

Business Item

Transportation Committee



Committee Meeting Date: August 28, 2023

For the Metropolitan Council: September 13, 2023

Business Item: 2023-193

Smoothed Urban Area Boundary

District(s), Member(s): All
Policy/Legal Reference: Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA)
Staff Prepared/Presented: David Burns, Planning Analyst
Division/Department: MTS Planning

Proposed Action

That the Metropolitan Council adopt the proposed smoothed urban area boundary as shown on the attached maps.

Background

Upon completion of each decennial census, the U.S. Census Bureau delineates and provides maps depicting the contiguous urban area boundary for metropolitan areas. These boundaries represent urban areas that meet certain population and distance thresholds to the core urban area. The urban area boundary must include all areas identified by the U.S. Census Bureau as urban but should also undergo a “smoothing” process to include identifiable features such as roadways and rivers, and to follow municipal boundaries. For urban areas with a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), the MPO is charged with leading this process.

For the 2020 Census, the U.S. Census Bureau altered the methodology used to determine urban area boundaries. This resulted in some cities within the Council’s 7-county metropolitan planning area, most notably Stillwater, becoming separate urban areas but remaining within the planning area. Stillwater and all other urbanized communities within the 7-county region remain part of the Council’s planning area boundary defined under State statute and are still eligible for Regional Solicitation funding and other Council services.

Similarly, due to the fact that under adopted local practices all A-Minor Arterials within the MPO planning area are eligible for the Regional Solicitation, urban and rural distinctions have little effect on communities and roadways within the 7-county metro area. MnDOT and FHWA, however, do track and use total urban and rural system mileage and are therefore more concerned with the urban and rural classifications.

Among the more significant changes to the urban area boundary is the removal of Houlton, Wisconsin, from the urban area and thus from the planning area. There were also some minor boundary changes within the urbanized areas of Wright and Sherburne counties, which became part of the Council’s urbanized area after the 2010 census. Council staff met with staff representing the counties and cities affected by these changes on June 12, and the area representatives did not indicate any concerns with the new boundaries.

Rationale

As the Metropolitan Planning Organization for the Twin Cities, the Council is required to perform the urban area smoothing process and adopt a smoothed urban boundary to comply with federal law.

The adjusted urban area boundary follows guidelines and best practices set forth by both the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). It includes all the urban areas as well as logical contiguous areas within the region, per federal guidelines. It has been reviewed and vetted by stakeholders, including MnDOT, representatives of Wright and Sherburne counties, and members of TAC Planning, TAC, and TAB.

Thrive Lens Analysis

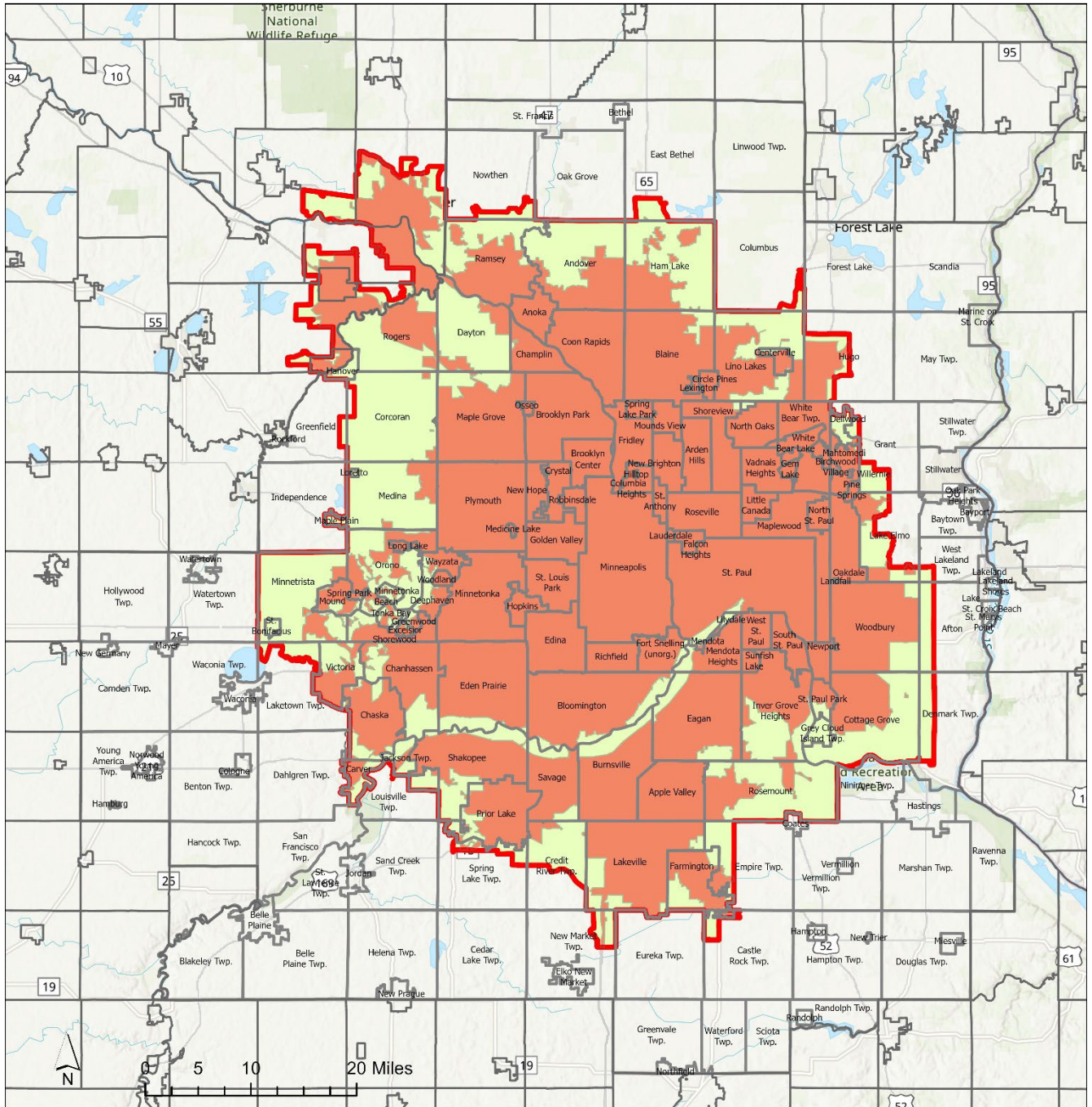
The smoothed urban area boundary most directly affects the Stewardship outcome, as the identification of urban areas promotes orderly development and helps direct resources to the appropriate areas.

