

BACKGROUND

As directed by state law, the Met Council develops forecasts of when, where, and how much population, household, and job growth the seven-county region and local jurisdictions can expect over a 30-year horizon. These long-range forecasts provide a shared foundation for coordinated comprehensive planning. The forecasts describe likely and reasoned expectations of regional growth based on an understanding and modeling of regional dynamics. [Regional total results were published in April 2023.](#)

Met Council's local forecasting involves the geographic allocation of regional employment and households totals to specific places. Met Council uses the local forecasts as a basis and benchmark for regional systems planning and deployment (MN Statutes 473.146); the local forecasts are our commitment to serve the forecasted population levels with transportation plans and wastewater capacity. While the Met Council does not provide or guarantee water supply, water supply limitations are a consideration in forecasts. Imagine 2050's local forecasts were formally adopted by the Metropolitan Council on February 12, 2025.

The Met Council uses UrbanSim, a real estate market simulation model, to project the geographic pattern of expected future growth and allocate the regional totals to locations. [UrbanSim's methodology is online, here.](#) The model is provided a large collection of neighborhood-level data for every location in the 7-county metro region; all of these locations are in competition with one another to attract shares of the metro region total.

The main determinants of local forecasts are real estate dynamics, location characteristics and amenities, activity patterns and accessibility (travel within the region). However, as part of forecast development, the Met Council may make manual adjustments to the model outputs based on known issues as well as policy direction. This is the case with the White Bear Lake Area communities impacted by court decisions.

Additionally, demographic trends through the region also indicate deceleration, as migration to the region has declined, birth rates have fallen, and death rates have stabilized. These factors contributed to a downward adjustment of approximately 100,000 persons in the regional population forecast. Because each community's forecast is a share of the regional total, a reduction at the regional level results in corresponding decreases in local level projections.

WHITE BEAR LAKE

The Minnesota legislature directed the Met Council to “develop a comprehensive plan to ensure communities in the White Bear Lake area have access to sufficient safe drinking water to allow for municipal growth while simultaneously ensuring the sustainability of surface water and groundwater resources to supply the needs of future generations.” This included establishing a [White Bear Lake Comprehensive Plan Group](#), inclusive of 14 local governments and other named stakeholders. This comprehensive plan was directed to be completed by June 30, 2027. This work is underway.

The Council is statutorily directed to plan for the orderly and economical development of the region. In this role, the Council must act responsibly to ensure that adequate public services are available to accommodate forecasted growth. Until the White Bear Lake Area Work Group concludes and there is an identified response to legislative direction and judicial decisions, the Met Council determined it prudent to withhold its consent of **additional** growth in local jurisdictions affected by the White Bear Lake Area Court decision **until** the Council is assured additional growth does not conflict with Court orders that cities must abide.

2050 PLAN UPDATES

The 2050 local comprehensive planning process was formally initiated when system statements, including local forecasts, were distributed to communities on September 22, 2025. Per statute, communities have the opportunity to dispute their forecasts and work with Council staff to make adjustments. Any jurisdiction impacted by this methodology and the court decision may still do that in accordance with state statutes. However, as it relates to requesting an upward adjustment to forecasts for growth in this area prior to completion of the White Bear Lake Area Comprehensive Plan being prepared with assistance from the legislatively identified Work Group Members and modification of the court order, communities should be aware that the Council will only consider forecast adjustments in the future, not during System Statements review. If a request is made, it may only be considered after modification of the court order, a change in local conditions, or a solution to water supply constraints are determined and implemented.

Council staff and [Sector Representatives](#) are available to assist local governments as they prepare for their 2050 planning process. If a deeper discussion about forecast methodology is desired, contact Todd Graham, Principal Forecaster at Todd.Graham@metc.state.mn.us.

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