



# Density Policies for Imagine 2050

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# Today's Agenda



Regional Goals

Scenarios Planning Analysis and Findings

Density Report Findings and Recommendations

Density Approaches Discussion

Schedule and Next Steps

# Regional Goals

## **Our region is equitable and inclusive.**

Racial inequities and injustices experienced by historically marginalized communities have been eliminated; and all people feel welcome, included, and empowered.

## **Our communities are healthy and safe.**

All our region's residents live healthy and rewarding lives with a sense of dignity and wellbeing.

## **Our region is dynamic and resilient.**

Our region meets the opportunities and challenges faced by our communities and the economy including issues of choice, access, and affordability.

## **We lead on addressing climate change.**

We have mitigated greenhouse gas emissions and have adapted to ensure that our communities and systems are resilient to climate impacts.

## **We protect and restore natural systems.**

We protect, integrate, and restore natural systems to protect habitat and ensure a high quality of life for the people of our region.

# Land use objectives

1



Respect the relationship with land and water as a foundation for regional growth.

2



Maximize opportunities for growth in places well-served by transit, bicycle, and pedestrian infrastructure.

3



People live in vibrant, inclusive, connected, and safe communities.

4



Ensure that development activities contribute to the fullest protection and restoration of natural systems on every level.

5



People in all types of communities have housing opportunities that align with their needs.

6



Remedy past and present discriminatory land use practices.

7



Strengthen the climate resilience of neighborhoods and communities through sustainable land use and development patterns.

