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SECTION TEN: NEXT STEPS

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Sections One through Six of this document described the history, current situation, and implications of the Twin Cities region's place-based disparities by race and income. Section Seven outlined an array of the policy approaches that influence the distribution of access to opportunity. Sections Eight and Nine discussed how the Metropolitan Council and other organizations are responding to the challenges of creating racial and economic equity.

Key policy conversations

While this document has described decades-long trends in economic and racial segregation and the large-scale impact of public policy, key policy conversations are occurring right now that highlight the complexities of these issues.

Relocation of the Dorothy Day Emergency Shelter

In December 2013, Saint Paul leaders announced a proposal to relocate and rebuild Catholic Charities' Dorothy Day emergency shelter for the homeless from its current location on the western edge of downtown Saint Paul to a new location on the edge of downtown Saint Paul and the East Side. The new facility is envisioned to include not only shelter but also permanent supportive housing and social service. Relatively quickly, both neighborhood residents and elected officials representing the East Side of Saint Paul reacted with concerns. Ramsey County Commissioner Rafael Ortega told the *Pioneer Press*, "We have a long history in certain neighborhoods where we keep concentrating the poverty.... The concentration of poverty is not a positive, and we need to take a good look at how we do the best practices, and deliver the best services."¹ Similarly, Representative Tim Mahoney asked, "I guess I want to know if they looked at Crocus Hill, or Highland Park, or Merriam Park, or anyplace else, before they put one more social service provider on the East Side."²

By February, the Payne-Phalen District 5 Planning Council wrote a letter to Saint Paul Mayor Chris Coleman saying that, "placing the proposed facility at this proposed site is an insult to the dignity of intended clients and injurious to the neighborhood."³ Further, the letter asked decision-makers to identify "any other site location that does not further concentrate poverty, and which is not already saturated with services for at-risk populations."⁴ In early March 2014, Mayor Coleman announced that the Dorothy Day shelter would be rebuilt at or close to its existing location on the western edge of downtown Saint Paul.

While future conversations about siting homeless shelters will be rare, the Dorothy Day Shelter discussion sits at the intersection of the location of social services and the placement of affordable housing. On the one hand, it seems self-evident that social services should exist in proximity to the populations who use them—no one would build a hospital or a WorkForce Center without considering where customers are. On the other hand, building affordable housing only where low-income residents currently live reinforces existing residential patterns without exploring where those households would prefer to live. A key question for siting social services, supportive housing, and housing for extremely-low income households is:

Should services and housing for extremely low-income households be sited where people are currently living or could alternative locations attract low-income residents into more economically diverse areas and/or improve their access to opportunity?

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Alignment of major transitway investments

Over the last few years, alignment decisions for three planned light-rail lines in the Twin Cities region have engaged questions of how to best address the transit needs of low-income neighborhoods. While the Metropolitan Council's Transportation Policy Plan sets priorities for transitway investment, county regional rail authorities are responsible for transitway alignments through their selection of Locally Preferred Alternatives.

- METRO Green Line (Central Corridor)

During the planning stages of the METRO Green Line, formerly known as Central Corridor Light Rail Transit, stops were planned at one-mile intervals along the eastern edge of University Avenue in Saint Paul. For residents who could have boarded the train at the Lexington or Dale or Rice stations, this would have meant faster trips with fewer stops. However, residents living at the Hamline, Victoria and Western cross-streets would have had longer walks to access the stations. A successful organizing campaign, in conjunction with changes to the federal cost-effectiveness index and additional sources of funding identified, led to the three additional stops added to the project.

- METRO Green Line Extension (Southwest Corridor)

Many people describe the METRO Green Line Extension, formerly known as the Southwest Corridor LRT, as the “jobs line” because of the suburban employment opportunities the line will serve. The proximity of the Van White Station to the Harrison Neighborhood, the southern edge of the North Minneapolis RCAP, holds the promise of connecting residents of North Minneapolis to job opportunities in Minnetonka and Eden Prairie. The opportunity that Southwest LRT holds for North Minneapolis has been identified as a key justification for the alignment's western path out of downtown Minneapolis.

- METRO Blue Line Extension (Bottineau Corridor)

The most recent addition to the region's program of planned transitways is the METRO Blue Line Extension, formerly known as the Bottineau Corridor, which approved its Locally Preferred Alternative in May 2013. During the Alternatives Analysis phase, discussions focused on the best way of meeting the transit needs of North Minneapolis residents—running light rail through the neighborhood at the cost of homes and businesses or bypassing the neighborhood. The Locally Preferred Alternative opted to route the Blue Line Extension through Golden Valley rather than through North Minneapolis.

Some key questions about transitway alignments include:

When is it preferable to route transit through a low-income neighborhood and when is it preferable to avoid the loss of and disruption to homes and businesses that routing transit through a low-income neighborhood may cause? Where major transitways do not go through low-income neighborhoods, how can these areas connect to and benefit from the transitway investments?

What is the appropriate balance of increasing access to transit by providing additional stations and reducing travel time by minimizing stops?

Where is the balance of providing some access to transit to more places and providing higher levels of transit service to more people in limited places?

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Priorities for affordable housing investments

A broad consensus exists that the resources to build and preserve affordable housing fall short of meeting the needs. Inside this agreement, however, is a heated dialogue about how to prioritize the limited funding available. Minnesota Housing, the region's largest single funder of affordable housing, plays a significant role in this conversation as do other funders, including counties, cities, philanthropy, and the Metropolitan Council.

The Council also works with cities to ensure that local comprehensive plans reflect each city's share of the region's need for low- and moderate-income housing. As long as the demand for additional affordable housing outstrips the supply of affordable housing resources, the controversy surrounding resource allocation and location of affordable housing opportunities is likely to continue.

