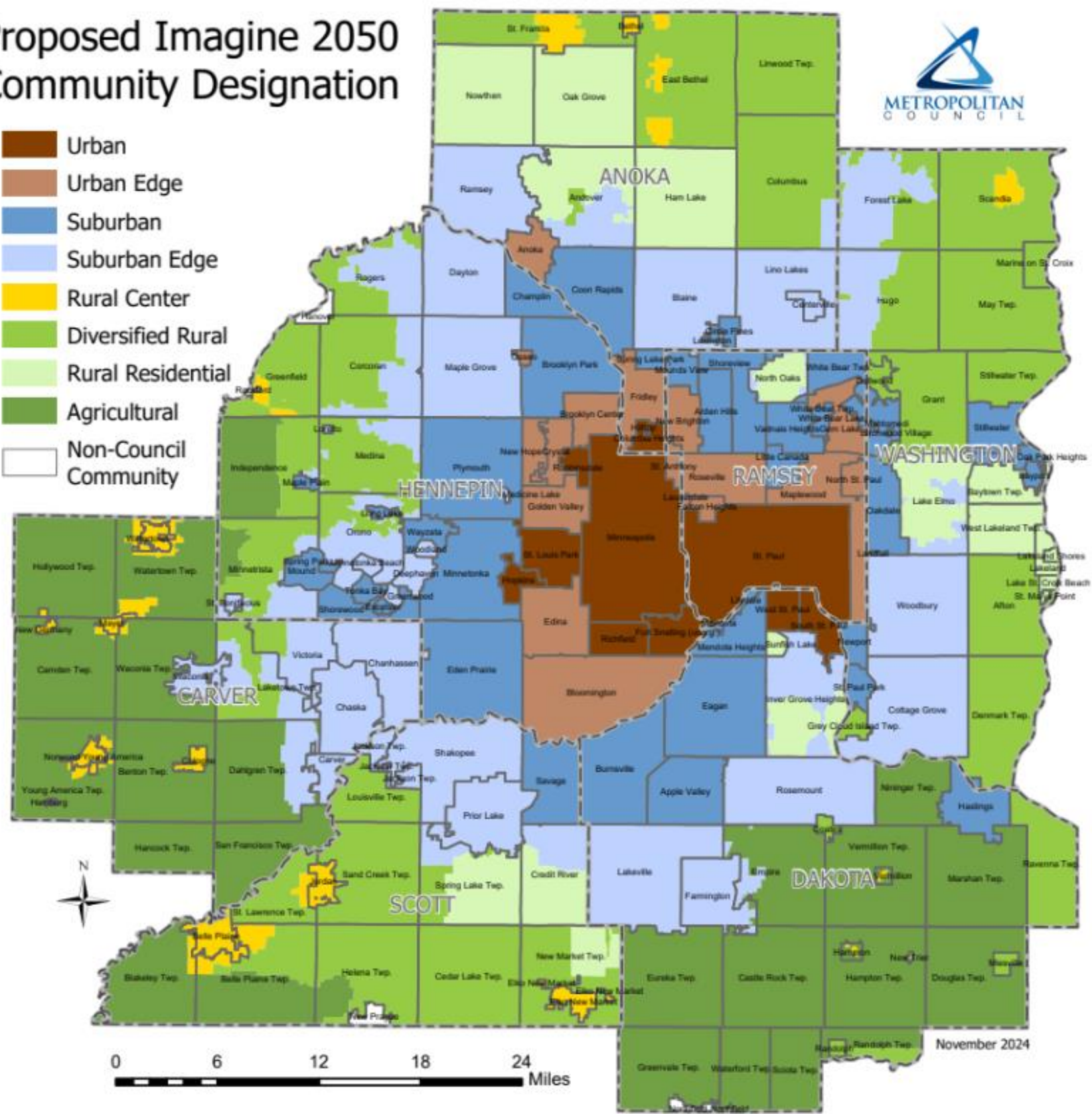
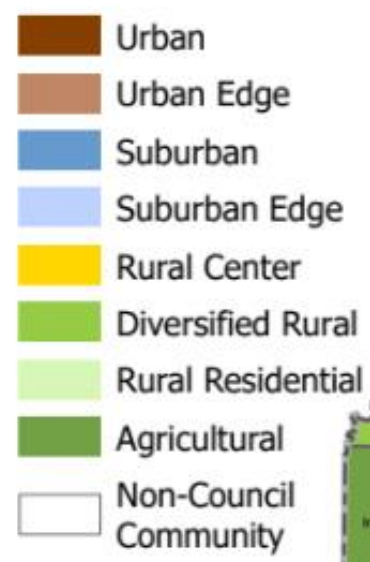
	City	Thrive MSP 2040		Imagine 2050 90% Draft		Imagine 2050 Draft for Adoption		Minimum Density Change
		Community Designation	Minimum Density	Community Designation	Minimum Density	Community Designation	Minimum Density	From 90% Draft to Draft for Adoption
1	Birchwood Village	Suburban	5	Urban Edge	14	Suburban	7	↓
2	Blaine	Suburban Edge	3-5	Suburban	7	Suburban Edge	4	↓
3	Excelsior	Suburban	5	Urban Edge	14	Suburban	7	↓
4	Gem Lake	Suburban	5	Suburban Edge	4	Suburban	7	↑
5	Landfall	Suburban	5	Urban Edge	14	Suburban	7	↓
6	Long Lake	Suburban	5	Urban Edge	14	Suburban	7	↓
7	Loretto	Suburban	5	Suburban	7	Suburban Edge	4	↓
8	Medicine Lake	Suburban	5	Suburban	7	Suburban Edge	4	↓
9	Mounds View	Suburban	5	Urban Edge	14	Suburban	7	↓
10	Osseo	Urban	10	Urban	25	Urban Edge	14	↓
11	Savage	Suburban	5	Suburban Edge	4	Suburban	7	↑
12	Shorewood	Suburban	5	Suburban Edge	4	Suburban	7	↑
13	South St. Paul	Urban Center	20	Urban Edge	14	Urban	25	↑
14	Spring Lake Park	Suburban	5	Urban Edge	14	Suburban	7	↓
15	West St. Paul	Urban Center	20	Urban Edge	14	Urban	25	↑