8

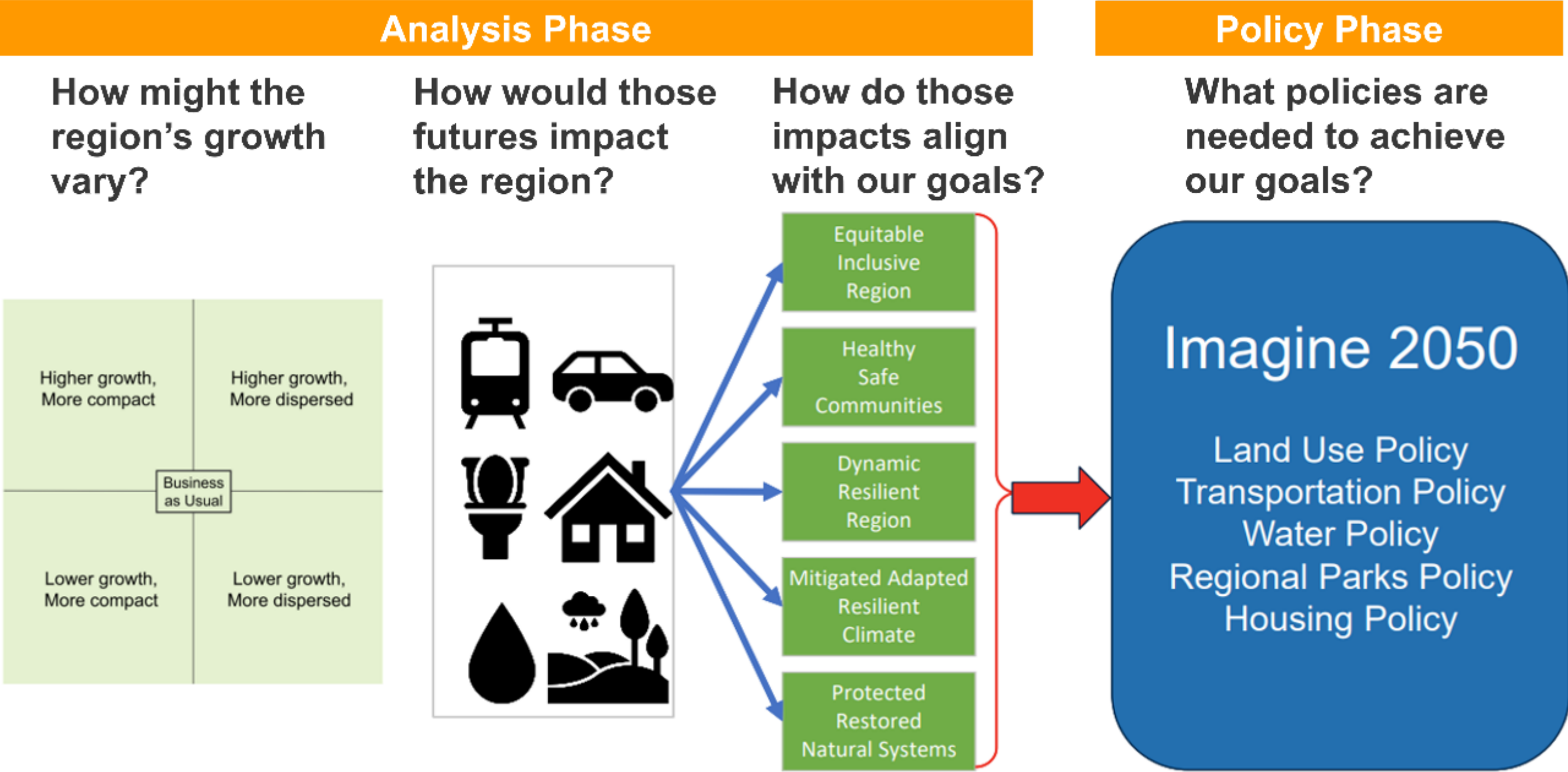


Support the economic wellbeing of our region and its communities.

# Scenarios Planning Analysis and Findings



# From Analysis to Policy



# Scenarios Alignment with Regional Goals

## Compact Scenarios

- More efficient use of land (including agricultural land protection).
- Lower GHG emissions (total as well as transportation and residential building related).
- Higher job accessibility.
- Higher viability for transit.
- Lower cost of meeting affordable housing need.
- Less chloride runoff.
- More efficient use of wastewater infrastructure.
- Lower risk of environmental degradation.
- Less fragmentation and degradation of natural systems.

## Dispersed Scenarios

- Lower risk of displacement and gentrification.
- Less nitrate runoff.

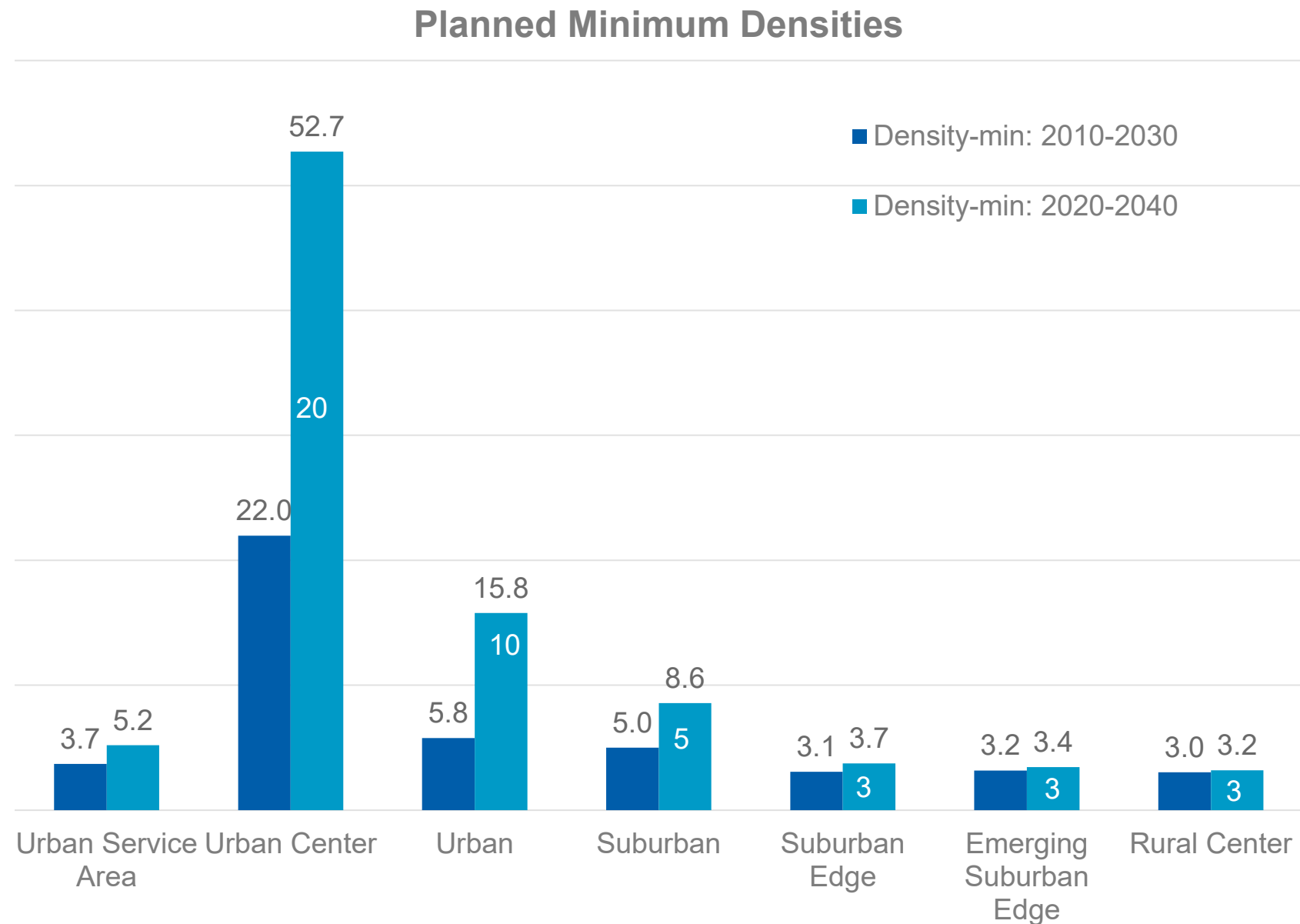
# Density Report Findings and Recommendations