Some key questions about affordable housing investments include:

What is the appropriate balance of resource allocation for maintaining safe, decent affordable housing opportunities in areas with concentrations of lower-income households (such as RCAPs) and investing in new affordable housing opportunities in higher-income areas?

What locational attributes are necessary for a successful affordable housing investment? How should public policy respond to the changing affordable housing market along transitways? When is it appropriate for affordable housing to be in locations distant from transit? Should priorities encourage both new construction and preservation broadly across the region, including or especially in areas with little to no existing affordable housing?

What interventions—housing or otherwise—can mitigate the negative impacts of RCAPs without displacing low- to moderate-income households?

Regional assessment of fair housing

The region's Fair Housing Implementation Council (FHIC) was established in July 2002 to affirmatively further fair housing throughout the housing market area and assist in taking affirmative action(s) to overcome or remove consequences of discriminatory actions in the housing market. The current signatories to the FHIC Cooperative Funding Agreement are the Anoka County Housing and Redevelopment Authority, Dakota County, Hennepin County, Ramsey County, Washington County, the city of Coon Rapids, the city of Minneapolis, the city of Saint Paul and the Metropolitan Council.

The FHIC was responsible for the region's 2009 Regional Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice, an effort required of jurisdictions who administer federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and HOME Investment Partnership Program (HOME) funding. An Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice (AI) is an examination of the impediments or barriers to fair housing, housing choices or the availability of housing choice that affect protected classes¹ within a geographic region. The AI process involves a thorough examination of a variety of sources related to housing, affirmatively furthering fair housing, the fair housing delivery system and housing transactions that affect people who are protected under fair housing law. Updating the 2001 Regional Analysis of Impediments, the 2009 Regional AI covered seven city and six county entitlement jurisdictions: the cities of Bloomington, Eden Prairie, Minneapolis, Minnetonka, Plymouth, Saint Paul and Woodbury as well as Anoka, Carver,

¹ Protected classes under Minnesota law are race, color, religion, sex, disability or handicap, familial status, national origin, creed, sexual or affectional orientation, marital status, and receipt of public assistance.

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Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey and Washington counties. (The Council does not receive either CDBG or HOME dollars and is therefore not required to complete an Analysis of Impediments.)

Planning is about to begin to update the Regional Analysis of Impediments. In July 2013, HUD released a proposed rule describing a new process—an Assessment of Fair Housing (AFH)—that would replace the Analysis of Impediments. With the release of the proposed rule, HUD identified four primary goals for the Assessment of Fair Housing:

- improving integrated living patterns and overcoming historic patterns of segregation;
- reducing racial and ethnic concentrations of poverty;
- reducing disparities by race, color, religion, sex, familial status, national origin, or disability in access to community assets such as education, transit access and employment as well as exposure to environmental health hazards and other stressors that harm a person’s quality of life; and
- responding to disproportionate housing needs by protected class.⁵

Just as HUD encouraged regional Analyses of Impediments and regional Fair Housing and Equity Assessments, HUD is encouraging regional Assessments of Fair Housing. The Fair Housing Implementation Council is responsible for the next Regional Analysis of Impediments or the Assessment of Fair Housing, and the Metropolitan Council is willing to provide data to that work as a way of building on the analysis in this document. However, given the Council’s multiple layers of relationships with local governments, including the approval of local comprehensive plans, the Council will not be taking a lead role in the next Regional Analysis of Impediments or the Assessment of Fair Housing.

Key questions about fair housing include:

What are the primary determinants influencing fair housing conditions?

What actions should be taken to address fair housing conditions and their determinants?

How can the Fair Housing Implementation Council most effectively develop and promote robust regional fair housing and equity practices, and overcome barriers to fair housing and housing choice throughout the region?

Evaluating all place-based investments

This document has focused on specific place-based investments closely connected to the regional work of the Metropolitan Council. It has not closely explored other place-based investments such as local decisions on policies and investments. Similar questions can be used to assess many public policies and priorities, ranging from playgrounds to school additions to heated bus shelters.

Key questions about place-based investments include:

Who benefits from the investment? Do benefits accrue equitably or do the benefits follow those who have higher-incomes?

Are services or amenities equitably distributed? Do all parts of a community have a similar quality of amenities or are higher-quality amenities located where higher-income residents live?

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Is the public sector equally responsive to all residents or are residents in one part of the area more likely to have their voices heard?

Next Steps

A region that shares both opportunities and challenges and that seeks to improve the lives of its entire population is stronger and more vibrant. With this document, the Council hopes to raise awareness of the complex interdependencies of income, race, place, and opportunity and to challenge both itself and others to think regionally and act equitably for a better region for all.

The Council is eager to convene and partner to further develop plans to reduce both areas of concentrated poverty and racial disparities in our region because the Council recognizes that it cannot do this work alone. Moving to a more equitable future will take concerted effort and a shared commitment. Persistent racial disparities must become an artifact of our history rather than a limit on our future vitality. Given the scale and complexity of these issues and the large benefits of success, the time to begin this work is now.

¹ Frederick Melo, "Dorothy Day relocation, expansion plan supporters make their case," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, December 20, 2013.

² Frederick Melo, "Dorothy Day relocation, expansion plan supporters make their case," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, December 20, 2013.

³ Frederick Melo, "St. Paul: Dorothy Day relocation runs into neighborhood objections," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, February 27, 2014.

⁴ Frederick Melo, "St. Paul: Dorothy Day relocation runs into neighborhood objections," *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, February 27, 2014.

⁵ HUD's Notice of Proposed Rulemaking on Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing, accessed from http://www.huduser.org/portal/affht_pt.html, March 7, 2014