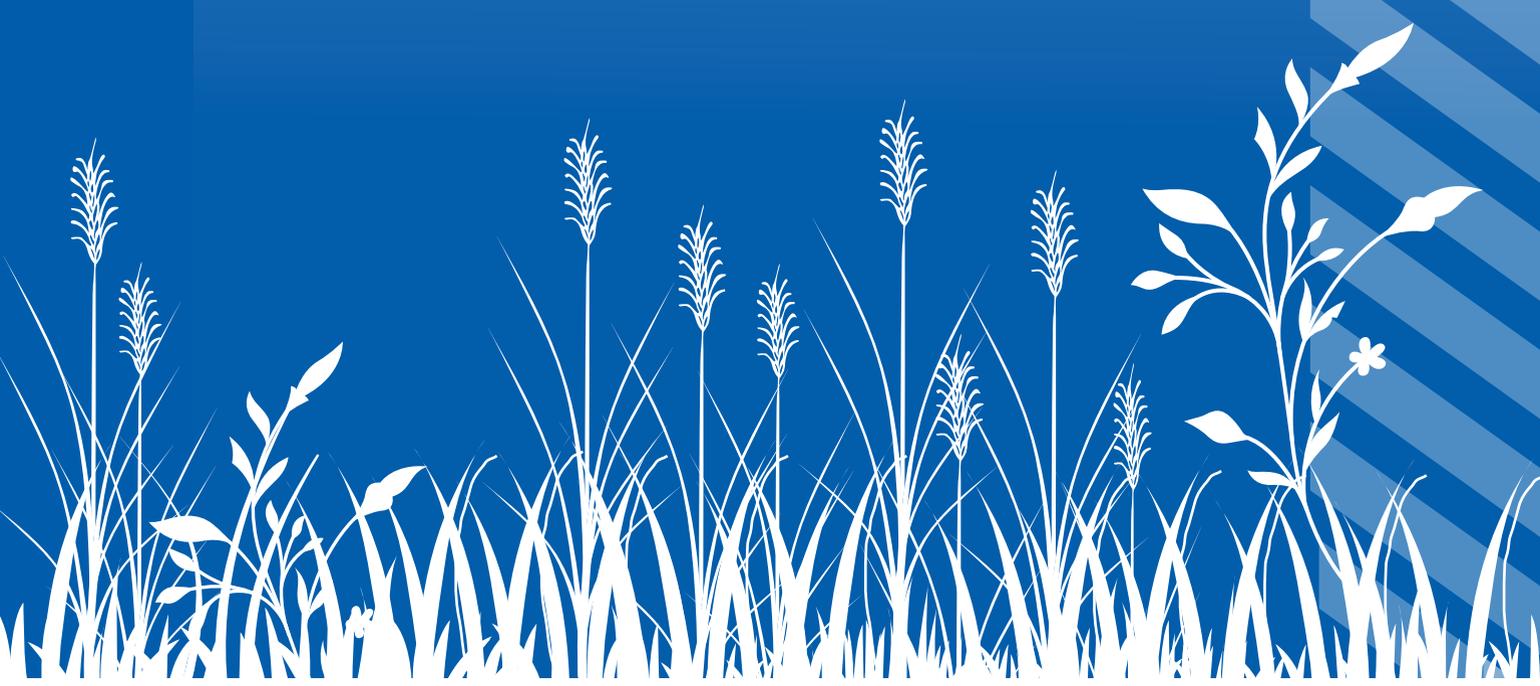


# 2040



## Thrive: Outcomes



The Metropolitan Council has listened to the aspirations voiced by the region's residents, civic, nonprofit and business leaders, and government officials and woven their thoughts and hopes into five desired outcomes that define our shared regional vision:

Stewardship Prosperity Equity Livability Sustainability



These five outcomes reinforce and support one another to produce greater benefits than any single outcome alone. Stewardship leads to decisions that advance prosperity, equity, livability, and sustainability. Prosperity provides more resources to support stewardship, equity, livability, and sustainability. Equity is crucial to creating greater prosperity and livability in the region. And so on.

Plans, policies, and projects that balance all five of these outcomes will create positive change, while efforts that advance only one or two at the expense of the others may fall short over the long term. Policymakers make tough decisions at the intersections of these five outcomes, weighing the benefits and costs of their options against these five outcomes. Focusing on outcomes allows for flexibility in implementation—for both the Council's systems and policy plans and local comprehensive plans—while prioritizing a shared strategic vision.

With *Thrive MSP 2040*, the Metropolitan Council is adopting an outcomes-orientation to its regional policy, focusing on policies that demonstrably improve our region. The Council is challenging itself, local governments, and its regional partners and stakeholders to describe how their work advances the five *Thrive*

outcomes. Outcomes describe how our investments and our policies are enriching our region for our residents and businesses, not how much money we are investing or how many miles of highway, interceptor pipe, or rail we ...are building.

Living out the Council's first principle of integration, the following narrative weaves together all of the Council's core policy authorities—from affordable housing and aviation to wastewater treatment and water supply—in the framework of the five outcomes. The *Thrive* outcomes—stewardship, prosperity, equity, livability, and sustainability—are lofty ideals that defy simple categorization into the Council's authorities. Instead, progress toward these outcomes demands that the Council use its full range of authorities and activities in a new, coordinated way. Integrated approaches will advance the *Thrive* vision of a prosperous, equitable, and livable region for today and generations to come.



## Stewardship ●

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Stewardship advances the Metropolitan Council's longstanding mission of orderly and economical development by responsibly managing the region's natural and financial resources, and making strategic investments in our region's future. Several of the major challenges that the Council was established to address—such as an aging bus fleet and inadequately treated wastewater polluting the region's lakes, rivers, and streams—demonstrate the need for effective regional stewardship.

