

Summary of Information on  
Geographic Planning Areas for  
Committee of the Whole Meeting  
January 30, 2013

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## Introduction

Geographic planning areas are an important means of defining and implementing strategies tied to goals in the *Regional Development Framework*, and planning areas have played a similar role in previous Metropolitan Development Guides. The objective of summarizing information on geographic planning areas is to bring planning areas into policy discussions that will have major implications for implementation. Specifically, the information is intended to inform the Council's work on Thrive MSP 2040 scenario proposals and support the Council's upcoming decisions on how to define planning areas.

This summary on geographic planning areas:

- Explains the importance of the planning areas and shows current planning areas;
- Identifies earlier Metropolitan Development Guides and depicts the history of the Council's geographic planning areas through maps;
- Includes maps of other geographic areas, such as service areas for long-term wastewater treatment service and transit service; and
- Summarizes feedback and ideas from the Council's Land Use Advisory Committee on concepts and criteria for defining geographic planning areas.

Information in this summary is based on two main sources: (1) background material prepared for the Land Use Advisory Committee to support its discussion of geographic planning areas, and (2) feedback and ideas shared during a Land Use Advisory Committee meeting on January 17, 2013.

## Importance of Geographic Planning Areas

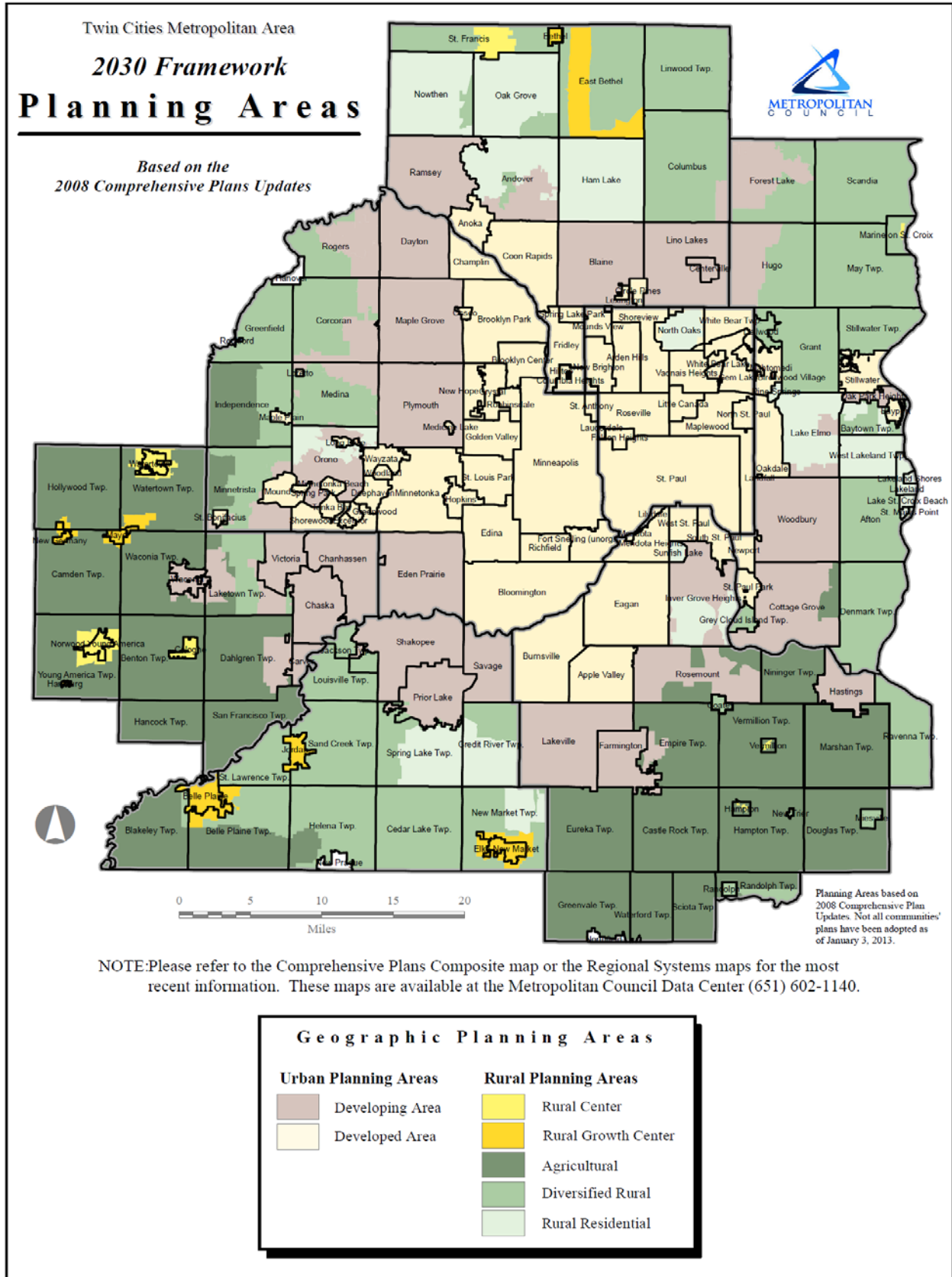
Geographic planning areas have been pivotal in planning and implementing policies and strategies, and decisions on geographic planning areas will have a significant impact on communities. The region includes a diversity of communities, and the Council has tailored different strategies for areas that range from rural to urban. Planning areas, as well as regional service areas, are used in planning for the Council's regional systems and setting expectations for investment. Geographic planning areas are a key means of implementing the spectrum of the Council's overarching policies, including guiding development and redevelopment, resource protection, and accommodating growth.

## Geographic Planning Areas in the Framework

Geographic planning areas are currently defined for developed communities, developing communities and a variety of types of rural areas. Figure 1 shows the geographic planning areas in the *Regional Development Framework (Framework)*. The map reflects changes to planning area designations made during the review of the 2008 comprehensive plan updates.

The *Framework* continued to apply distinctions between urban and rural areas and to identify specific rural areas. Unlike previous Metropolitan Development Guides covered in the next section, the *Framework* did not include varying levels of protection for agricultural land. The *Framework* also did not designate centers or regional business concentrations as part of the urban area, since those designations were discontinued in the *Regional Blueprint*.

