COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COMPOSITE

Equity Tracking in 2040 Comprehensive Plans

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Month Year

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The Metropolitan Council is the regional planning organization for the seven-county Twin Cities area. The Council operates the regional bus and rail system, collects and treats wastewater, coordinates regional water resources, plans and helps fund regional parks, and administers federal funds that provide housing opportunities for low- and moderate-income individuals and families. The 17-member Council board is appointed by and serves at the pleasure of the governor.

Executive Summary

Council staff reviewed 136 comprehensive plans authorized by the Metropolitan Council on or before December 23rd, 2020 for explicit mention of equity terms. These terms include: equity, equitable, inequity, inequitable, equities, and inequities. The purpose of this research is to develop a baseline for how communities in the region address equity to inform policy and technical assistance.

The Plans were categorized into three groups to broadly demonstrate the extent to which equity is addressed. The categories were Explicit, Minimal, and None. "Explicit" refers to Plans that included one or more of the search terms in the main body of the Plan and used the search terms in the context of the Thrive definition. "Minimal" refers to Plans that included one or two of the search terms in the main body of the Plan; however, the search terms are not used in the context of the Thrive definition. "None" refers to Plans that did not include any of the search terms.

Of the 136 Plans, 52 explicitly included equity terms, 40 minimally included equity terms, and 44 did not include equity terms. Most communities that explicitly mention equity terms in their Plan are designated as Urban Center, Urban, Suburban, Suburban Edge, and Emerging Suburban Edge. The community designations with the highest number of communities that explicitly mentioned equity were Urban and Suburban. Additionally, of the 52 Plans that explicitly included equity terms, 21 of these Plans stated equity as a guiding principle. Plans with an equity guiding principle integrated equity into most plan elements rather than sporadically throughout the Plan.

The communities that explicitly mentioned equity in their Plan often introduced it through discussion of growing racial and cultural diversity in the community and across the region. Several communities also introduced equity by acknowledging the region's significant disparities and the need to address them. Although many communities addressed equity in several plan elements, equity was most frequently mentioned in the Transportation, Housing, and Parks and Trails sections of comprehensive plans. The review of Plans also revealed that the framing of equity varies across communities. While most communities simply stated "equity", there were several that framed it as "Social Equity", "Health Equity", or "Racial Equity". In addition to discussing community-based initiatives to address equity, several communities included information on efforts to advance equity within internal processes. Some examples include the development of committees or workgroups to lead local equity initiatives and the evaluation of recruitment, hiring, and retention practices so that staff are representative of the community.

While many communities demonstrated significant efforts to address equity through their Plan, there were several that stood out for their innovative approach. For example, the City of St. Louis Park has invested in efforts to advance equity in the community, as well as within internal practices and processes. Ramsey County also stood out for its use of a Racial Equity Toolkit to apply an equity lens to the analysis of county programs, policies, procedures, and capital planning.

In conclusion, this research reveals that although all communities in the region are at different stages of addressing equity, many are making great efforts. This information also helps identify areas where communities in the region already strive to advance equity and areas where they may still need support. Council staff plan to use this information to inform the development of resources and technical assistance to support communities as they begin to implement the goals and policies laid out in their comprehensive plans.

Introduction

Council staff completed a study of equity in the authorized 2040 comprehensive plans (Plan) and created an inventory of information on how local governments incorporated and addressed equity in their comprehensive plans. The purpose of this research is to develop a baseline for how communities in the region address equity to inform policy and technical assistance.

Analysis

Quantitative Analysis

The following is a high level, quantitative analysis of the findings of this research. During the analysis, the 136 communities were categorized into three groups: Explicit, Minimal, and None. Of the 116 communities, 52 were categorized as Explicit, 40 were categorized as Minimal, and 44 were categorized as No Equity Mention.

Table 1 Community Designation by Equity Category

Community Designation[1]	Explicit Equity Mention	Minimal Equity Mention	No Equity Mention
Urban Center	8	0	0
Urban	11	4	0
Suburban	11	10	13
Suburban Edge	6	2	1
Emerging Suburban Edge	9	8	4
Rural Center	1	8	2
Diversified Rural	0	4	10
Rural Residential	0	3	3
Agricultural	0	0	11
County	6	1	0
TOTAL	**52**	**40**	**44**

As shown in Table 2, the communities in the Minimal category cover a broad range of community designations, with a majority designated as Suburban, Emerging Suburban Edge, and Rural Center. The only community designations that were not included were Urban Center and Agricultural. Table 2

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[1] Several of the communities included in this analysis have multiple community designations. However, to simplify the analysis and avoid double counting, the community designation that covers the greatest land area of the community was the designation used in the analysis.

also shows that most of the communities that did not mention equity terms in their Plans are designated as Suburban, Diversified Rural, and Agricultural. Most communities that explicitly mention equity terms in their Plan are designated as Urban Center, Urban, Suburban, Suburban Edge, and Emerging Suburban Edge. The community designations with the highest number of communities that explicitly mentioned equity were Urban and Suburban.

