

Information Item

Community Development Committee



Meeting Date: February 20, 2024

Topic

Imagine 2050: Draft Land Use Objectives and Policies

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Background

The Metropolitan Council is charged in statute with preparing a comprehensive development guide for the metropolitan area. The land use objectives, policies, and actions in *Imagine 2050*, the next regional development guide, will provide directions on how the Council plans to manage growth and development within the region. Council staff use the regional vision and goals as a foundation for developing land use objectives, along with associated policies and actions. Regional goals broadly describe the desired end states for the region, while objectives provide more specific direction by identifying achievable results that advance each regional goal. Policies identify the Council's intent or approach to regional issues or topics to help achieve objectives, and actions are specific strategies or activities to implement these policies.

Council staff developed draft land use objectives and solicited feedback from stakeholders including the Land Use Advisory Committee (LUAC), the Transportation Policy Plan Advisory Working Group (TPP AWG), the Regional Development Guide Work Group (RDG Work Group), and Council staff from other policy and system areas. The original draft land use objectives were:

Original Land Use Objectives

1. Minimize the amount of land needed to accommodate regional growth.
2. Maximize the development of places accessible for people by transit, bicycling, rolling, and walking.
3. Design places where all people feel safe and connected.
4. Maximize the preservation and restoration of natural systems at all scales of development.
5. Maximize housing choice within communities.
6. Remedy past and present discriminatory land use practices.
7. Prioritize land use and development patterns that strengthen local climate resilience.

Council staff reviewed stakeholder feedback and findings from external community engagement and incorporated it into the draft land use objectives. Some feedback included advice for more people-centered language, use of the term housing "opportunities" rather than housing "choice," and the addition of an objective focused on economic development and economic competitiveness. Given these and other changes, the current draft land use objectives are:

Revised Land Use Objectives (Current as of February 20, 2024)

1. Respect the relationship with land and water as a foundation for regional growth.

2. Maximize opportunities for growth in places well-served by transit, bicycle, and pedestrian infrastructure.
3. Establish vibrant, inclusive, connected, and safe communities for people to live in.
4. Ensure that development activities contribute to the fullest protection and restoration of natural systems on every level.
5. Ensure that in all types of communities, people find housing opportunities that align with their needs.
6. Remedy past and present discriminatory land use practices.
7. Strengthen the climate resilience of neighborhoods and communities through sustainable land use and development patterns.
8. Support the economic wellbeing of our region and its communities.

Discussion

Council staff presented the draft land use objectives at the November 20, 2023, Community Development Committee meeting. The February 20, 2024, CDC meeting will focus on the revised land use objectives and draft land use policies for each objective. The sections below provide the revised land use objective, a description of the purpose and desired outcomes of the objective, and the draft land use policies.

Objective 1: Respect the relationship with land and water as a foundation for regional growth.

Land and water are essential for sustaining all life. We recognize that planning for the region is about more than accommodating a growing human population, but also about respecting the needs of all living things in the region. Regional growth requires the orderly and efficient development of land to meet evolving and expanding needs. A development pattern that minimizes the amount of land used to accommodate growth supports this outcome by leveraging the region's existing resources. Directing growth to areas where infrastructure already exists promotes efficient use of available infrastructure capacity in the urban and rural service areas and reduces the need for infrastructure expansion. The concentration of growth in existing service areas also mitigates premature development of agricultural areas and destruction of natural systems. Managing growth in this manner allows our region to preserve its agricultural economy and rural lifestyles while accommodating the needs of residents and businesses.