Figure 1: Current Geographic Planning Areas



NOTE: Please refer to the Comprehensive Plans Composite map or the Regional Systems maps for the most recent information. These maps are available at the Metropolitan Council Data Center (651) 602-1140.

## **History of Geographic Planning Areas**

Geographic planning areas have evolved over the course of the Council’s planning history. Maps from previous Metropolitan Development Guides show how areas were previously defined and reflect the role of urban service provision. Investments in wastewater treatment plants have been a major driver in managing growth, especially in rural areas. A table with side-by-side comparisons of planning areas used throughout the Council’s history appears in Appendix A.

### **Metropolitan Development Framework Guide, 1975**

The *Metropolitan Development Framework Guide* (MDF) was adopted by the Council in 1975. The MDF divided the region into two major service areas: the Urban Service Area and the Rural Service Area, and then developed geographic planning areas described as “Generalized Policy Areas.” Figure 2 shows the Geographic Policy Areas in the MDF.

The MDF defined Metropolitan Centers and Freestanding Growth Centers, which are no longer designated as part of the Urban Area. Freestanding Growth Centers are now Rural Centers and Rural Growth Centers.

### **Metropolitan Development and Investment Framework, 1986**

The *Metropolitan Development and Investment Framework* (MDIF) was adopted by the Council in 1986. It reaffirmed the urban/rural service area concept detailed in the Metropolitan Development Guide and extended the Metropolitan Urban Service Area (MUSA) to the year 2000. Figure 3 shows the Geographic Policy Areas in the MDIF.

The MDIF retained the Metropolitan Centers and Freestanding Growth Centers from the MDF and added Regional Business Concentrations to the urban area.

### **Regional Blueprint, 1996**

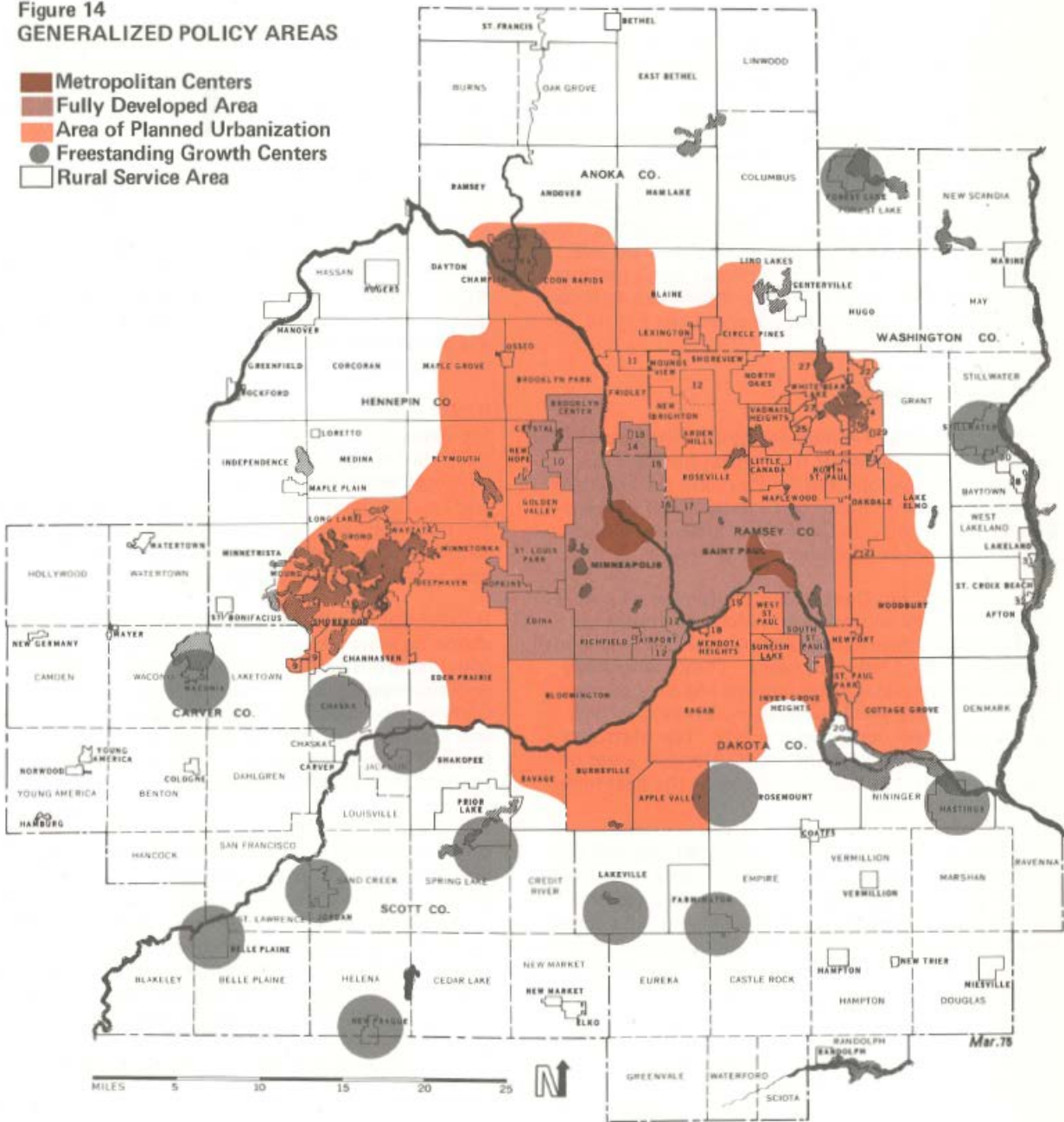
The *Regional Blueprint* was adopted by the Council in 1996. The *Regional Blueprint* continued the concept of the Metropolitan Urban Service Area and further defined the boundary as the maximum long-term service area for regional services between the time of adoption and the year 2040. Land outside of the 2040 urban reserve boundary was planned to remain permanently rural or permanently agricultural. The Growth Strategy Policy Areas defined in the *Regional Blueprint* are shown in Figure 4.

The *Regional Blueprint* discontinued defining centers or regional business concentrations as part of the urban area.

