



# Geographic Planning Areas: Proposed Policy Direction

For discussion and confirmation October 30, 2013

## Overall direction

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The Metropolitan Council tailors policies for different areas within the region using a combination of policy layers and community-wide designations. Together, these policy layers and community designations make up **Geographic Planning Areas**. They integrate the Council's overall policy direction, communicate the Council's policies and priorities to local jurisdictions and provide the foundation for local comprehensive planning under the Metropolitan Land Planning Act.

Communities in the region are all growing, developing and redeveloping in different ways. The Geographic Planning Areas allow for regionally-consistent policies that respond to and reflect the diversity of communities in the region. Recognizing that one size does not fit all, the Council will use Geographic Planning Areas to implement *Thrive* policies customized to the different characteristics, challenges, and opportunities of cities and townships across the region.

The Council's approach to Geographic Planning Areas:

- Groups communities with similar development patterns and priorities and applies consistent land-use expectations, including minimum or maximum residential densities, for cities and townships with common characteristics;
- Tailors policies to recognize both granular variation within communities and commonalities that transcend community borders.

Each community may use their comprehensive plan to determine how best to advance both the regional vision and their local goals. Geographic planning areas are designed to accomplish regional goals while providing flexibility for policy implementation by local communities .

## Community-wide designations

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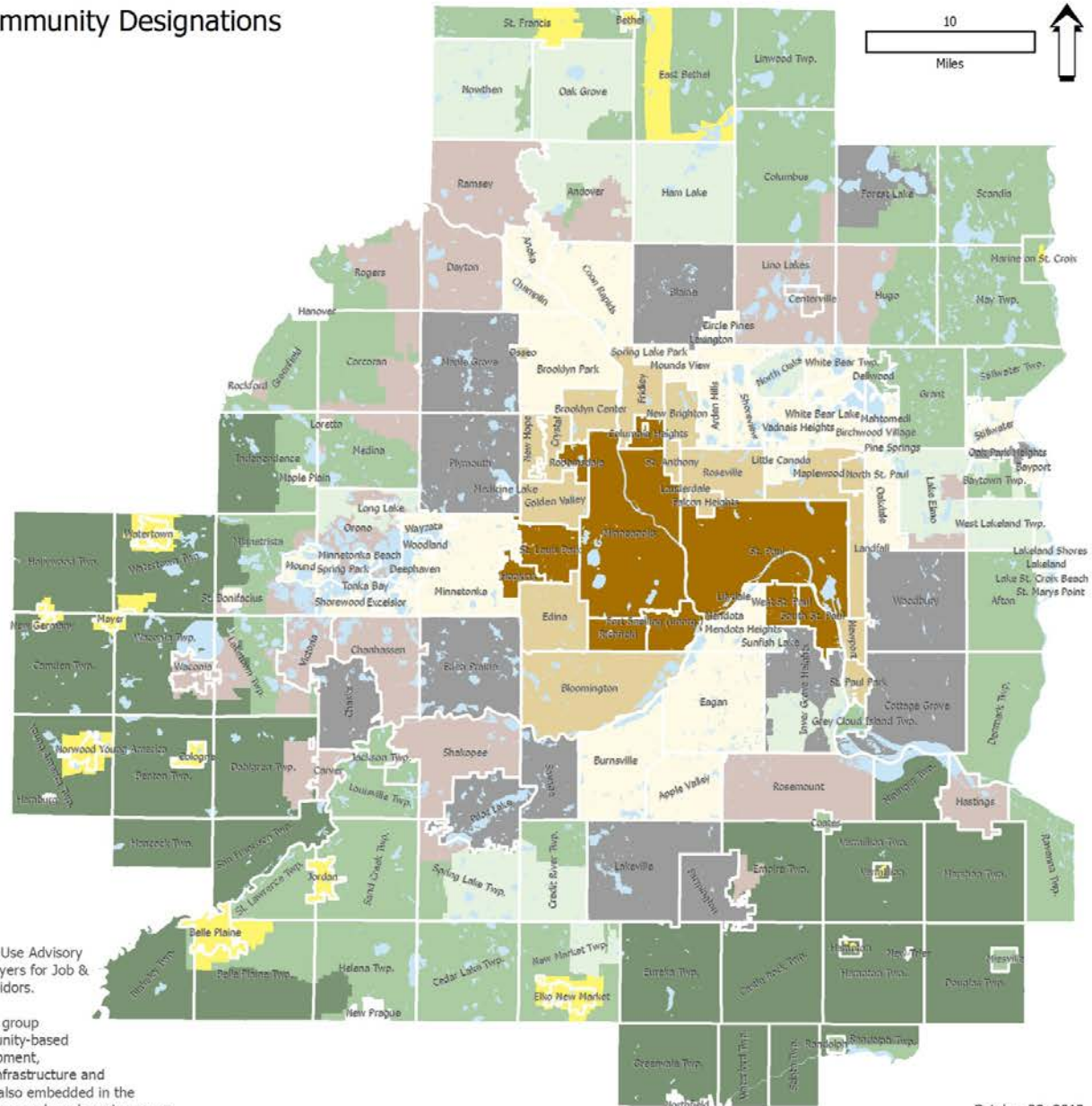
Community-wide designations reflect high-level, strategic priorities for growth, development and redevelopment and are the foundation for the Council's land use policies. These community designations continue the distinction between the Urbanized and Rural Service Area defined in previous Development Guides.