Draft Land Use Policies

1. Incorporate indigenous perspectives in management of land and water sources.
2. Minimize the amount of land needed to accommodate regional growth and reduce the cost of infrastructure expansion and service improvements through orderly and economical growth.
3. Minimize urbanization of rural and agricultural uses and retain the ability to provide urban services based on regional system plans and long-term needs.
4. Focus growth, both community-wide and in TOD areas, to maximize infrastructure investments, especially in station areas by community designations.
5. The 2040 MUSA boundary provides sufficient area to accommodate 2050 regional forecasted growth.
6. Forecasted growth and land supply shall be identified by decade. Land use shall be guided at the parcel level.
7. Maximize use of the existing built environment by encouraging redevelopment, infill, adaptive reuse, and culturally inclusive historic preservation.
8. Direct growth away from sensitive ecosystems to prioritize protection of natural systems and prevent groundwater contamination from development, especially in highly vulnerable Drinking Water Supply Management Areas.
9. Community-wide growth shall be forecasted only in areas where sufficient water supply is available to support the anticipated population.



10. Urban design and development patterns include climate mitigation and adaptation measures.

Objective 2: Maximize opportunities for growth in places well-served by transit, bicycle, and pedestrian infrastructure.

The region includes existing and planned regional transit and bicycle infrastructure. We have many residents who cannot afford personal vehicles, are unable to drive, or who would prefer to use transit, bicycle, or walk/roll for some or all their daily needs.

Additional housing, jobs, and services in these locations will have the following benefits:

- Increase the accessibility of the region for those without access to a personal vehicle.
- Reduce the need for vehicle trips and/or their cost and duration.
- Reduce GHG emissions related to transportation and land use.
- Ensure that our regional investment in regional transit/bicycling infrastructure is well used.
- Increase positive health outcomes due to greater physical activity.

The region has geographic transit market areas that are commensurate with existing or potential future levels of transit service. They are related primarily to density, walkability, and levels of car ownership. Factors such as age (children/elderly), ability, income, and personal preferences are other important planning considerations. Communities in the region can support and reinforce these areas through planning and implementation that encourages additional density around activity centers and along corridors, a greater mix of uses, and improvement to the walkability and livability of the area.

Draft Land Use Policies

1. Support community-led planning and anti-displacement efforts to ensure community cohesion during change resulting from public investments and market demand.
2. Require cities to focus growth and meet minimum density requirements for planned residential and commercial development near transit.
3. Support ongoing community planning and implementation that supports transit, bicycling, and walking/rolling through grants, partnerships, and technical resources.
4. Promote professional development in the disciplines of urban design, complete streets, placemaking, and walkability.
5. Support regional centers of economic activity through land acquisition, pollution cleanup, preservation, accessibility improvements, and other planning support.
6. Prioritize the preservation, restoration, and enhancement of environmental and natural resources to leverage development near transit.

Objective 3: Establish vibrant, inclusive, connected, and safe communities for people to live in.

People’s experiences of the places in which they live, work, and recreate reflect the livability of the region. Feelings of safety and connection in one’s community promote a sense of belonging and ownership, offering residents access to many of the things they desire close to home. Planning for future growth presents the opportunity to design places where new and existing residents can gather, interact, and connect. Communities can use these spaces to celebrate local culture and history through events that bring together people from different backgrounds. While community connection impacts feelings of safety within a community, land use decisions also create a built environment that supports safety, physical activity, and access to amenities and services, contributing to the notion that residents can conveniently access many of their needs and desires within their own community.

Draft Land Use Policies

1. Prioritize planning practices that support mixed-use development, walkable neighborhoods, and easy access to public transportation.
2. Plan and maintain public spaces for community gatherings.
3. Prioritize and plan for creation and preservation of green public spaces in urban areas.
4. Center community engagement in the planning process to build community trust and ownership.
5. Protect historic and cultural assets.



6. Preserve and support business districts in historically disadvantaged and vulnerable communities.
7. Support culturally-significant design elements that animate the urban landscape.
8. Plan for developments that meet or exceeds the minimum ADA standards to fully meet the needs of people with disabilities.
9. Incorporate inclusive design principles that consider the needs of all community members including various cultural backgrounds, age groups, languages, and gender identities.
10. Integrate sustainable water management strategies into the design of vibrant public spaces.

Objective 4: Ensure that development activities contribute to the fullest protection and restoration of 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. Going forward, the Council wants to promote development and land use management that is sustainable and considers natural systems in design and implementation. This requires a balancing of natural system protection and 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. 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.