# Lots of great things are happening

- Planned densities are exceeding Thrive minimum density requirements.
- Market conditions support higher densities.
- Communities are responding to greater housing needs in their plans and in comprehensive plan amendments.



# What we already know

## Long-term impact

- The structure of a community remains for decades.
- Past land use practices impact existing and future development patterns.
- Incremental changes won't meet long-term needs.

## Assessing performance

- There is a gap between minimum density requirements and actual development.
- Low-density land use patterns do impact infrastructure investments.
- Business-as-usual is not achieving regional goals.

# What people are telling us

**Preserve green and open space through more dense housing.**

“Cookie cutter houses and houses on large lots are not an efficient use of undeveloped land. Encouraging more dense development, keeping housing and businesses in one area, and making areas more walkable” are desired goals.”

"I think our city is lacking a lot of biodiversity, there's so much development and such little trees"

**Multigenerational housing and housing for large families; housing affordability**

“Let’s say a lot of people come to the US at once; most won’t have a job at first and will have to live in a small house with only one or two bedrooms. This is a challenge for immigrants in finding houses.”

“We need the kinds of affordable housing that fit our families. Some of us want to live in multigenerational housing with parents and grandparents.”

**Better transit, improved bike/ped safety, walkable communities with dense and mixed-use development within urban & suburban communities**

“A lot of friends live on the border between Shakopee and Prior Lake. When they want to hang out and do that, it’s unsafe because they have to bike on the road.”

“Having a walkable city is good for basically everything it reduces the carbon footprint of the city. It increases the use of transportation. Having places that are walkable is good for the health of the citizens.”

# Density Analysis Takeaways



- Planned densities exceed Thrive minimum density requirements.
- Despite higher density ranges developed in the past decade, overall developed density remains below planned minimum densities, except in Suburban Edge communities.
- Higher developed densities in the recent decade are insufficient to bring the overall density of development up to minimum planned densities.
- Despite some communities building at higher densities, very low densities are still being developed in other communities within the same Community Designation.
- Platted density is higher than developed density, suggesting that many plats remain undeveloped.

# Recommended Planning Approaches

## Policy Decisions

- Increase minimum density requirements.
- Restrain MUSA expansion and establish criteria for when expansion would be authorized.
- Evaluate the practical feasibility of demand and development.

## Administrative Practices and Guidelines

- Consider all land guided to support growth, not just areas of change
- Calculate density requirements per decade rather than over the planning horizon
- Use a performance-based approach to explore flexibility in minimum planning requirements while advancing regional goals.

# Approaches NOT recommended

## Minimum density standards for all new connections to the regional sewer system.

- Establishes the lowest density allowed to balance higher density areas across the community. This has historically been a local decision.
- Reduces flexibility to plan for a variety of development densities.
- Creates significant implications throughout the planning process on how density is calculated.

## Include all existing development in density calculations.

- Significant complications at the local level.
- Forces planning at much higher densities than the minimum requirements.
- Could unfairly penalize communities for historical development patterns.
- Could create a barrier to achieving planned growth objectives.

