

Information Item

Land Use Advisory Committee (LUAC)



Meeting Date: March 16, 2023

Topic

Regional Growth Scenarios: Opportunities and Challenges

District(s), Member(s):	All
Policy/Legal Reference:	Metropolitan Land Planning Act (§473.145)
Staff Prepared/Presented:	Katelyn Champoux, Planner (651-602-1831) Baris Gumus-Dawes, Planning Analyst (651-602-1331) Raya Esmaeili, Planning Analyst (651-602-1616)
Division/Department:	Community Development/Regional Planning

Proposed Action

There is no proposed action. This item is presented for information and discussion purposes only.

Background

Council staff will present the opportunities and challenges of four regional growth scenarios and seek LUAC committee members' input on policies to address these findings.

At the LUAC meeting on January 19, 2023, Council staff presented the regional growth scenarios and associated findings that emerged from a scenario modeling exercise. The [information item](#) and [presentation](#) are linked for reference.

Following up on the initial discussion of these scenarios, the LUAC will continue the discussion and further explore the policy implications of these scenarios. Using insights from subject matter experts in each policy and system area, Council staff evaluated the opportunities and challenges of the regional growth scenarios through the lens of the four cross-cutting issues: Equity, Climate, Natural Systems, and Public Health, Safety, and Well-Being. These cross-cutting issues provide the foundation for the current working draft of the 2050 Regional Development Guide Vision Statement, which the Metropolitan Council endorsed at the Committee of the Whole meeting on February 1, 2023. The [information item](#) and [presentation](#) are linked for reference.

The following memo provides an overview of the findings from the evaluation of opportunities and challenges. Council staff qualified the opportunities and challenges by using words such as "less" and "more" to indicate the comparison made between each scenario and business-as-usual. At its March 16, 2023, meeting, LUAC members will use this information to explore additional opportunities and challenges associated with each scenario and discuss regional policies to help achieve desired outcomes.

Cross-Cutting Issue: Natural Systems

The Metropolitan Council endorsed the following working vision statement regarding natural systems for the 2050 Regional Development Guide: *“Our region has world class parks and abundant natural resources. We envision a future where natural systems are increasingly protected, integrated, and restored to ensure a high quality of life for our growing region.”*

During the analysis of opportunities and challenges related to natural systems in the region, staff identified two recurring themes: 1) preservation and/or degradation of natural resources, and 2) impacts to water quality and availability.

High Growth & Compact Development

Opportunities

- **Preservation:** Compact development reduces the demand for greenfield development.
- **Preservation:** Compact development reduces the need for new impervious surfaces to accommodate growth.
- **Preservation:** Compact development promotes better preservation of high-quality and contiguous natural areas.
- **Preservation:** Compact development reduces premature development pressure on areas dedicated to agricultural production which reduces the amount of agricultural land lost to development.

Challenges

- **Degradation:** High growth puts more pressure on park system expansion for resident use rather than natural resource conservation.
- **Degradation:** High growth puts more stress on water resources for recreational use, especially on higher heat days.
- **Degradation:** High growth and compact development increases parks usage within already developed areas, negatively impacting natural resource quality in those areas.
- **Water:** High growth requires more impervious surface to accommodate development which causes more rapid water degradation, especially in areas with poor water quality.
- **Water:** Compact development leads to a greater water recharge deficit in the urban core.
- **Water:** High growth increases water demand, which may cause communities supplying water from surface water sources to be more susceptible to challenges associated with drought.
- **Water:** Compact development with high growth leads to increased drinking water vulnerability in times of drought, particularly in areas served by the Mississippi River.

High Growth & Dispersed Development

Opportunities

- No opportunities identified.

Challenges

- **Degradation:** High growth puts more pressure on park system expansion for resident use rather than natural resource conservation.
- **Degradation:** High growth and dispersed development increases the need for new impervious surfaces to accommodate development.
- **Degradation:** High growth puts more stress on water resources for recreational use, especially on higher heat days.
- **Degradation:** Dispersed development leads to increased fragmentation of natural resources.
- **Degradation:** Dispersed development with high growth puts greater pressure on development of agricultural land and results in more unsewered rural residential

development.