Draft Land Use Policies

1. Plan and maintain public spaces that enhance informal green space and natural systems features.
2. Build natural systems amenities that enhance biodiversity while preserving or increasing public safety through community-centered design and management.
3. Prioritize planning practices that support nature-based solutions to build community resilience to potential climate impacts.
4. Quantify the value of open space and undeveloped land through quantitative and qualitative means to assist communities in measuring the value of natural systems preservation and restoration efforts.
5. Prioritize compact and infill development to preserve high quality natural systems.
6. Inventory natural systems within and between communities to assess areas for protection, restoration, and enhancement.
7. Protect, restore, and enhance connected habitat and natural systems corridors through sustainable land use and infrastructure planning.
8. Protect, restore, and enhance natural systems in areas of environmental justice concern to build community resilience.
9. Partner with State, Tribal, local and watershed planners to build a shared understanding and identify strategies that address risks to public and ecosystem health.
10. Enhance public and private pollinator habitat and native plantings across land uses.
11. Build natural systems amenities through meaningful community engagement to enhance community trust and ownership.

Objective 5: Ensure that people find housing opportunities in all types of communities that align with their needs.

The housing affordability crisis that persists in our region limits people from choosing the location and type of housing in which they want to live. Instead, people must look outside of their desired community for stable and affordable housing options. The issue is further compounded for those who use housing vouchers or are disabled, because they are already severely limited in their housing options. Planning for a diverse housing stock supports housing choice by providing options for all ages, incomes, and abilities. Lower cost units help meet affordable housing needs, while housing variety allows people to



transition to housing that better meets their evolving needs. The location of housing types within a community impacts choice regardless of its diverse housing stock.

Draft Land Use Policies

1. Set realistic and achievable minimum density requirements for all communities based on needs and characteristics.
2. Encourage communities to prioritize senior-specific housing options which cater to diverse needs.
3. Encourage communities to prioritize a variety of housing types close to destinations including neighborhoods centers, transit nodes and community regional centers.
4. Design and retrofit neighborhoods to reduce auto-dependency.
5. Encourage the creation of multi-modal connections between neighborhoods and destinations.
6. Expand housing voucher programs to assist low-income families in securing housing in neighborhoods with better resources and opportunities.
7. Support local official controls and fiscal devices which, by right, allow for mixed-use developments and diverse housing types, such as duplexes, triplexes, and accessory dwelling units (ADUs).
8. Support local official controls and fiscal devices to allow for the inclusion of modular and manufactured homes in areas zoned for single-family residences.
9. Support local official controls and fiscal devices to allow for the development of cooperative and multigenerational homes.
10. Support local controls and fiscal devices that support and incentivize the creation of affordable, homeownership opportunities.
11. Incentivize and streamline the repurposing of existing vacant or underutilized buildings for residential use.
12. Broaden permitted density requirements to balance categories which support more than one housing type.
13. Prevent underutilization of land.
14. Promote inclusive land use planning policies that prioritize diverse perspectives and lifestyles, steering away from imposing norms derived solely from the dominant culture and class values.
15. Collaborate with community-based organizations and local governments to eradicate homelessness and address housing insecurity through regional and local policies and fiscal devices.
16. Partner with local government to implement measurable standards that ensure safe and sanitary living conditions and ensure the wellbeing of residents.

Objective 6: Remedy past and present discriminatory land use practices.

Our region's history of discriminatory planning and policy decisions contributed to the inequitable landscape in which we live today. Redlining, racially restrictive covenants, disproportionate investment, environmental injustices, and more have magnified racial disparities leaving lasting impacts on communities of color. The perpetuation and exacerbation of these inequities, to the point where our region has some of the worst racial disparities in the country, is proof that the status quo is not working. Moving forward, we will acknowledge the faults of our past while remedying their consequences. This objective requires us to center the voices of marginalized and underrepresented communities in planning and decision-making so that we may plan with them and not for them. Together we will remedy past and present discriminatory land use practices.