## Establish target densities in addition to minimum densities.

- This approach was not used widely in the previous planning cycle.
- Considerable effort is required to establish this approach.
- Primarily serves as a communications tool rather than a substantive change.
- The potential benefits do not justify the resources and time investment required.

# Discussion on Recommended Density Approaches



# Quick View on Density Calculations: What's proposed to change and what isn't

## Continued from Thrive MSP 2040:

- Use overall average minimum density in calculations.
- The minimum number of planned housing units is divided by the net acreage.
- Net acreage does not include land covered by wetlands, water bodies, public parks and trails, public open space, arterial road rights-of-way, and other undevelopable areas identified or protected by local ordinances.
- Local flexibility determines which areas are best suited for higher and lower density development under the framework of meeting the overall minimum density on available developable lands.

## Changes under consideration:

- Adjustment to minimum density requirements.
- Average minimum net residential density to be calculated across all areas used to accommodate forecasted growth, not just areas of change.
- Meet minimum density requirements in each planning decade, not the planning horizon.
- Flexibility for calculations to be based on performance, policy consistency, and regional goals.



# Policy Recommendation: Increase Minimum Density Requirements

## Increase minimum density requirements.

- Encourages communities in all areas of the region to plan for higher-density, more compact development, and better advance regional goals.
- Over time, the density of existing development increases which will help compensate for existing lower-density areas within communities.
- Contributes to lowering greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.
- Helps meet the State's new GHG reduction targets and regional goals.

## Approach to implementation:

- Pair with accompanying measures to meet minimum density requirements within specific timeframes.
- Pair with incentives and define areas of flexibility.
- Work with local governments to explore how to best implement.

