

# Information Item

Metropolitan Council



**Meeting Date:** February 22, 2023

## Topic

2050 Regional Development Guide: Community Designations

<b>District(s), Member(s):</b>	All
<b>Policy/Legal Reference:</b>	Bylaws of the Metropolitan Council Land Use Advisory Committee, Art. I. B.1(a).
<b>Staff Prepared/Presented:</b>	Raya Esmaeili, Planning Analyst (651-602-1616) Paul Hanson, GIS Coordinator (651-602-1642) Angela R. Torres, Senior Manager, Local Planning Assistance (651-602-1566)
<b>Division/Department:</b>	Community Development/Regional Planning

## Background

Every 10 years, the Council prepares a regional development guide for the seven-county metro area that sets the vision and land use policies that are carried forward in the regional systems and policy plans. Regional land use policies are framed around common characteristics of communities, which are the basis for community designations. The proposed 2050 community designations will be used for planning purposes during the 2050 regional development guide process. Community designations will reflect the vision, values, and goals adopted as part of the 2050 regional development guide and support development of land use policies and strategies to implement the regional vision, values, and goals.

The community designations project team worked with an external focus group of local planners in the region and an internal focus group of technical experts to evaluate and update existing community designations using *Thrive MSP 2040* (Thrive) outcomes as a basis for variable analysis. The engagement efforts helped narrow down the possibilities, better understand local needs, and analyze potential impacts. The Land Use Advisory Committee (LUAC) is responsible for recommending community designations to the Council. LUAC and other stakeholders were closely engaged in the project, providing feedback on analysis throughout the process, and evaluating proposals for community designations. LUAC discussed and recommended the attached proposed 2050 community designations (Figure 1) by consensus at its meeting on January 19, 2023. The Community Development Committee further recommended the proposal at its meeting on February 6, 2023.

## Summary of Analysis

Community Designations are part of the regional development guide that work in conjunction with land use policies in furthering regional policy outcomes through at the local level, setting direction of growth based on level of urban services, establishing density expectations, and protecting agricultural and natural areas.

The project sought to evaluate and update community designations for use in the 2050 regional planning process and policy development. The project included examining current Thrive community

designations, identifying areas for improvement, and compiling proposals for new community designations.

The LUAC provided feedback and participated in detailed discussions throughout 2022 in evaluating and updating the current community designations for use in the 2050 regional planning process. The project team also engaged with an external focus group of local planners and an internal group of Council staff to gather additional feedback in compiling proposals for new community designations.

Through this engagement process, LUAC recommended only considering updates to the designations within the Metropolitan Urban Service Area (MUSA) and retaining the same designations outside of MUSA as identified in *Thrive MSP 2040* (Thrive). The LUAC also advised on an updated set of variables that includes intersection density, age of housing (a proxy for age of infrastructure), and planned residential densities (based on local 2040 comprehensive plans). At its most recent conversation with staff, the LUAC confirmed reducing the number of designations within MUSA from five categories to four categories.

Final community designations recommendation has been developed based on this feedback (see Figure 1).

### Community Designations Draft Descriptions

Please note that density references reflect *Thrive MSP 2040* minimum densities and will be reviewed and updated as part of the land use policy development for the 2050 Regional Development Guide.

- **Urban:** These communities are the largest and most centrally located communities within the metro area. Most of the housing stock in Urban communities were built prior to 1965 and therefore are experiencing the most opportunities for redevelopment. Most of these communities are planning for redevelopment areas at more than [10] units per acre and consist of the densest neighborhoods in the region. These are the most interconnected communities and more conducive to high frequency transit use and walking. At the same time, due to the amount of development and urban heat island effects, these communities are among those with highest median surface temperatures of 93 degrees Fahrenheit or higher.
- **Urban Edge:** Communities in this designation are mostly built prior to the economic recession of 1973-1974. Similar to Urban communities, they experience rapid growth and redevelopment at higher densities, but lower than [10] units per acre. They are among communities with high job densities, and access to transit, considering their relatively high street connectivity. Many of these communities are faced with challenges of higher surface temperatures and some drinking-water vulnerability.
- **Suburban:** Suburban communities were mostly built in the 1980s and 1990s, with planned residential densities of mostly [3-5 units per acre. These communities are mainly auto oriented and include subdivisions and lower intersection densities]. While their street grid is not conducive to frequent transit access, many park and rides are located within these areas for commuter service. There are small amounts of undeveloped land still remaining in these communities and similar to Urban Edge communities, they are faced with challenges related to higher surface temperature and potential water supply issues.
- **Suburban Edge:** Suburban Edge communities are on the edge of the Metropolitan Urban Service Area (MUSA) and are primarily developed after the 1990s. They include many undeveloped areas and have lower planned residential densities of just above [three] units per acre. Generally, less than 15% prime agricultural land remain in these communities, and the median surface temperature is mostly between 82 and 89 degrees of Fahrenheit. These communities have the lowest street connectivity among the communities within MUSA due to larger lot developments.
- **Rural Center:** Rural Center communities are small local commercial, employment, and



residential activity centers for the rural and agricultural areas surrounding them. While their development patterns are similar to urban communities within MUSA at densities of higher than [three] units per acre, they are at a smaller scale with their municipal wastewater treatment services. Most of these areas were developed prior to 2000 and have relatively higher intersection density, compared to the surrounding agricultural areas. Similar to their urban counterparts, they face the challenges of higher surface temperature and include less than 5% prime agricultural land.

- **Diversified Rural:** These communities include some prime agricultural land and farms, as well as large-lot residential development and clustered housing. Most of these areas were developed just prior to 2000 with lower residential densities of [1 unit per 10 acres]. This pattern of development is most conducive for future expansion of urban infrastructure, as some of these areas are within the Council's Long-Term Service Area. Considering the long-term plans for orderly growth of these communities, urbanized levels of residential development is discouraged to avoid premature demand for wastewater expansion.
- **Rural Residential:** These are communities with larger lot developments which preclude the provision of urban infrastructure, such as the regional wastewater service. Rural Residential communities have a historic development pattern of 1-2.5 units per acre, and were mostly built in the 1980s and 1990s. The growth pattern in these communities is not aligned with the Council's mission of orderly and economic growth and therefore they generally plan to accommodate minimal growth while preserving natural areas. Many communities with this community designation also include another community designation within their boundary.
- **Agricultural:** Agricultural communities mostly include more than 50% prime agricultural land with large areas dedicated to farming. These farming activities support the economic competitiveness of the region and promote local food production. Most of these areas are enrolled in the Agricultural Preserves Program and are discouraged from higher density development. While most of Agricultural communities have lower surface temperatures compared to the rest of region, they also include some higher vulnerability drinking-water areas, as well as high potential for groundwater and surface water interaction. Therefore, preservation of these agricultural areas and implementing best management practices in farming operation is important for overall water quality improvement.

## ATTACHMENTS

Figure 1: Proposed 2050 Community Designations



**Figure 1. Proposed 2050 Community Designations**