Proposed Designations in Draft for Adoption

1. Metropolitan Urban Service Area (MUSA)
2. Age of the housing stock
3. Intersection density
4. Planned residential density

For review by the CDC on December 2, 2024

Proposed Imagine 2050 Community Designation



Proposed Text and Policy Changes



Under Construction



More to come...

- Review Community Designation descriptions to ensure that there is clear, yet concise, distinction of the differences between each designation.
- Visual representation of Met Council and Local Government Roles and Responsibilities by Urban or Rural Service Area
 - Also by Community Designations, where applicable

Changes Proposed

Minor Changes Proposed

- Added context to the Urban and Rural Service Area descriptions
- Updated Community Designations and associated maps
- Clarification throughout of Roles & Responsibilities (labels and text)
- Clarification throughout of terms related to required or encouraged policies/actions
- Removal of duplicative actions or as needed for simplicity/clarity

Specific Changes Proposed

- Added clarity for commitment to a balanced and flexible approach to administrative guidelines
- Added clarity for Orderly Annexation Area policies
- Added Roles and Responsibilities Section
- Added Implementation Section outlining at a high level, technical assistance and funding resources for local comprehensive planning.



Clarifying flexibility and implementation

Proposed new and revised language for Obj. 1, Policy 2, Action 3viii

- viii. Update and adopt administrative guidelines which offer a balanced and flexible approach to local implementation of land use and density policies, while maintaining conformance with regional system plans and consistency with Met Council policies. As part of the administrative guidelines review and the implementation work plan, the Met Council will:
- Prioritize collaboration with local government partners and regional stakeholders to best meet both regional goals and local needs.
 - Evaluate the need for updates to **current** administrative guidelines including the MUSA Implementation Guidelines and Flexible Development Guidelines to align with regional goals and to effectively advance the policies in Imagine 2050.
 - Evaluate the net residential density calculations guidance and assess the implications of excluding stormwater management areas, permanent public easements, and others.
 - Update the Plat Monitoring Program to better reflect more recent development patterns by examining a lookback period that is not dependent on when the program was initiated in 2000, or when participation in the program began.
 - Consider how flexibility for infill and redevelopments may be accommodated based on their different infrastructure needs and ability to meet different regional goals.
 - Consider positive past planning outcomes and innovative local initiatives which have supported regional goals including existing development patterns, adopted plans and ordinances, as well as other relevant data.
 - Provide the necessary tools, resources, and technical assistance to help local governments meet these planning expectations.

Clarifying Orderly Annexation Area Policies

Proposed new and revised language for Obj. 1, Policy 2, Action 7ii & 7iv

- A7. Encourage orderly annexation agreements (OAs) between ~~cities growing Rural Centers or Suburban Edge communities,~~ and adjacent townships to encourage planned and orderly development in rural areas, where applicable. (Met Council/Local Government)
- ii. Orderly annexation agreements must encompass the planning horizon and identify needed updates that occur within the planning period. ~~The Met Council will evaluate the land capacity to accommodate forecasted growth in the OAA area. If an adopted OAA terminates prior to the end of the planning horizon, additional land supply within the jurisdictional authority of the local government may need to be identified to accommodate any additional forecasted growth or the Met Council may consider a forecast adjustment. Plan authorization may only apply to timelines permitted within the orderly annexation agreement. (Met Council/Local Government)~~
 - iv. ~~Unincorporated areas surrounding Rural Centers, and some Suburban Edge communities, guided by the current local government jurisdiction for future urban expansion should not encourage a development pattern that precludes the extension of future urban services. Even if a particular land use may be acceptable in the Rural Service Area from a regional perspective, the Met Council does not encourage land uses or development that would be incompatible with plans of adjacent jurisdictions.~~

Discussion and Policy Direction



Discussion and Policy Direction

For clarity, please address each question individually.

1. Do you agree with the proposed changes to Community Designations?
2. Do you want to change, or keep the same, the proposed minimum average density for Suburban Edge communities of 4 u/a?
3. Do you have any specific concerns related to the substantive edits to the 90% draft related to:
 - a) Commitment to a balanced and flexible approach to administrative guidelines (Obj 1, P2, A3 viii)
 - b) Additional support for Orderly Annexation Agreements in rural areas (Obj 1, Pol 2, A7)
 - c) Other?



Thank you

Angela R. Torres, AICP

Senior Manager, Local Planning Assistance

Angela.Torres@metc.state.mn.us

(651) 602-1566