# Thrive MSP 2040 (2014)

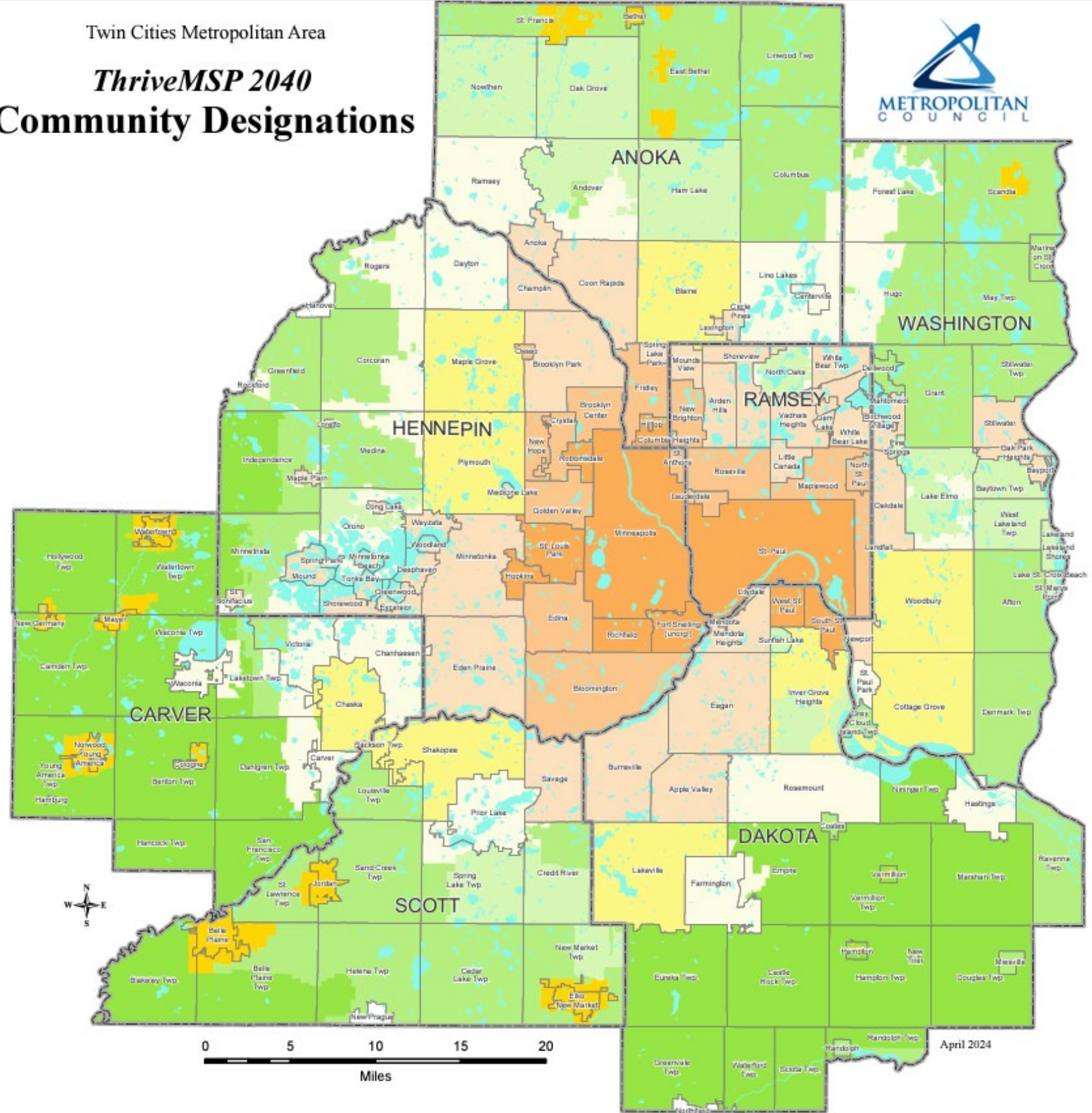
## Urban Service Areas

- Urban Center
- Urban
- Suburban
- Suburban Edge
- Emerging Suburban Edge

## Rural Service Areas

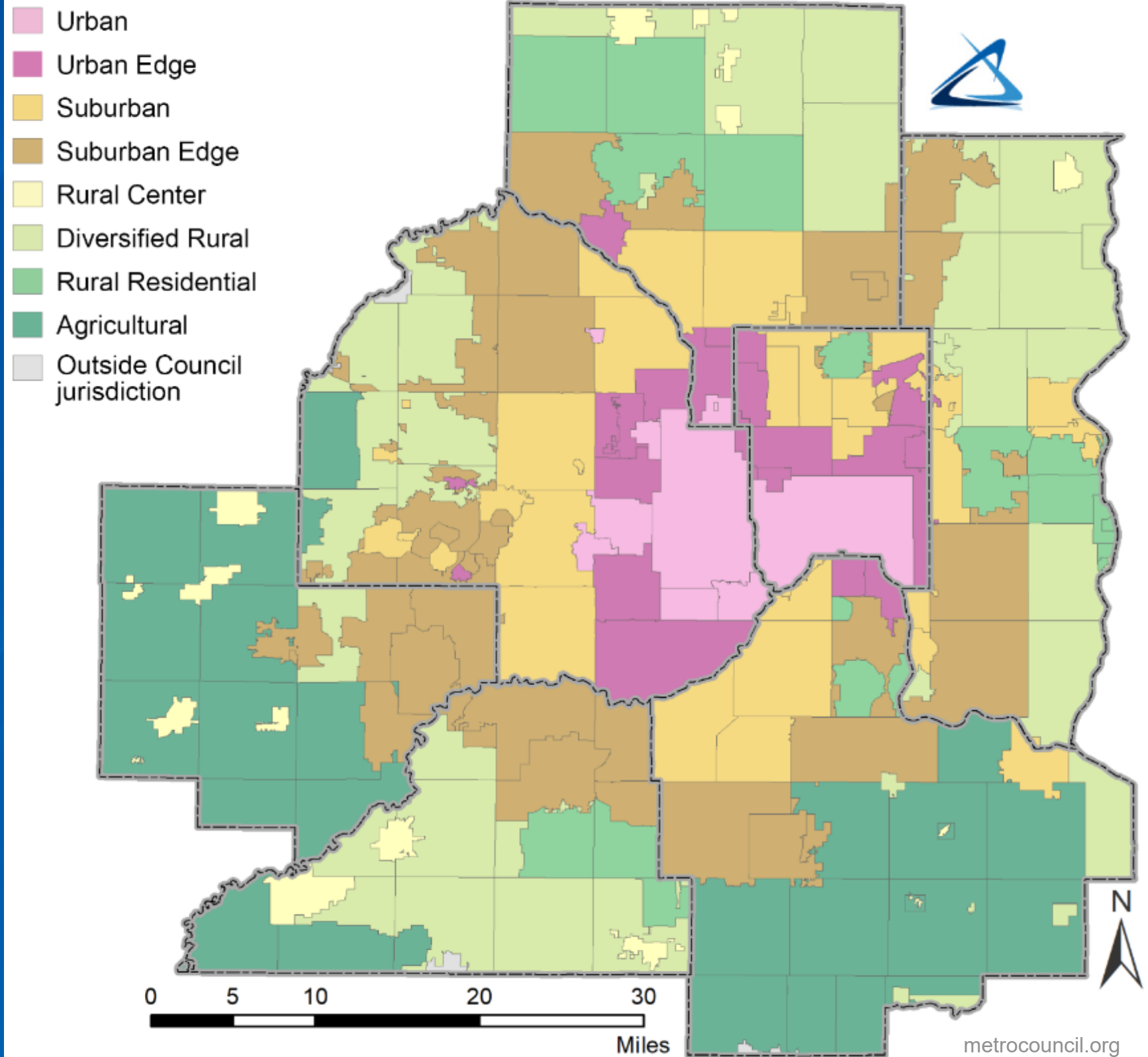
- Rural Center
- Diversified Rural
- Rural Residential
- Agricultural