The communities categorized as Explicit were further studied for mentions of equity in goals, policies, and implementation strategies and the inclusion of equity as a guiding principle of the comprehensive plan. Of the 52 communities that explicitly mentioned equity terms in their Plan, 42 communities explicitly mentioned equity in goals, policies, and/or implementation strategies. The remaining 10 communities only mentioned equity in the body of the Plan. Additionally, of the 52 communities that explicitly mentioned equity terms, 21 communities stated that equity is a guiding principle of the comprehensive plan. Table 3 shows the breakdown of the communities with an equity guiding principle by community designation. Most are designated as Urban Center, Urban, or Suburban. Two of the seven counties also stated equity as a guiding principle. Plans that stated equity as a guiding principle often took a more comprehensive approach where equity was integrated into all plan elements rather than mentioned sporadically throughout the Plan. Five communities even used icons to identify where equity was specifically addressed.

Table 2 Community Designation of Communities with an Equity Guiding Principle

Community Designation	# of Communities with an Equity Guiding Principle
Urban Center	7
Urban	6
Suburban	5
Suburban Edge	0
Emerging Suburban Edge	1
Rural Center	1
Diversified Rural	0
Rural Residential	0
Agricultural	0
County	2

Qualitative Analysis

The communities that explicitly mentioned equity in their Plan often introduced it through discussion of growing racial and cultural diversity in the community and across the region. Several communities, including Hopkins, St. Anthony Village, and Washington County, also introduced equity by acknowledging the region's significant disparities and the need to address them.

Although many communities addressed equity in several plan elements, equity was most frequently mentioned in the Transportation, Housing, and Parks and Trails sections of comprehensive plans. Communities connected transportation and equity through several topic areas including access to transit, connected multi-modal transportation systems, and complete streets. Plans that addressed

equity in the housing section often discussed access to affordable housing, Fair Housing Policies, lifecycle housing, and increased housing stock diversity. Parks and Trails sections that mentioned equity focused on advancing equitable access to and/or distribution of parks throughout the community. Many of these Parks and Trails sections also emphasized the need to promote equity through community engagement that targets underrepresented groups and the need to adapt park facilities and programs to the changing preferences of a more racially and culturally diverse population.

The review of Plans also revealed that the framing of equity varies across communities. While most communities simply stated "equity," there were several that framed it as "Social Equity," "Health Equity," or "Racial Equity."

In addition to discussing community-based initiatives to address equity, several communities included information on efforts to advance equity within internal processes. Some examples include the development of committees or work groups to lead local equity initiatives and the evaluation of recruitment, hiring, and retention practices so that staff are representative of the community. Some communities also discussed the desire to develop and use tools such as equity toolkits, lenses, and criteria to evaluate equity in local policies, programs, and services. Additionally, communities including Bloomington, Brooklyn Park, Edina, and St. Louis Park, among others, mentioned that they hired dedicated staff members to lead equity work in the community.

Community Highlights

While many communities demonstrated significant efforts to address equity through their Plan, there were several that stood out for their innovative approaches. Below are descriptions of four standout communities. However, please note that the following is only a sample of those standout communities.

Maplewood

The City of Maplewood uses four guiding principles to demonstrate the City's values through the Plan. The guiding principles are equity, resilience, health, and age-friendliness. The Plan states that these guiding principles will likely be implemented through collaboration and actions of multiple departments and community partners. The City seeks to use this principle to identify and address the obstacles and disparities that lead to inequities in the community. Throughout the Plan, the City uses an icon to note where equity is addressed. Maplewood's Plan also stood out because its description of the equity guiding principle explicitly calls out the history of systematic racism that created the inequities seen today, which is a topic not commonly discussed in Plans.