Figure 2: Geographic Policy Areas in the Metropolitan Development Framework Guide, 1975

Figure 14  
GENERALIZED POLICY AREAS

- Metropolitan Centers
- Fully Developed Area
- Area of Planned Urbanization
- Freestanding Growth Centers
- Rural Service Area



- |                    |                     |                   |                     |
|--------------------|---------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| 1 SPRING PARK      | 9 VICTORIA          | 17 FALCON HEIGHTS | 25 GEM LAKE         |
| 2 ORONO            | 10 ROBBINSDALE      | 18 MENOTA         | 26 BIRCHWOOD        |
| 3 HENNETONKA BEACH | 11 SPRING LAKE PARK | 19 LUDVALE        | 27 WHITE BEAR       |
| 4 TONKA BAY        | 12 U. S. GOVT       | 20 GREY CLOUD     | 28 BAYPORT          |
| 5 EXCELSIOR        | 13 HILLTOP          | 21 LANDFALL       | 29 WILLERIE         |
| 6 GREENWOOD        | 14 COLUMBIA HEIGHTS | 22 DELLWOOD       | 30 OAK PARK HEIGHTS |
| 7 WOODLAND         | 15 ST. ANTHONY      | 23 PINE SPRINGS   | 31 LAKELAND SHORES  |
| 8 MEDICINE LAKE    | 16 LAUDERDALE       | 24 MAHTOMEDI      | 32 ST. MARY'S POINT |

- ANOKA — County Boundary
- ORONO — Municipal Boundary
- CAMDEN — Township Boundary

Figure 3: Geographic Policy Areas in the Metropolitan Development and Investment Framework, 1986

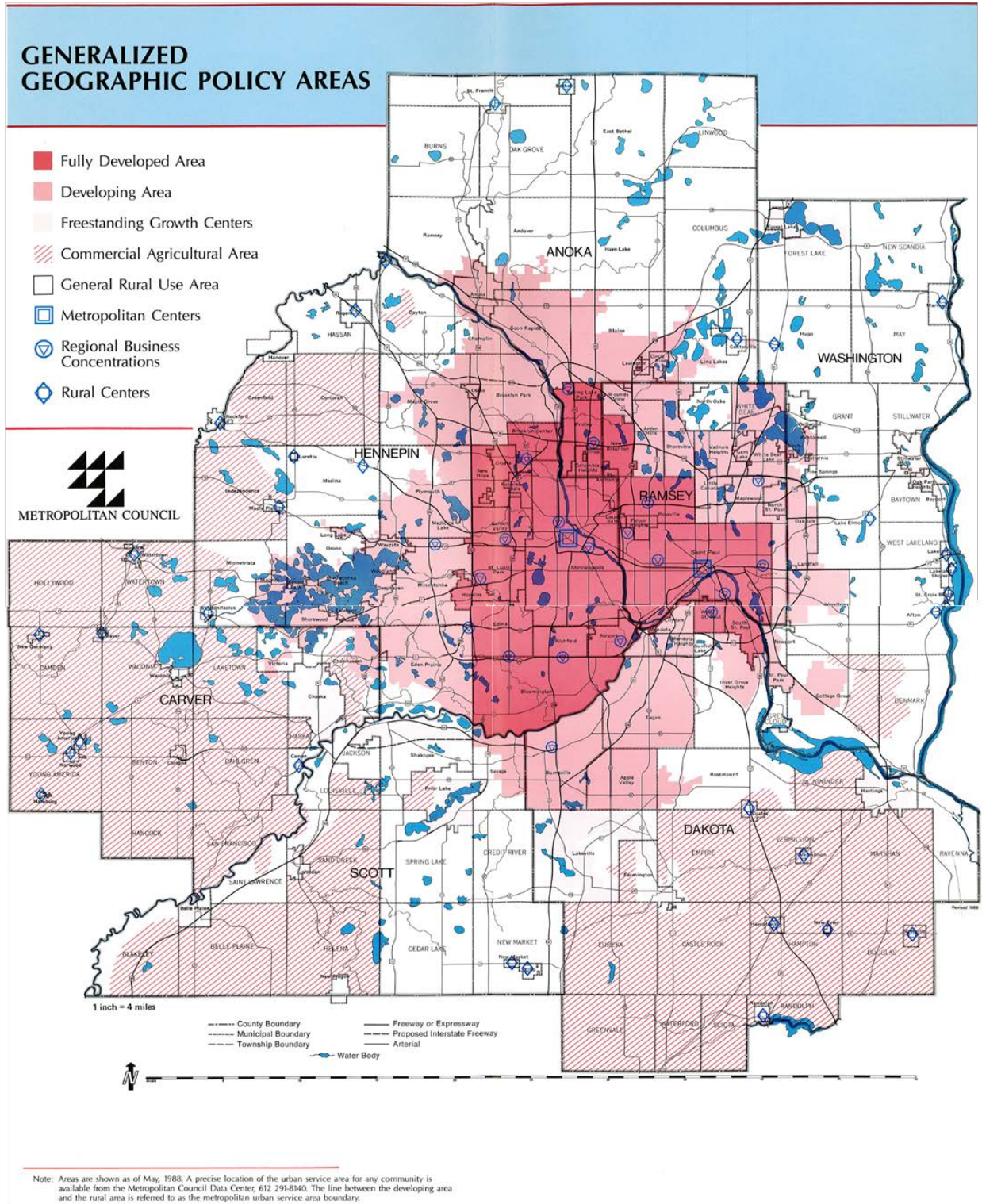
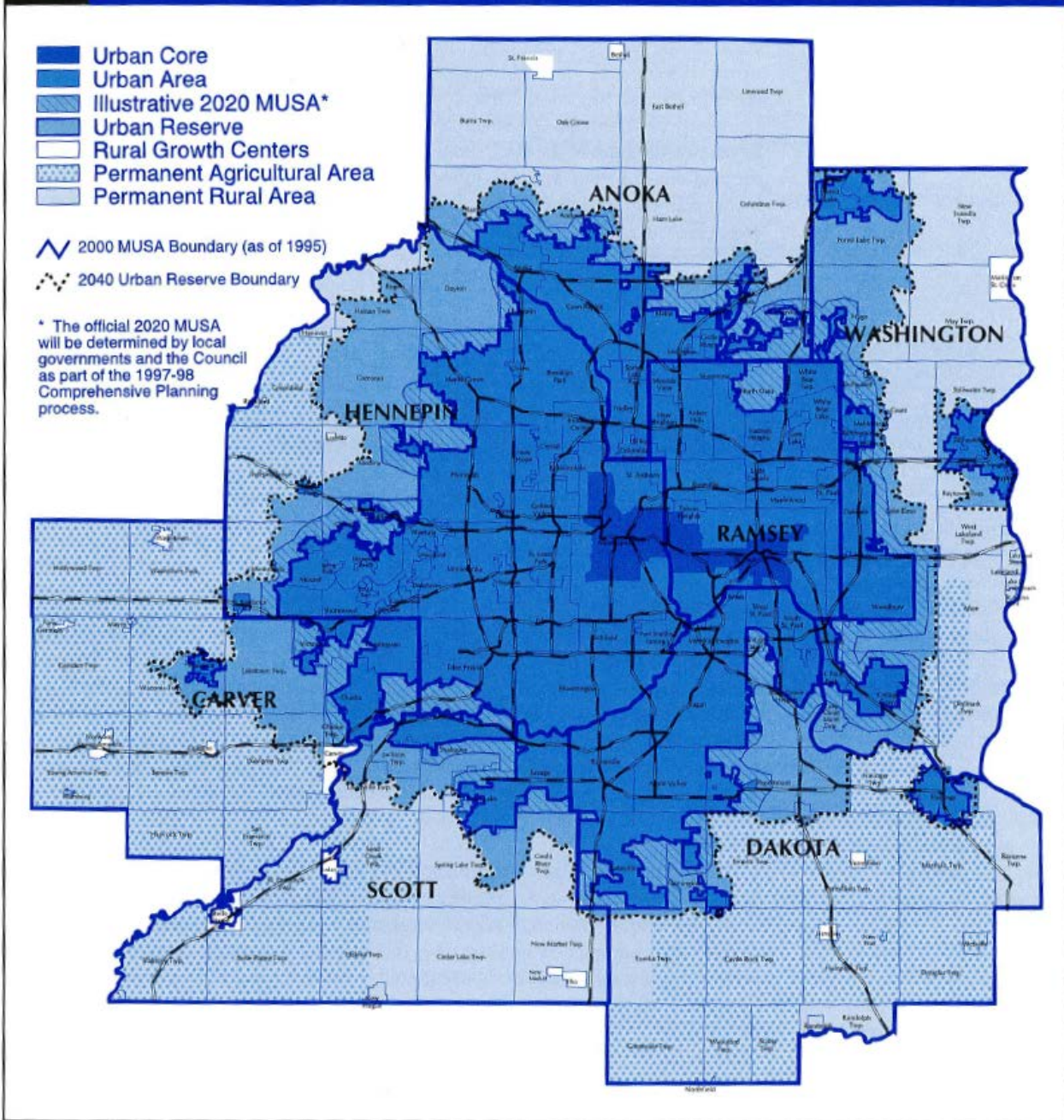