# Twin Cities Metropolitan Area ThriveMSP 2040 Community Designations



April 2024

# Imagine 2050 Community Designations, *endorsed March 2023*



# Policy Recommendation: Increase Minimum Density Requirements

## Proposed Minimum Densities within the MUSA

Imagine 2050 Community Designation	Thrive MSP 2040 Minimum Density Requirements (units per acre)	Average Planned Net Density (units per acre)	Proposed Minimum Density (units per acre)
Urban	20 u/a (Urban Center)	30.9 u/a*	25 u/a
Urban Edge	10 u/a (Urban)	14.6 u/a	14 u/a
Suburban	5 u/a (Suburban)	7.7 u/a	7 u/a
Suburban Edge	3 u/a (Suburban Edge) 3 u/a (Emerging Suburban Edge)	4 u/a	4 u/a

\* Excluding Minneapolis

\*\* Areas in the Rural Service Area are not proposed to have changes to density expectations. Rural Center communities are recommended to remain at 3 u/a minimum density.

# Administrative Practices and Guidelines: Include all land guided to support growth

**Density calculations include all land guided to support growth within the planning period, not just areas of change.**

Ensures that every plan is reviewed based on all areas identified to accommodate future growth, not just those changing from the previous plan.

Can help communities plan more effectively for change in their communities.

Moves the focus from previous planning decisions and approaches that may not fit evolving regional and local needs.

# Administrative Practices and Guidelines: Identify forecasted growth & land supply by decade

**Meet density requirements within each planning decade rather than over the planning horizon.**

Ensures that communities meet their density requirements in each decade.

Ensures that higher density developments are included in the near-term as well as future decades.

Helps communities meet affordable housing planning requirements for the first decade.

# Administrative Practices and Guidelines: Apply performance-based flexibility

Explore approaches to flexibility while advancing regional goals.

Incentivizes local implementation of regional goals.

Must maintain conformance with regional system plans and consistency with Council policies.

Requires a systematic approach to implement.

Provides more flexibility locally.

Needs more specific details about the nature and design of these incentives.

Consideration is needed for the effort to develop, administer, and track any established Council program.

# Discussion on Other Recommended Planning Approaches





# Policy Recommendation: Establish criteria for MUSA expansions

**Restrain MUSA expansion and establish criteria for when expansion would be authorized.**

Signals commitment to efficient and cost-effective growth management.

Encourages more efficient infrastructure utilization.

Directs development to areas already equipped with infrastructure, which includes small and developing cities.

Helps mitigate inefficient, dispersed development patterns.

Facilitates the protection of agricultural lands and natural resources.

# Policy Recommendation: Practical feasibility of demand and development

## Evaluate the practical feasibility of demand and development.

Encourages realistic planning by urging communities to adopt land use plans that are not only allowed but also realistically implementable.

Helps prevent the overestimation of development outcomes,

Reduces the risk of underutilized infrastructure, inefficient land management, and improbable planned densities.

Facilitates more efficient growth management

Guides regional resources more effectively by focusing investments in areas with a higher likelihood of development.