Draft Land Use Policies

1. Take ownership of past harms, provide transparent communication, and hold governments accountable to plans and actions.
2. Prioritize engagement with underrepresented populations to develop plans, policies, and programs responsive to and reflective of community needs.
3. Promote equitable distribution of public investments to benefit communities disproportionately



harmed by past planning practices and to eliminate racial disparities.

4. Center the native experience in decision-making and implement the actions included the Council's acknowledgment statement that all land in this region is Dakota land.

Objective 7: Strengthen the climate resilience of neighborhoods and communities through sustainable land use and development patterns.

The effects of climate change transcend community boundaries and impact the entire region. While it is important to implement mitigation measures to stop climate impacts associated with climate change from getting worse, we must use nature-based and built solutions to adapt to current and future climate impacts and therefore strengthen our resilience in the face of these challenges. 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. Climate change and environmental justice (equity considerations) are inextricably linked. Climate action must center environmental justice outcomes to build community and neighborhood scale resilience.

Draft Land Use Policies

1. Support local governments in establishing urban tree canopy goals and restoration and maintenance of the urban tree canopy.
2. Incentivize urban design and development that maximizes renewable energy readiness, enhances energy efficiency, and incorporates community greenspace.
3. Incentivize mixed use and activity center development patterns to enhance accessibility for local needs.
4. Encourage de-paving and natural landscaping to enhance climate adaptation and resilience.
5. Deploy 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).
6. Increase renewable energy systems deployment and energy storage, particularly in disadvantaged communities.
7. Support low impact design and integration of nature-based solutions into development to adapt to projected climate impacts on our region.
8. Create an incentives-based program for climate-focused land management and development.
9. Partner with Tribal Nations and communities to build trust through shared knowledge and experiences, collaborate on solutions, and work together to bring indigenous values, perspectives, and experiences forward for climate and natural systems work.
10. Develop climate-related technical assistance and resources to serve the needs of local governments as well as historically underrepresented and marginalized populations.

Objective 8: Support the economic wellbeing of our region and its communities.

The region historically has had a robust and diverse economy, often leading our peer regions with growing industries that have competitive advantages. However, our region also has some of the worst racial economic disparities in the country. As our region becomes more racially diverse, it is imperative to address these disparities in a meaningful way so that the existing and new workers connect with these opportunities. This dynamic becomes even more important as we recognize that job relocations to the region, as well as international immigration, have been waning. Regional and local economic conditions have significant impacts on the wellbeing of places important to our region and communities. These include our downtowns, other regional jobs and industrial centers, local main streets, and neighborhoods.

Draft Land Use Policies

1. Support culturally inclusive local community development efforts that work to reduce racial



- income and wealth disparities.
2. Support community development efforts that foster a welcoming environment for workers and businesses new to the region.
 3. Help ensure the affordability of the region as a place to live, travel, and do business.
 4. Require jobs-rich communities to plan for a greater degree of affordable and workforce housing opportunities.
 5. Invest in places that have high job growth potential.
 6. Support broad based efforts to connect the region's workforce to skill building and learning opportunities.
 7. Support place-based business development, entrepreneurship, and mentoring.
 8. Support land use and accessibility strategies to improve the accessibility of the region's job opportunities.
 9. Invest in initiatives to support jobs related to climate adaptation and resilience.
 10. Support efforts that promote the region's cultural, economic, and natural resources.
 11. Preserve prime agricultural lands for food production.

Other policies that support this objective:

1. Minimize the amount of land needed to accommodate regional growth and reduce the cost of infrastructure expansion and service improvements through orderly and economical growth. (Objective 1)
2. Support regional centers of economic activity through land acquisition, pollution cleanup, preservation, accessibility improvements, and other planning support. (Objective 2)
3. Support community-led planning and anti-displacement efforts to ensure community cohesion during change resulting from public investments and market demand. (Objective 2)
4. Preserve and support business districts in historically disadvantaged and vulnerable communities. (Objective 3)
5. Promote equitable distribution of public investments to benefit communities disproportionately harmed by past planning practices and to eliminate racial disparities. (Objective 6)