Figure 4: Regional Growth Strategy Policy Areas in the Regional Blueprint, 1996

Figure 7  
Regional Growth Strategy Policy Areas, December 1996





## Regional Service Areas, TOD Areas, and Regional Parks

Both geographic planning areas and regional service areas have essential roles in the effective implementation of strategies and the efficient use of regional services. Looking at the different areas helps point out connections to geographic planning areas and differences based on different purposes and needs.

Maps show where specific metropolitan services are provided for wastewater treatment and transit, as well as areas eligible for the Council's new Livable Communities Act Transit Oriented Development (LCA TOD) grants. The regional parks system is a natural resource based system focused around areas of high-quality natural resources and water bodies, so strategies in the *Regional Parks Policy Plan* are not based on geographic planning areas because regional parks and trails transcend development patterns and jurisdictional boundaries.

In the past, urban service areas had been defined based on the provision of metropolitan wastewater treatment services due to the substantial capital investment needed to support urban development and the pressures for continued growth. But since the development of the *Framework*, transit services have expanded with fixed transitways (light rail transit and commuter rail) and significant infrastructure investments, in addition to traditional bus service. These changes in infrastructure investment help inform the examination of geographic planning areas.

Figure 5: Long-Term Service Areas for Regional Wastewater System

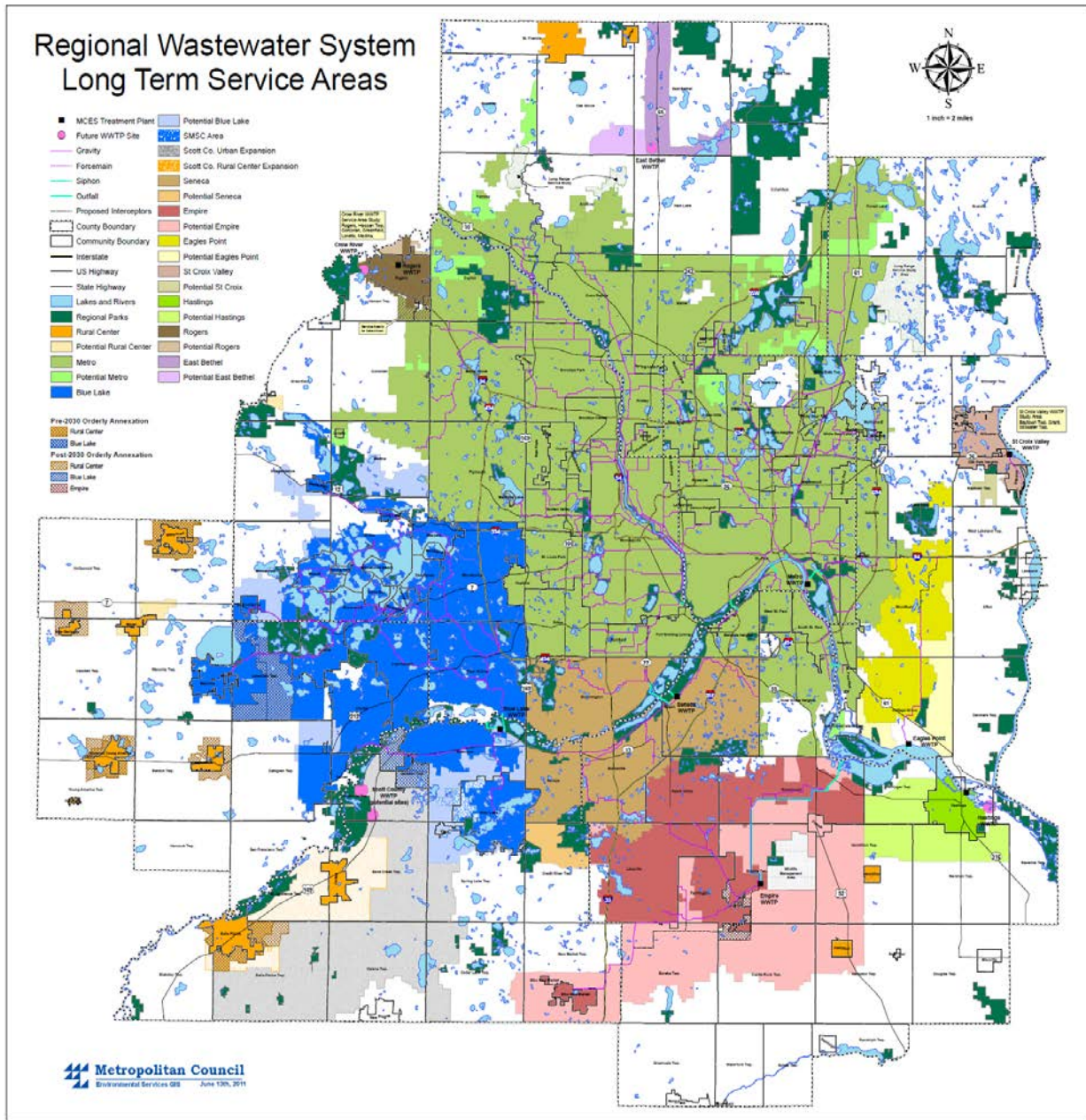


Figure 6: Transitways and Long-Term Wastewater Service Areas

### Long Term Wastewater Service Areas and Transitways

- Complete / Underway
- Arterial BRT
- Proposed
- Express Bus

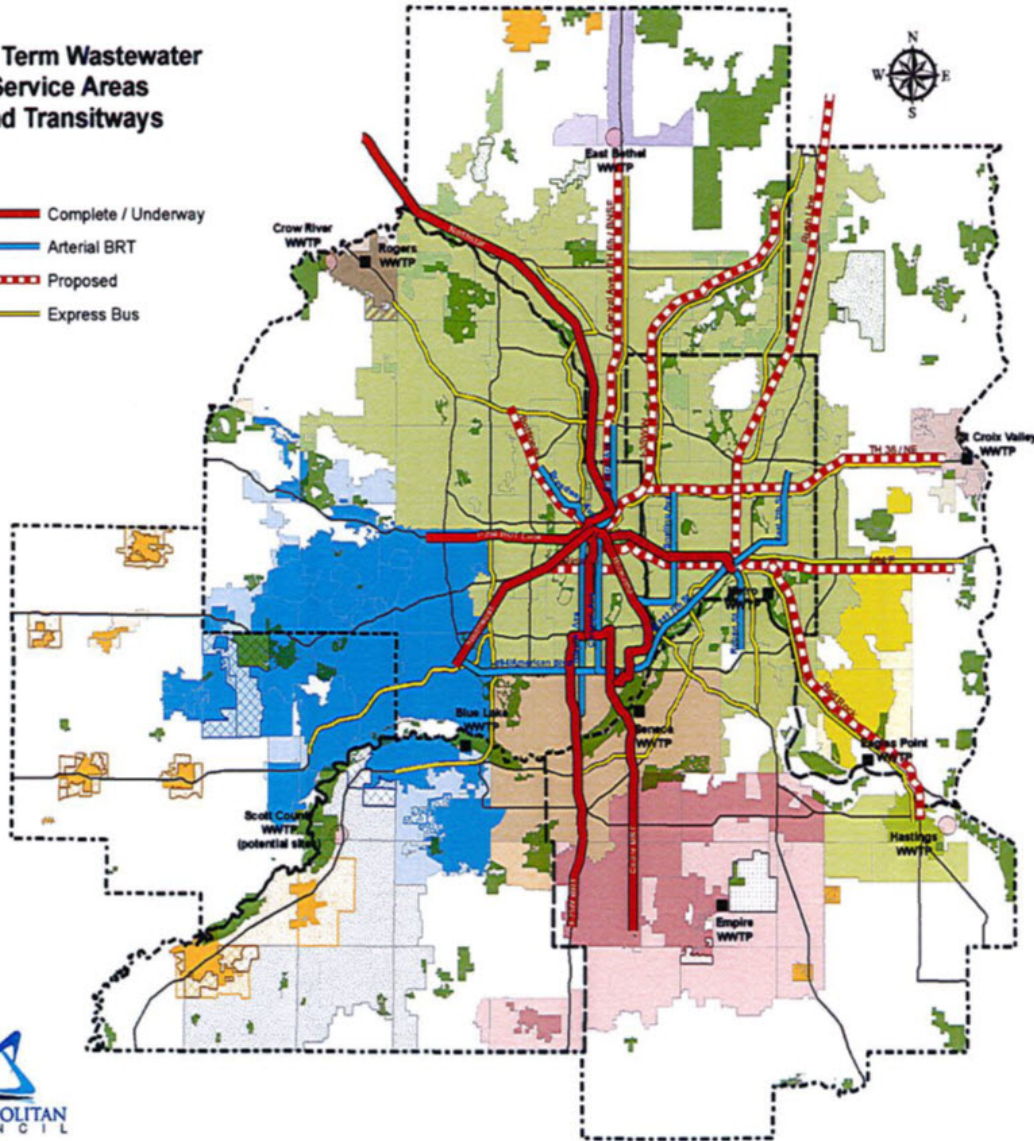


Figure 7: Transit Market Areas

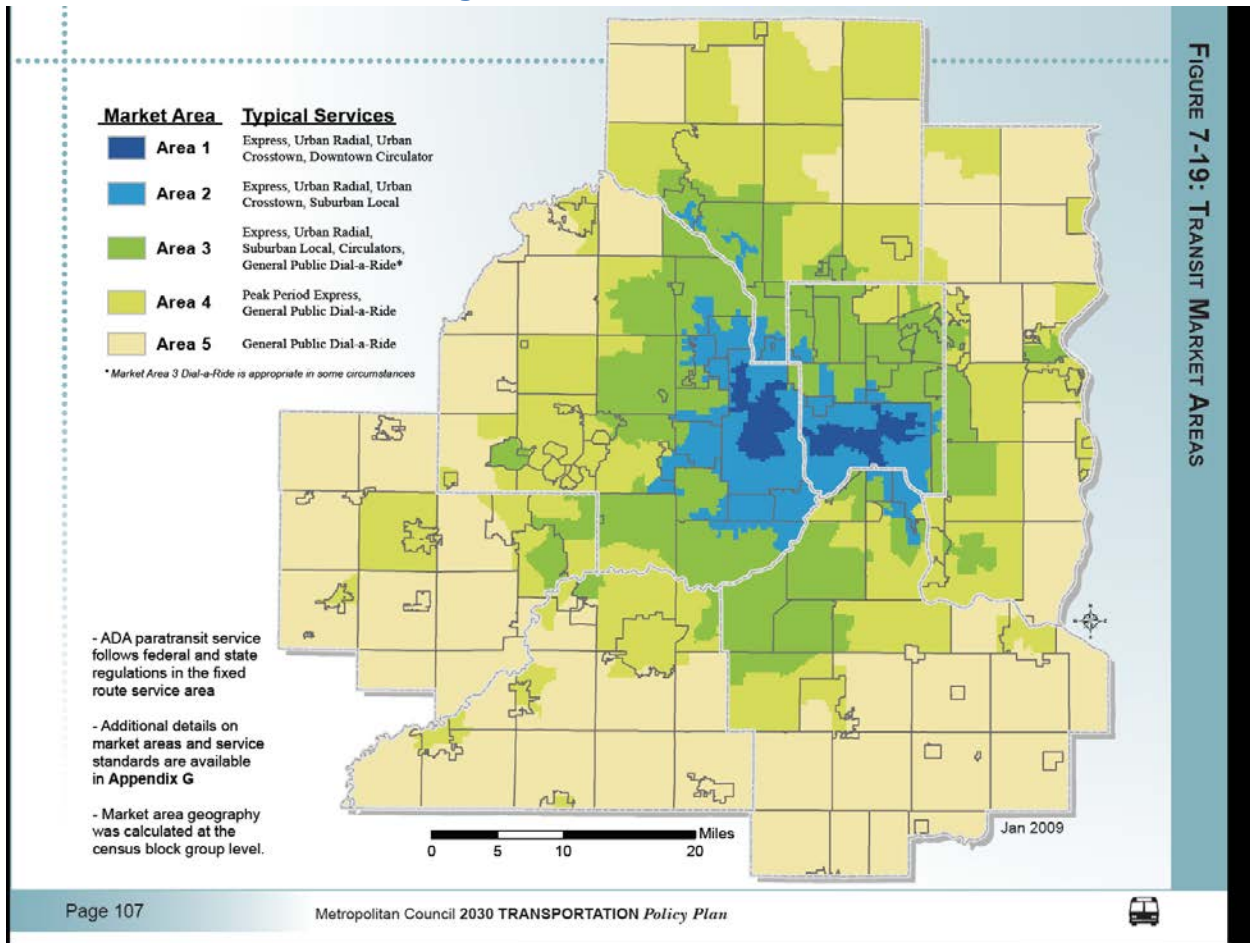

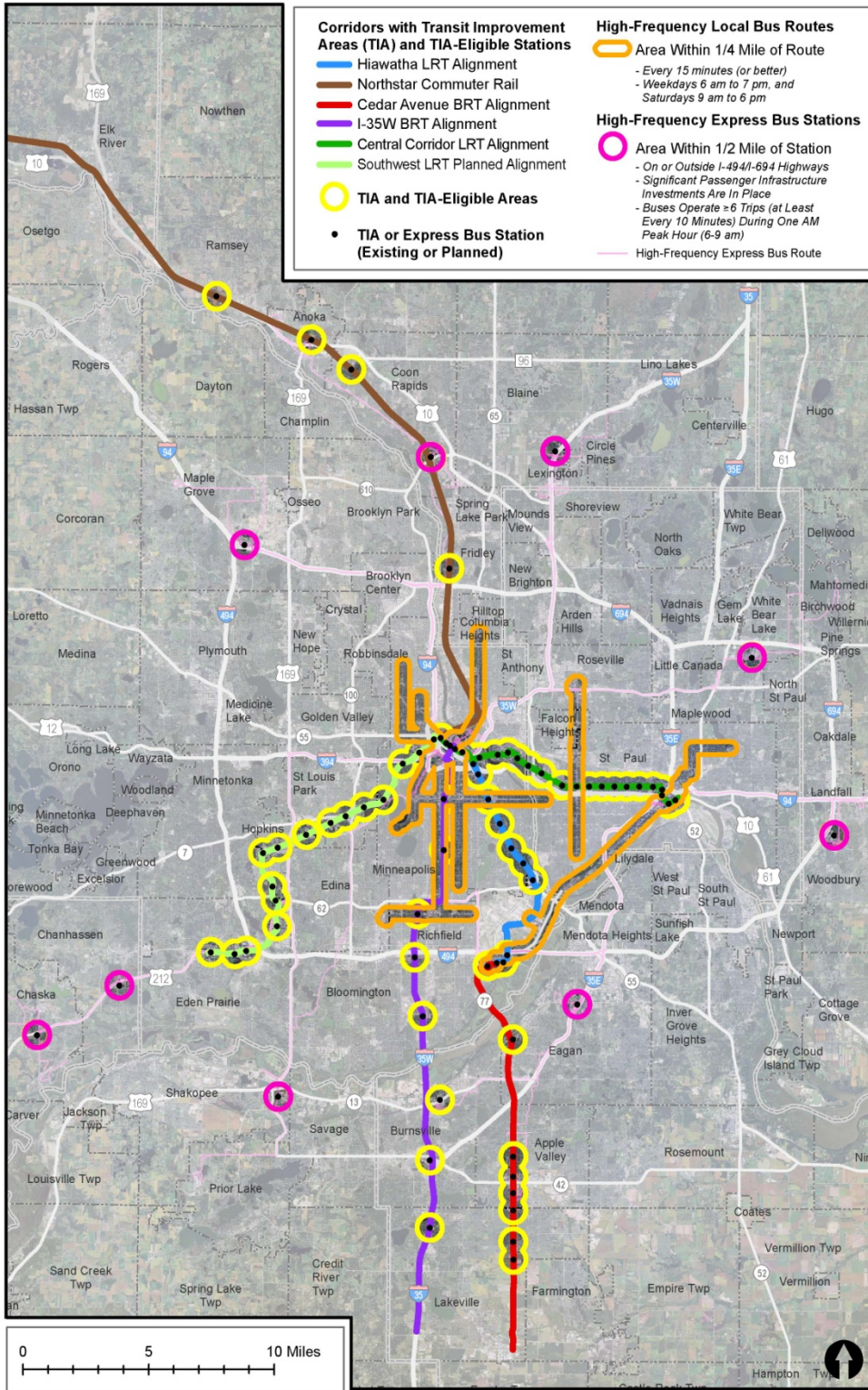


Figure 8: Areas Eligible for Livable Communities Act TOD Grants

Twin Cities Metropolitan Area

# LCA TOD Eligible Areas

 Metropolitan Council  
June 2012



## Input from the Land Use Advisory Committee

Members of the Land Use Advisory Committee were asked to frame initial ideas and articulate fundamental criteria for thinking about potential changes to geographic planning areas. Half of the committee members are locally elected officials, and gaining input from the Land Use Advisory Committee leverages their expertise on land use and practical experience with implementation.