Funding

This item has no impact on funding.

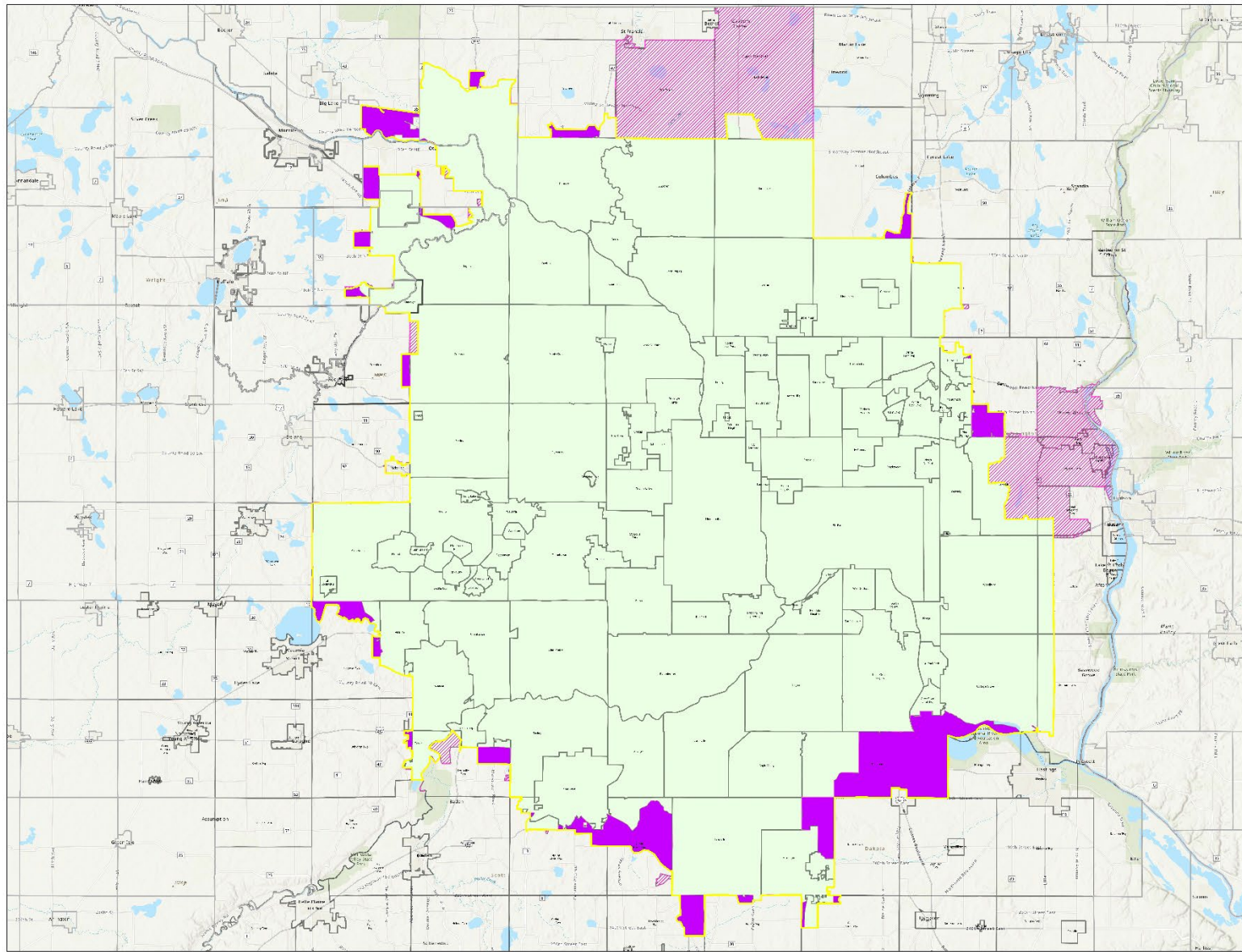


2023 Smoothed Urbanized Area



- 2023 Smoothed Urbanized Area
- 2020 Census Required UZA Areas
- 2020 City & Township Areas

DRAFT



2023 Smoothed UZA
Urbanized Area
Change
2013 to 2023

- Added UZA in 2023
- Removed UZA in 2023
- 2023 DRAFT Smooth UZA Metro
- City and Townships