Ramsey County

Ramsey County's Plan was developed through three lenses: Health in All Policies, Resiliency, and Racial Equity. The Racial Equity lens addresses the County's large racial disparities and the barriers these create to achieving countywide goals. The Plan states that the County has already begun integrating equity into County operations, but that it must also integrate equity into the daily work of all departments and the countywide budget. The County mentions using several tools to support its equity work including the Council's Areas of Concentrated Poverty (ACP) study and the County's Racial Equity Toolkit, which helps it apply a racial equity lens to analysis of programs, policies, procedures, and capital planning. The Plan emphasizes advancing equity in the County's parks system through the development of new facilities and programs to better serve the growing cultural diversity of the County. It also acknowledges that the current parks system was designed for a majority dominant culture and

states that "community engagement, a racially representative staff, and equitable policies and processes are vital to all future planning efforts."[2]

St. Louis Park

The City of St. Louis Park incorporates equity into its Plan in three distinct ways. First, the City lists "Racial Equity and Inclusion" as one of five Strategic Priorities that guided the development of the Plan. These priority areas were identified through an extensive engagement process, Vision 3.0, aimed at engaging with underrepresented populations to produce a vision representative of all community members. Second, it uses an icon to identify where equity is addressed throughout the Plan. This icon demonstrates the City's comprehensive approach to addressing equity by showing how it is integrated into all plan elements. Third, the Plan includes a Racial Equity chapter dedicated to the City's specific racial equity goals and policies. Many of these actions represent the City's internal efforts to advance equity within its own practices and processes. For example, the City prioritizes hiring specific staff to lead its equity work and investing in racial equity training for staff and elected officials.

Minneapolis

The City of Minneapolis opens its Plan by stating that it presents an opportunity to undo barriers and overcome inequities created by a history of policies that prevented equitable access to housing, jobs, and investments. The City builds on this introduction through the Plan's unique format, which puts its goals and policies at the center of the discussion. The City clearly demonstrates its dedication to advancing equity by using a targeted approach that identifies desired outcomes, weaves equity into all plan elements, and illustrates the interconnectedness of all City actions. The Plan also extensively uses data disaggregated by race and ethnicity to visualize the City's disparities and demonstrate the need for immediate action.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research reveals that although all communities in the region are at different stages of addressing equity, many are making great efforts. It also helps identify areas where communities in the region already strive to advance equity and areas where they may still need support. For instance, the plan elements where equity was most frequently mentioned were Transportation, Housing, and Parks and Trails, which may signify that communities need greater support to develop and implement equity initiatives in other areas.

Council staff recommends that the Council continue to build on this work through one-on-one conversations with communities in the region to better understand their efforts to advance equity and identify areas where the Council can provide support. The Council should ask questions such as: What has worked? What challenges has the community faced in advancing equity? What lessons has the community learned? Which resources did the community find most helpful? And what resources would support the community's equity efforts? Asking these questions may help inform the development of tools and resources to help communities implement the equity initiatives identified in their comprehensive plans.

Finally, as communities move through the authorization process and into the implementation phase of the comprehensive planning process, it may interest the Council to observe community progress toward implementation of the equity initiatives stated in the Plans. Council staff recommends that the

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[2] Ramsey County. (2019). *Ramsey County 2040 Comprehensive Plan*, Parks and Trails, pp. 117. Retrieved from:
https://www.ramseycounty.us/sites/default/files/Departments/Policy%20and%20Planning/RamseyCounty2040_FullDraft_FINAL-compressed.pdf.

Council expand on the research presented in this report by conducting a more exhaustive evaluation of equity goals, policies, and implementation strategies to help monitor this progress.

Appendix A: Methodology

Council staff reviewed the Plans of 136 communities with Plans authorized by the Metropolitan Council on or before December 23, 2020. Table 1 shows the distribution of community designation for communities reviewed in this study, as well as all communities in the region.

Table 3 Community Designation Distribution of Study Sample and Region

Community Designation	Number of Communities in the Sample	Number of Communities in the Region
Urban Center	8	10
Urban	15	16
Suburban	34	48
Suburban Edge	9	9
Emerging Suburban Edge	21	22
Rural Center	11	14
Diversified Rural	14	30
Rural Residential	6	10
Agricultural	11	22
County[3]	7	7
TOTAL	**136**	**181**

The review looked at explicit mentions of equity based on the definition of equity in *Thrive MSP 2040* (Thrive)[4]. Council staff used the following search terms to complete the review: equity, inequity, equitable, inequitable, equities, and inequities. The Plans were categorized into three groups to broadly demonstrate the extent to which equity is addressed in them. The categories were Explicit, Minimal, and None. "Explicit" refers to Plans that included one or more of the search terms in the main body of the Plan (i.e. not the appendices) and used the search terms in the context of the *Thrive* definition. "Minimal" refers to Plans that included one or two of the search terms in the main body of the Plan; however, the search terms are not used in the desired context for this analysis. For example, communities that only mentioned equity once in relation to "equitable sewer fees" or similar statements received a designation of "Minimal". Communities that only mention search terms in an appendix also received a designation of "Minimal". "None" refers to Plans that did not include the search terms in the main body of the Plan or the appendices.