# Next Steps



# Partnership is key

## We can help local governments.

- We are looking at process differently and implementing improvements.
- We are looking at how we can better support local planning for your community to be successful.
- We recognize that other tools and resources are needed to achieve regional goals; density is only one method.

## We need help from local governments, too.

- Contributing to the development of the flexibility program.
- Identifying performance measures for flexibility program.
- Planning grant program changes.
- Development of other incentives to help local governments.

# Next Steps for Density Policy

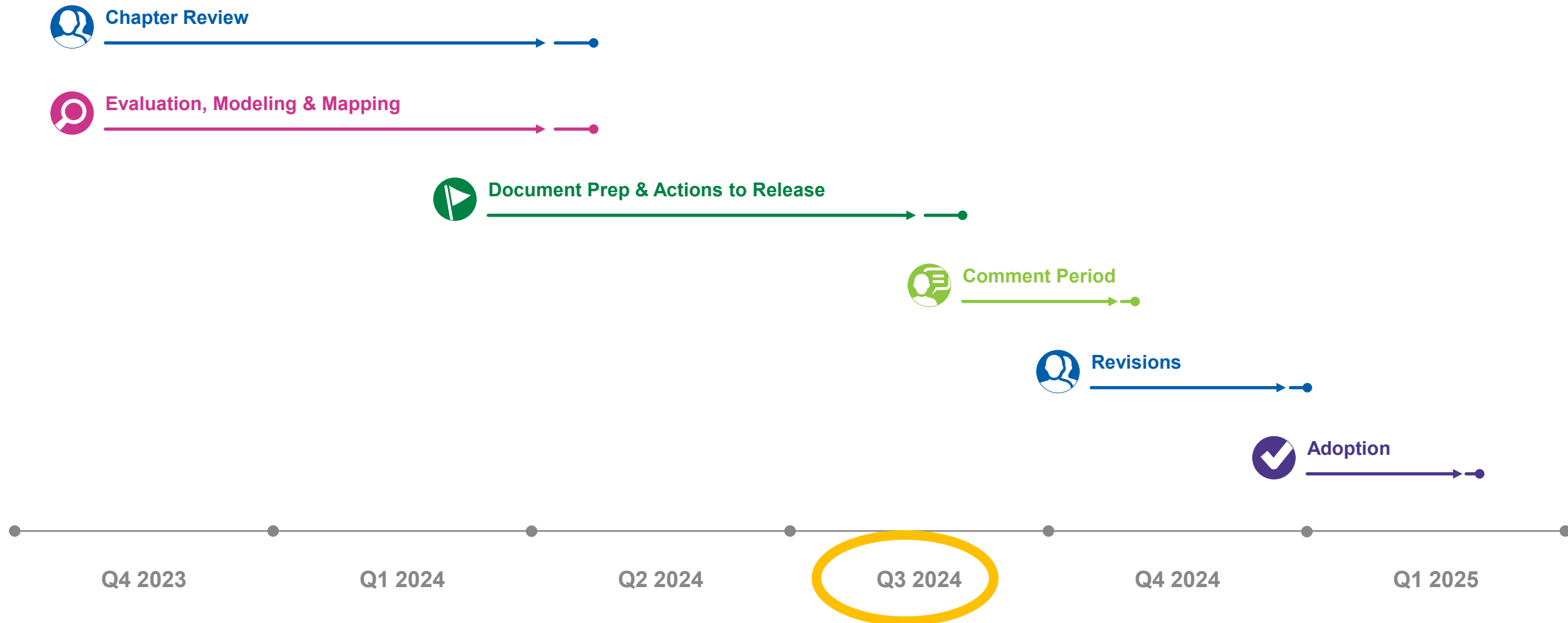


## Moving toward the public comment draft and adoption

- Council will continue to discuss:
  - Transit Station Area Density Recommendations
  - Criteria for MUSA Expansion
- Ongoing work plan items:
  - Development of methodology to evaluate feasibility of demand and development
  - Discussion with communities on criteria for performance-based flexibility and program needs (enrollment, eligibility, tracking)
- Balance revisions; weigh feedback of underrepresented communities to ensure voices are heard equitably.

# Overall Imagine 2050 Timeline

**August 5, 2024:** Community Development Committee recommendation  
**August 14, 2024:** Met Council action to release Imagine 2050 for public comment  
**September 25, 2024:** Tentative formal public hearing date  
**October 7, 2024:** Close of formal public comment period



# Questions

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