The Land Use Advisory Committee (LUAC) is authorized by state statute to assist the Council in regional land use planning functions and undertake other responsibilities as delegated by the Council or required by law. (Minn. Stat. § 473.127; 473.853). Advisory duties include giving advice and assistance on metropolitan land use, comprehensive planning, and matters of metropolitan significance. Appendix B identifies the members of the Land Use Advisory Committee.

The Land Use Advisory Committee discussed geographic planning areas on January 17, 2013, and the committee's comments are summarized below. Note that comments appear in no particular order under the headings.

### Main messages

- *Tying geographic planning areas to the Council's policies is critical.* Geographic planning areas are likely to continue as an important tool for the Council.
- *Consider making more distinctions within or across geographic planning areas.* Overlays could be added to broader geographic planning areas to recognize different conditions within a community, but overlays add complexity. Examples are overlays of centers and corridors and overlays of areas to protect water resources and natural resources.
- *Use spatial planning to transcend borders.* Community boundaries do not align with protecting natural resources, such as aquifers, or enhancing the economy and transit ridership. Water and transit service are tools for seeing how a community is part of a larger system and the entire region.

### Themes

- *Distinguishing between urban and rural areas is losing some relevancy.* Transit service and county funding mechanisms are busting past distinctions between urban and rural areas. Criteria are weakening for protecting farm land. Urban farming in Saint Paul and Minneapolis pushes past distinctions between urban and rural areas in a new way.
- *Use specific markets, submarkets or corridors in definitions.* Define market characteristics and transit corridors using jobs, retail and housing. Identify nodes of commercial activity, nearby forms of density and connections. Submarkets are regionally significant and play different roles.
- *Group similar communities.* Reflect the age and lifecycle of communities in geographic planning areas. Communities in the fully developed area share experiences with older infrastructure. Grouping peer cities in a geographic planning area is more appreciated than making distinctions between urban and rural areas.