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[3] Please note that "County" is not a community designation identified in *Thrive*; however, it is used in this analysis to identify the seven counties in the Twin Cities metro, and each County includes many of the designations within them due to their geographic extent.
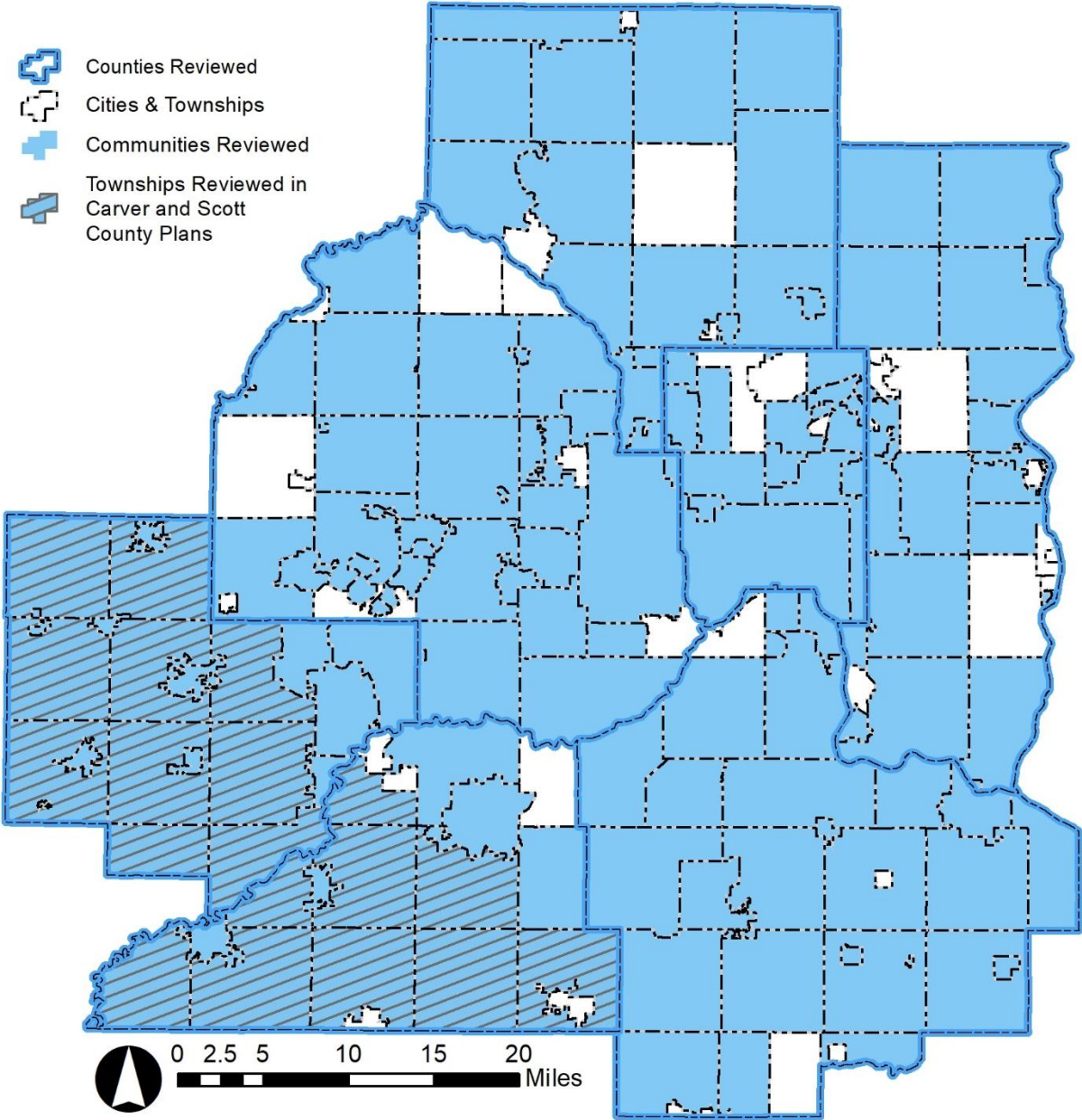
[4] Thrive MSP 2040 defines equity as: "Equity connects all residents to opportunity and creates viable housing, transportation, and recreation options for people of all races, ethnicities, incomes, and abilities so that all communities share the opportunities and challenges of growth and change. For our region to reach its full economic potential, all of our residents must be able to access opportunity. Our region is stronger when all people live in communities that provide them access to opportunities for success, prosperity, and quality of life." (*Thrive MSP 2040, 38*).