- The **Urbanized Area** ranges from the urban centers of downtown Minneapolis and St. Paul to suburban communities planning for staged growth and expansion. Within the Urbanized Area, the Council provides and plans for urbanized levels of regional services, such as regional wastewater services and higher levels of public transit. The Council expects communities to support continued population growth through staged expansion and redevelopment to optimize use of existing infrastructure. The five community-wide designations within the Urbanized Area are:
  - **Urban Center:** Anchored by Minneapolis and Saint Paul, the Urban Center includes cities with well-connected street grids and development patterns dating back to the streetcar era. Housing and infrastructure were largely built before World War II, indicating growing maintenance needs. Significant redevelopment, often driven by transit, has already transformed many parts of these cities.

# Geographic Planning Areas - Community Designations

Proposed Planning Area Designation

- Urban Center
- Urban
- Suburban
- Suburban Edge
- Emerging Suburban Edge
- Rural Center
- Diversified Rural
- Rural Residential
- Agricultural
- Non Region



This map shows only the base level designations that the Land Use Advisory Committee recommends, and does not include the additional layers for Job & Activity Centers, Groundwater Recharge, or Transportation Corridors.

The planning area designations on this map were developed to group communities who are most similar to one another using community-based characteristics related to their urban form such as level of development, intersection density, and age of housing as a proxy for age of infrastructure and development patterns. The Metropolitan Urban Service Area is also embedded in the planning areas with the boundary distinguishing between the urban and rural service areas.

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- **Urban:** The Urban area includes suburban cities with employment centers and older established neighborhoods built on a street grid and housing primarily built after World War II. With little land remaining for greenfield development, these cities are focused on redeveloping key sites, maintaining and rebuilding their aging infrastructure, and restoring natural resources.
- **Suburban:** Cities in the Suburban area are a range of older streetcar suburbs and suburban developments built primarily in the 1970s and 1980s. Some regional employment centers are located in suburban cities. While these cities have some limited opportunities for new development, many are focusing on creating and revitalizing their downtowns as community centers.
- **Suburban Edge:** Cities in the Suburban Edge have been growing both population and employment quickly over the last two decades and are continuing to stage undeveloped land for future urbanized development.
- **Emerging Suburban Edge:** Cities and townships in the Emerging Suburban Edge area are in the early stages of their population growth cycle and have significant amounts of undeveloped land gifted for future urbanized development.
- The **Rural Area** contains about half of the land in the seven-county area and includes uses such as cultivated farmland, vineyards, hobby farms, gravel mines, woodlands, small towns, and significant expanses of the region's natural resources. Aside from regional parks and regional sewer service to some rural centers, the Council's investments in regional service are limited in the Rural Area. The four community-wide designations within the Rural Area are:
  - **Rural Centers:** Rural Centers are free-standing small towns within the rural area with a mix of residential neighborhoods and basic commercial services. Some of these cities operate municipal wastewater plants, while others receive regional wastewater service.
  - **Diversified Rural:** Cities and townships in the Diversified Rural Area have a mix of residential, agricultural, and hobby-farm uses; many of these communities are expected to receive regional wastewater service sometime after 2040.
  - **Rural Residential:** Cities in the Rural Residential Area have developed at low residential densities that create significant challenges for transitioning to more urbanized development patterns.
  - **Agricultural:** Cities and townships in the Agricultural Area have a farm-based economy and development pattern and contain some of the region's best agricultural land.