- **Water:** Dispersed development leads to less land area for water infiltration resulting in decreased water recharge, increased erosion, etc.

Low Growth & Compact Development

Opportunities

- **Preservation:** Compact development promotes better preservation of high-quality and contiguous natural areas.
- **Preservation:** Low growth creates the opportunity to better address maintenance gaps due to less intense demand for natural recreation areas.
- **Preservation:** Compact development reduces the demand for greenfield development.
- **Preservation:** Compact development reduces the need for new impervious surfaces to accommodate growth.
- **Preservation:** Compact development reduces premature development pressure on areas dedicated to agricultural production which reduces the amount of agricultural land lost to development.
- **Water:** Low growth leads to less demand for water resources, which allows for better water supply recharge.
- **Water:** Low growth allows for the current capacity of drinking water sources to meet future demand, specifically surface water from Minneapolis and St. Paul.

Challenges

- **Degradation:** Low growth decreases the availability of Legacy funding due to lower tax base.
- **Water:** Compact development leads to increased drinking water vulnerability in times of drought, particularly in areas served by the Mississippi River.
- **Water:** Compact development increases pollution of water bodies near the most compact areas.

Low Growth & Dispersed Development

Opportunities

- **Preservation:** Low growth creates the opportunity to better address maintenance gaps due to less intense demand for natural recreation areas.
- **Water:** Low growth leads to less demand for water resources, which allows for better water supply recharge.
- **Water:** Low growth allows for the current capacity of drinking water sources to meet future demand, specifically surface water from Minneapolis and St. Paul.
- **Water:** Low growth puts less pressure on groundwater resources.

Challenges

- **Degradation:** Dispersed development leads to increased fragmentation of natural systems.
- **Degradation:** Low growth decreases the availability of Legacy funding due to lower tax base.
- **Degradation:** Dispersed development with high growth puts greater pressure on development of agricultural land and results in more unsewered rural residential development.
- **Water:** Dispersed development leads to less land area for water infiltration resulting in decreased water recharge, increased erosion, etc.



Cross-Cutting Issue: Equity

The Metropolitan Council endorsed the following working cross-cutting regional vision statement regarding equity for the 2050 Regional Development Guide: *“Our quality of life is high by national standards but not all communities share in this. We envision a future where inequities and injustices have been eliminated and all residents and newcomers feel welcome, included, and empowered.”*

Equity is a crucial issue that cuts across all policy areas. During the analysis of opportunities for and challenges associated with the issue of equity in the region, four recurring themes emerged: 1) housing, 2) transportation, 3) parks, and 4) water.

High Growth & Compact Development

Opportunities

- **Housing:** Higher density creates more potential for affordable housing development.
- **Housing:** Higher density creates more opportunities for a more diverse housing stock that provides life-cycle housing options such as townhomes, apartments, senior living facilities, and accessory dwelling units (ADUs).
- **Transportation:** High growth sustains expansion of high-frequency, full-service transit network, which is mostly used by black, indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) residents.
- **Transportation:** Compact development benefits BIPOC and aging communities by enhancing the transit network and promoting walkability.

Challenges

- **Housing:** High growth increases housing demand, which puts an upward pressure on housing prices, especially in already-developed areas of the region where many BIPOC and low-income residents live.
- **Housing:** High growth may lead to increased homelessness and increase the need for public housing subsidies.
- **Housing:** High growth may lead to accelerated displacement and gentrification in historically disinvested areas.
- **Transportation:** High growth generates more congestion and leads to longer travel times for transit users, especially in the absence of dedicated transit lanes.
- **Transportation:** More congestion contributes to air quality problems, often concentrated in areas where BIPOC and low-income residents live.
- **Parks:** BIPOC and low-income residents living in the region’s core are disproportionately impacted by degradation of parks and open spaces due to increased use.
- **Water:** High/compact growth may require increasing the capacity of the wastewater infrastructure in the developed portions of the region. The cost of increasing the capacity of existing wastewater infrastructure will disproportionately impact low-income residents.