- *Frame definitions to reflect socio-economic criteria.* Another element of geographic planning areas could address concerns over race and poverty.
- *Consider groundwater and surface water when structuring geographic planning areas.* Explore different impacts on watersheds, how to manage stormwater and how to create reserves.

Foster more collaboration. The region will need more water in the future. What happens with runoff and regulations will be more regionally significant.

## Additional points

- *Explore a transit corridor overlay.* More housing along transit lines is of interest. Assess interest in overlay tools and then ask how to use overlays in implementation.
- *Use overlays to understand issues and create incentives.* Approaches that draw distinctions within communities, such as overlays, can set expectations for growth that do not fit the entire community. This can reduce push back. Create incentives to buy into strategies for getting transit.
- *Focus more on systems and less on communities.* Tend to favor a hybrid, overlay approach. Stay away from simplistic density targets, such as five units per acre.
- *Prepare for push back on density.* Promoting more density will invite push back. But higher density is needed for transit service in some areas.
- *Question where polluting industries fit.* Help communities think of where to locate manufacturing and heavy industries that do not fit in mixed-use areas. Policy could keep heavy industry out of water recharge areas.
- *Address tradeoffs.* Acknowledge the tension between increasing density in one area to save green space and cut down on runoff in another area. Increasing density in a subdivision can increase impervious surfaces and lead to more runoff.
- *Balance jobs and housing to reduce commutes.* Spread jobs out so roads are used in both directions.
- *Tie geographic planning areas to the Council's policies.* Think of how classifications would work for park land preservation, housing and many other factors. One developing community could be much different than another developing community.
- *Be clear on the consequences of defining geographic planning areas.* Include options on how the geographic planning areas will be used.
- *Align with comprehensive plans.* When geographic planning areas are defined, understand how they connect to guidance to cities for creating comprehensive plans.
- *Do not miss the importance of technology.* Working from home is a growing trend, and fiber optic capacity is an advantage in global competition for employers. Technology will change more than anything else.