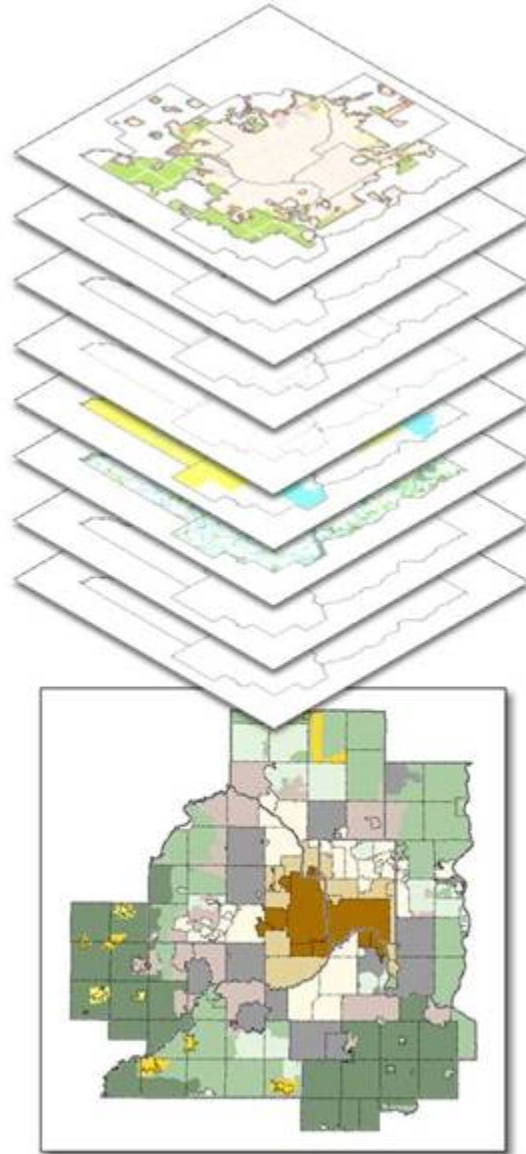
Community-wide land use policies, including density expectations, will be applied consistently to jurisdictions within the same designation.

## Geographically-specific policy layers

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Policy layers provide enhanced granularity for policies that vary within jurisdictional boundaries; others focus policy implementation on features that transcend local borders. Policy layers allow the Council to apply policy consistently to land with specific levels of infrastructure or service, certain demographic traits, similar urban form, or particular geological or topological characteristics whether within or across jurisdictional borders. Some policy layers are static, describing fixed topographical characteristics; others are dynamic, reflecting changing infrastructure or socioeconomic characteristics. The Council's policies will be stable over time while the geographies that they affect may change.

The Council will provide online tools that map these policy layers to local jurisdictions to inform the local comprehensive planning process.



These layers reflect the *key geographic and policy drivers for local comprehensive planning* under *Thrive MSP 2040*. The proposed policy layers are:

Type	Policy layer	Source	Function and outcomes
Infrastructure	<b>Existing, Planned and Long-Term Wastewater Service Areas</b>	Water Resources Policy Plan, updated through Comprehensive Plan Updates and Amendments	Defines minimum density expected in areas planned for regional wastewater service by 2040 to ensure efficient use of regional wastewater infrastructure  Defines maximum density expected in areas planned for post-2040 regional wastewater service to ensure future efficient construction of infrastructure
Infrastructure	<b>Existing and Planned Transitway Station Areas (including Commuter Rail, LRT, BRT, Arterial BRT et al.)</b>	Transportation Policy Plan, as amended and updated	Focuses where transit-oriented and intensified development should occur to maximize the impact of major fixed transit investments
Infrastructure	<b>Existing and Planned Managed Highway Lanes and Transit Corridors (all transit modes)</b>	Transportation Policy Plan, as amended and updated	Focuses development in areas served by transportation modes with the capacity to absorb future growth
Infrastructure	<b>Transportation Corridors</b>	Transportation Policy Plan, as amended and updated	Encourages communities to seek connections and partnerships across jurisdictional borders
Topography / Geology	<b>Groundwater Recharge Areas</b>	Water Resources Policy Plan, informed by the Metro Groundwater Model	Elevates attention to aquifer recharge potential in planning future development patterns
Topography / Geology	<b>Natural Resources Inventory and Assessment</b>	Regionally-Significant Ecological Areas to be updated with the Department of Natural Resources	Encourages development patterns that preserve natural resources
Socioeconomic	<b>Racially-Concentrated Areas of Poverty and Concentrated Areas of Poverty (RCAPs and CAPs)</b>	Annual updates using the most recent data from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey	Describes priority areas for investments that improve access to opportunity for residents and attract private investment
Socioeconomic	<b>Job and Activity Centers</b>	Annual updates using the most recent employment data from the Department of Employment and Economic Development	Encourages local investments to create vibrant neighborhoods that attract and retain employers and workers; focuses higher-levels of transit and transportation infrastructure