High Growth & Dispersed Development

Opportunities

- No opportunities identified.

Challenges

- **Housing:** High growth increases housing demand, which puts an upward pressure on housing prices. This price pressure reduces overall housing affordability, especially impacting low-income residents.
- **Housing:** Commuting costs may increase due to people choosing to live further from the center of the region.
- **Housing:** High growth may lead to increased homelessness and increase the need for public housing subsidies.



- **Transportation:** High growth generates more overall congestion.
- **Transportation:** Dispersed growth is less conducive to the expansion of a high-frequency, full-service transit network which is important to transit-dependent populations.
- **Water:** High/dispersed growth would require expanding the footprint of wastewater infrastructure. The cost of expanding wastewater infrastructure will disproportionately impact low-income residents.

Low Growth & Compact Development

Opportunities

- **Housing:** Due to low growth, there may be more opportunities for housing development to catch up with existing unmet demand.
- **Housing:** Lower growth potentially puts less pressure on housing prices.
- **Housing:** Higher density creates more potential for affordable housing development.
- **Housing:** Higher density creates more opportunities for a more diverse housing stock that provides life-cycle housing options such as townhomes, apartments, senior living facilities, and accessory dwelling units.
- **Transportation:** Less travel and lower congestion implies better access to amenities for BIPOC and low-income residents.
- **Transportation:** Compact development benefits BIPOC and aging communities by sustaining the transit network and promoting walkability.

Challenges

- **Housing:** Low tax base associated with low growth may mean fewer resources for affordable housing subsidies.
- **Transportation:** Cost of maintaining and upgrading local infrastructure in populated areas are more burdensome for low-income residents.
- **Water:** Low tax base makes it challenging for smaller cities with local treatment facilities to maintain their infrastructure.

Low Growth & Dispersed Development

Opportunities

- **Housing:** Due to low growth, there may be more opportunities for housing development to catch up with existing unmet demand.
- **Housing:** Lower growth potentially puts less pressure on housing prices.

Challenges

- **Housing:** Low tax base associated with low growth may mean fewer resources for affordable housing subsidies.
- **Transportation:** Dispersed growth is less conducive to the expansion of high-frequency, full-service transit network, which is mostly used by BIPOC residents.
- **Water:** Low tax base makes it challenging for smaller cities with local treatment facilities to maintain their infrastructure.



Cross-Cutting Issue: Climate

The Metropolitan Council endorsed the following working vision statement regarding climate for the 2050 Regional Development Guide: *“Our region leads on the critical issue of climate change. We envision a future where we have eliminated or mitigated greenhouse gas emissions and have adapted to ensure that our communities and systems are resilient.”*

During the analysis of opportunities and challenges associated with the issue of climate change in the region, staff identified two recurring themes: 1) greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions; 2) environmental quality and preservation of natural areas impacting the urban heat island effect.

High Growth & Compact Development

Opportunities

- **GHG:** Shorter travel distances reduce GHG emissions.
- **GHG:** Denser housing developments can result in more efficient building energy use, which reduces GHG emissions.
- **GHG:** Compact development helps preserve natural areas allowing for carbon sequestration that mitigates climate change.
- **Env. quality:** Denser developments reduce the need for new impervious surfaces.

Challenges

- **GHG:** Larger population growth, greater energy needs, and more freight travel increase GHG emissions.
- **Env. quality:** Increased density can increase the urban heat island effect.

High Growth & Dispersed Development

Opportunities

- **Env. quality:** More sparsely built developments, dispersed throughout the region, contribute less to an urban heat island effect.

Challenges

- **GHG:** Larger population growth and greater energy needs increase GHG emissions.
- **GHG:** Longer travel distances to reach goods and services result in increased VMT and therefore, increase GHG emissions.

Low Growth & Compact Development

Opportunities

- **GHG:** Lower population growth reduces GHG emissions.
- **GHG:** Compact development helps preserve natural areas allowing for carbon sequestration that mitigates climate change.
- **Env. quality:** Denser developments reduce the need for new impervious surfaces.