## Appendix A: Geographic Planning Area History Summary

	Metropolitan Development Framework Guide 1975	Metropolitan Development & Investment Framework 1986	Regional Blueprint 1996	Regional Development Framework 2004
	<i>Urban geographic planning areas have become simplified. Business concentrations and centers were grouped into larger designations.</i>			
<b>URBAN AREA</b>	<p><b>Metropolitan Centers</b> are the central business districts of Minneapolis and St. Paul and the adjacent residential, commercial, and institutional developments; includes Cedar-Riverside, the University of Minnesota, and the Capitol area. They include the largest and most diverse activity centers in the Region.</p> <p><b>Fully Developed Area</b> consists of the suburbs in which there is little land left for development and the part of the central cities outside of the Metropolitan Centers.</p> <p><b>Area of Planned Urbanization</b> includes the developing suburban communities in the path of urban growth. This area either has been, or will be, provided with metropolitan services, and most of the growth in the region between 1973 and 1990 will occur here.</p> <p><b>Freestanding Growth Centers</b> are small cities in the region that provide a rural living environment by accommodating growth which would otherwise occur as scattered rural subdivisions lacking adequate public services.</p>	<p><b>Metropolitan Centers</b> are the central business districts of Minneapolis and St. Paul, further defined according to the U.S. Census definition at that time.</p> <p><b>Regional Business Concentrations</b> are areas with a large employment base and/or large sales volumes; contain a diverse mix of offices, hotels and motels, retail facilities and industry; constitute the most important concentrations of economic activity outside of the Metropolitan Centers.</p> <p><b>Fully Developed Area</b> is the part of the Urban Service Area where the level of, or need for, maintenance, upgrading, rehabilitation, and redevelopment has surpassed the level of new development. Communities were more than 85% developed at the end of 1984 and contiguous to one another.</p> <p><b>Developing Area</b> is the part of the region that is in the path of urban growth, where most of the residential growth in the region will occur through the year 2000. It includes the communities beyond the Fully Developed Area up to the MUSA boundary.</p> <p><b>Freestanding Growth Centers</b> are larger urban centers located within the rural portion of the region that originated as outlying trade centers. Some include large areas of open land as a result of annexation from former townships.</p>	<p><b>The Urban Core</b> has the highest concentrations and density of urban activity, both jobs and housing. It is where the highest levels of regional services are available, particularly for transit service and highway facilities.</p> <p><b>The Urban Area</b> mostly consists of one large, connected area (as shown on the Regional Growth Strategy Policy Areas map), but also includes the Stillwater-Bayport, Oak Park Heights urban area and the Hastings area.</p> <p><b>Urban Staging Areas</b> are the areas where communities along the 2000 MUSA line will plan for cost effective, staged, contiguous 2020 urban staging areas as part of the Urban Area. The Council committed to working with communities in these areas to identify which parts of the Urban Reserve are planned to urbanize before 2020.</p>	<p><b>Developed Area</b> includes cities where more than 85% of the land is developed and infrastructure is well established.</p> <p><b>Developing Area</b> includes communities that already designated sufficient land to accommodate forecasted growth through 2020 and were forecasted to accommodate the largest portion of the region's growth.</p>



	Metropolitan Development Framework Guide 1975	Metropolitan Development & Investment Framework 1986	Regional Blueprint 1996	Regional Development Framework 2004
<b>RURAL AREA</b>	<i>Rural geographic planning areas have become more complex over the Council's planning history. Varying levels of agricultural protection were removed.</i>			
	<p><i>Rural Centers</i> are other small cities in the region that also provide a rural living environment, are smaller in size, have a small population base, and a very limited trade area.</p> <p><i>Commercial Agriculture Area</i> contains some of the best agricultural land; local employment base is heavily dependent upon farming, food processing, and other agribusiness.</p> <p><i>General Rural Use Area</i> is the remainder of the Rural Service Area, in which agriculture should be given first priority, but it must be anticipated that quasi-urban land uses such as recreation areas, hobby farms, and horse stables will continue to expand.</p>	<p><i>Rural Centers</i> are areas that have historically served as retail service centers and transportation centers for surrounding rural areas.</p> <p><i>Commercial Agriculture Area</i> includes those lands certified by local governments as eligible for agricultural preserves under the 1980 Metropolitan Agricultural Preserves Act.</p> <p><i>General Rural Use Area</i> is the area outside of the urban service area that is not designated for commercial agriculture.</p>	<p><i>Rural Growth Centers</i> are the small cities in the Rural Area that have central sewer service systems. They have many residents who work in the urban area and many industries with few ties to agriculture.</p> <p><i>Permanent Agriculture Area</i> includes agricultural preserve land under the Metropolitan Agricultural Preserves Act, along with two additional levels of agricultural protection.</p> <p><i>Urban Reserve</i> are the parts of the region that are considered temporarily rural, are not currently receiving regional sewer service, but should plan and implement a post-2020 holding zone for future urban service and development.</p> <p><i>Permanent Rural Area</i> includes land outside the urban reserve boundary that has a wide variety of land uses, including farms, very low-density residential development, and facilities that mainly service urban residents, such as regional parks.</p>	<p><i>Rural Centers and Rural Growth Centers</i> are small towns located throughout the rural area. Rural Growth Centers are centers with the interest in and potential for growth and where existing infrastructure provides an alternative to individual wells and septic systems.</p> <p><i>Agricultural Area</i> includes large contiguous land areas planned and zoned to maintain agriculture as the primary land use.</p> <p><i>Diversified Rural Area</i> includes sparsely developed areas with a wide variety of agricultural, large-lot residential and clustered housing, and other uses requiring a rural location. In some areas, communities are directed to plan to accommodate post-2030 growth.</p> <p><i>Rural Residential Areas</i> are developed at one housing unit per 2 to 2½ acres or less and have many individual sewage treatment systems, with no plans to provide urban infrastructure.</p>

## **Appendix B: Members of Land Use Advisory Committee**

Jon Commers, Chair and Metropolitan Council Member

Vacant - District 1

Tami Diehm, Columbia Heights City Council Member – District 2

Kim Kang, City of Orono – District 3

Jon Ulrich, Scott County Commissioner – District 4 (Scott County)

Gregory Boe, Chaska City Council Member – District 4 (Carver County)

William Neuendorf, Edina – District 5

Kathi Hemken, Mayor of New Hope – District 6

Andrew Hestness, City of Minneapolis – District 7

Chip Halbach, City of Minneapolis – District 8

David Elvig, Ramsey City Council Member – District 9

Amy Ihlan, City of Roseville – District 10

Phil Klein, Hugo City Council Member – District 11

Kristina Smitten, City of Marine on St. Croix – District 12

Vacant – District 13

Elizabeth Wefel, City of St. Paul – District 14

Elizabeth Kautz, Mayor of Burnsville – District 15

William Droste, Mayor of Rosemount – District 16