There are several limitations to this research and analysis. The search terms listed above were used to limit subjectivity of data collection and analysis. However, these terms do not capture the full extent to which communities in the region address equity. Communities may advance equity through goals, policies, and implementation strategies that do not explicitly mention equity. Due to limited staff resources, that information was not captured in this research. Additionally, this is the first time the Council has tracked equity in the Plans, therefore there is no concrete data from the 2030 Plans as baseline. However, experiential knowledge from Council staff was used to address this limitation.

Appendix B: List of Communities Reviewed

1. Andover
2. Anoka County
3. Apple Valley
4. Arden Hills
5. Baytown Township
6. Belle Plaine
7. Blaine
8. Bloomington
9. Brooklyn Center
10. Brooklyn Park
11. Burnsville
12. Carver
13. Carver County
14. Castle Rock Township
15. Centerville
16. Chanhassen
17. Chaska
18. Circle Pines
19. Coates
20. Cologne
21. Columbia Heights
22. Columbus
23. Coon Rapids
24. Corcoran
25. Cottage Grove
26. Credit River Township
27. Crystal
28. Dakota County
29. Deephaven
30. Denmark Township
31. Douglas Township
32. Eagan
33. East Bethel
34. Eden Prairie
35. Edina
36. Empire Township
37. Eureka Township
38. Excelsior
39. Falcon Heights
40. Farmington
41. Forest Lake
42. Fridley
43. Golden Valley
44. Greenfield
45. Greenvale Township
46. Greenwood
47. Grey Cloud Island Township
48. Hamburg
49. Hampton
50. Hampton Township
51. Hastings
52. Hennepin County
53. Hopkins
54. Hugo
55. Inver Grove Heights
56. Jordan
57. Lake Elmo
58. Lakeville
59. Landfall
60. Lauderdale
61. Lilydale
62. Lino Lakes
63. Linwood Township
64. Little Canada
65. Long Lake
66. Loretto
67. Mahtomedi
68. Maple Grove
69. Maplewood
70. Marine on St. Croix
71. Marshan Township
72. May Township
73. Mayer
74. Medicine Lake
75. Medina
76. Miesville
77. Minneapolis
78. Minnetonka
79. Minnetonka Beach
80. Minnetrista
81. Mound
82. Mounds View
83. New Brighton
84. New Germany
85. New Hope
86. New Trier
87. Newport
88. Nininger Township
89. North St. Paul
90. Norwood Young America
91. Nowthen
92. Oak Grove
93. Oak Park Heights
94. Oakdale
95. Orono
96. Osseo
97. Pine Springs
98. Plymouth
99. Prior Lake
100. Ramsey
101. Ramsey County
102. Randolph Township
103. Ravenna Township
104. Richfield
105. Rogers
106. Rosemount
107. Roseville
108. Scandia
109. Scott County
110. Shakopee
111. South St. Paul
112. Spring Lake Park
113. Spring Park
114. St. Anthony
115. St. Francis
116. St. Louis Park
117. St. Mary's Point
118. St. Paul
119. Stillwater
120. Stillwater Township
121. Sunfish Lake
122. Tonka Bay
123. Vadnais Heights
124. Vermillion Township
125. Victoria
126. Waconia
127. Washington County
128. Waterford Township
129. Watertown
130. Wayzata
131. West Lakeland Township
132. West St. Paul
133. White Bear Lake
134. White Bear Township
135. Woodbury
136. Woodland

Appendix C: Map of Communities Reviewed

Legend:
- Counties Reviewed
- Cities & Townships
- Communities Reviewed
- Townships Reviewed in Carver and Scott County Plans

0 2.5 5 10 15 20 Miles

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