Challenges

- **Env. quality:** Increased density contributes to increased urban heat island effect.

Low Growth & Dispersed Development

Opportunities

- **GHG:** Lower population growth reduces the number of trips, which then lowers GHG emissions.

Challenges

- **GHG:** Increased VMT and travel time to reach goods and services increases GHG



emissions.

- **GHG:** Lower density of new development is less conducive to efficient building energy use, which increases GHG emissions.



Cross-Cutting Issue: Public Health, Safety, and Well Being

The Metropolitan Council endorsed the following working vision statement regarding healthy and safe communities for the 2050 Regional Development Guide: *“The wellbeing of our region depends on the strength and inclusiveness of our economy as well as the quality, safety, and reliability of our public infrastructure and services. We envision a future where all our region’s residents can live healthy, productive, and rewarding lives with a sense of security, agency, and wellbeing.”*

During the analysis of opportunities for and challenges associated with the issue of Public Health, Safety, and Well Being in the region, staff identified three recurring themes: 1) safety, including personal and collective safety; 2) access to goods and services, including emergency services and grocery stores; and 3) health, including physical and mental health, and promoting healthy lifestyles.

High Growth & Compact Development

Opportunities

- **Safety:** More people and compact development can lead to more activity with uses that serve the population throughout the day, which puts more "eyes on the street" and creates safer neighborhoods.
- **Access:** Compact development is more conducive to mixed use developments (commercial uses next to housing developments), which allow more people to live in proximity to goods and services such as grocery stores.
- **Access:** Compact development means more people live in proximity to public services such as healthcare and transit. The cost of these public services may potentially be lower due to efficiency and density.
- **Health:** Compact development promotes walkability and reduces vehicle miles traveled (VMT) resulting in improved mobility and health outcomes.
- **Health:** More people living in greater proximity to one another can result in stronger social support network.

Challenges

- **Access:** High population growth leads to more congestion which inhibits and delays access to emergency services.
- **Health:** Greater proximity to other people creates more opportunities for spread of disease.
- **Health:** High population growth increases housing demand and puts an upward pressure on housing prices. As a result, finding affordable housing can become challenging and potentially increase housing instability, which impacts job security, mental health, and more.

High Growth & Dispersed Development

Opportunities

- No opportunities identified.

Challenges

- **Safety:** Longer travel distances and static (or increased) car-dependency may cause an increase in traffic accidents.
- **Access:** High population growth leads to more congestion which inhibits and delays access to emergency services.
- **Access:** Dispersed development makes it more difficult to connect the growing number of residents to community resources, which also disproportionately impacts already underserved communities.
- **Health:** Dispersed development is not conducive to creating walkable communities.

- **Health:** Dispersed development may increase current water supply contamination risks by creating new sources of contamination.
- **Health:** New dispersed development means more developments on individual SSTs, and therefore a greater potential for failure of sewer systems and contamination risks.

Low Growth & Compact Development

Opportunities

- **Safety:** More compact development may create busier and safer streets by increasing opportunities for mixed use neighborhoods that promote a flow of people throughout the day.
- **Access:** Compact development is more conducive to mixed use developments (commercial uses next to housing developments), which allow more people to live in proximity to goods and services such as grocery stores.
- **Access:** Compact development means that more people live in proximity to public services such as healthcare and transit. The cost of these public services may potentially be lower due to efficiency and density.
- **Health:** Compact development promotes walkability and reduces VMT resulting in improved mobility and health outcomes.
- **Health:** More people living in greater proximity to one another can result in stronger social support networks.

Challenges

- No challenges identified.

Low Growth & Dispersed Development

Opportunities

- No opportunities identified.

Challenges

- **Access:** Dispersed development makes it more difficult to connect the growing number of residents to community resources, which also disproportionately impacts already underserved communities.
- **Health:** Dispersed development is not conducive to creating walkable communities.
- **Health:** Dispersed development may increase current water supply contamination risks by creating new sources of contamination.
- **Health:** New dispersed development means more developments on individual SSTs, and therefore a greater potential for failure of sewer systems and contamination risks.