### Stewardship means:

- Responsibly managing our region's finite resources, including natural resources—such as lakes, rivers, streams, wetlands, groundwater, high quality natural habitats, and agricultural soils—financial resources, and our existing investments in infrastructure.
- Pivoting from expanding to maintaining our region's wastewater and highway infrastructure.
- Leveraging transit investments with higher expectations of land use.

# Stewardship

## Responsibly managing finite natural resources

The region enjoys a bounty of natural resources including three major rivers, over 900 lakes, extensive wetlands, native prairie, woodland habitats, and an abundant groundwater system. These rich natural assets are part of our regional identity, enhancing our quality of life and supporting a strong economy. Natural areas recharge our aquifers and clean stormwater runoff and slow its flow, reducing flood damage and improving the quality of rivers, lakes, streams, wetlands, and groundwater.

Natural resources also provide a variety of benefits that would be costly to replace. Tree canopies shade our buildings and absorb carbon dioxide and pollutants. Wetlands, upland woods, and prairies provide wildlife habitat and offer access to nature. Local research “confirms that many types of open spaces, from parks and nature preserves to greenways, wetlands, and lakes, have a positive effect on nearby property values.”<sup>1</sup>

Nonetheless, challenges to the quality and extent of natural resources abound. Making natural resources a key part of the planning and development process will help protect highly prized natural features, for current and future generations. Protecting and preserving the region’s natural resources have long been an important part of the Council’s work. The Council works to preserve natural resources by partnering with local governments on land use planning, considering natural resources in the Council’s own planning and infrastructure investment decisions, and planning and funding regional parks. The Council uses its investments in the Regional Parks System to conserve scarce natural resources, such as habitats for endangered species, fens, unique habitats, conserved prairie, wetlands, and water resources. For example, regional park resources such as the Minneapolis Chain of Lakes and Lebanon Hills in Dakota County help preserve important ecological and natural features. Since its founding in 1974, the Regional Parks System has protected natural resources, including 30,700 acres of land designated as Regionally Significant Ecological Areas. In addition, the Council partners with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, and other state and local organizations to manage natural resources, especially water.

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<sup>1</sup> Wilder Research, “The Economic Value of Open Space”, 2005.

Although the region is a water-rich area, the quality of its rivers, lakes, and streams suffers from stormwater runoff that carries sediment, phosphorus, nitrates, oils, road salt, and other pollutants. Loss of natural areas contributes to increased runoff and lowered water quality. Best management practices minimize pollutants in the region's surface water and groundwater. Proper management of Subsurface Sewage Treatment Systems is needed to minimize impacts on surface water, groundwater, and public health. The Council and its partners will work to maintain and improve the quality and availability of the region's water resources (rivers, streams, lakes, aquifers, and wetlands) to support healthy habitats and ecosystems while providing for recreational opportunities.



To protect natural resources, the Council will:

- Fund ongoing acquisition of priority natural resource areas for inclusion in the Regional Parks System as identified in the *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan*.
- Encourage local governments to locate and design new developments in a way that preserves and benefits from the natural environment and reduces development pressures that endanger natural resources by promoting growth in already urbanized areas.
- Assess the quality of the regional groundwater system and its vulnerability to land use changes and identify high potential areas for recharge.
- Monitor and assess the condition of the region's lakes, rivers, and streams.
- Partner to conserve, maintain, and restore natural resources identified in local natural resource inventories.
- Provide direction, guidance, and technical assistance on best management practices for effective stormwater management and land use strategies that preserve and protect natural resources.
- Continue to ask local governments that their local comprehensive plans include local natural resources inventories, identify the tension points between natural resource protections and development pressures, and adopt local land uses and planning strategies for protecting natural resources and minimizing development impacts.

## Pivoting from expanding to maintaining our region’s wastewater and highway infrastructure

As with preserving natural resources, the Council is expected to be a wise steward of public financial resources and to strategically, effectively, and efficiently guide those dollars to the greatest benefit to our region. The combination of structural and demographic changes has made public resources for infrastructure expansion and preservation much more limited than in the last half of the 20th century. Consequently, it becomes more critical that we make smart investments and wise financial decisions to maximize the benefit from the resources we have.

The deterioration of roadway pavement and the aging condition of the regional sewers demonstrate the urgency of investing significantly more in their preservation, maintenance, and rebuilding. It is time to strike a new balance between being good stewards of the infrastructure we have and building more. As a result, the Council is pivoting from an emphasis on expanding our systems—especially wastewater and highways—to maintaining the infrastructure we have and maximizing the impact of limited dollars.

The Council’s effective planning, combined with slowed population growth and reduced per capita water use over the last decade, has created a regional wastewater treatment system with adequate capacity and service coverage planned through at least 2040. Prudent planning and system improvements at the regional and local levels have helped maintain and extend the capacity and life of the existing wastewater treatment system. Forecasted population growth to 2040 suggests minimal need to expand the wastewater system’s geographic footprint beyond that negotiated between the Council and local governments and reflected in 2030 local comprehensive plans. As a result, the Council’s attention will increasingly turn from managing the edge of the system to ensuring adequate maintenance and capacity in the redeveloping areas of the region in order to efficiently use existing wastewater investments. Although it has reduced 30-year population forecasts for some jurisdictions, the Council will provide necessary infrastructure to honor existing 2030 commitments for land to be included in the Metropolitan Urban Service Area by 2040.

Our region’s highway investment strategy exemplifies the need and the opportunity for thoughtful and strategic stewardship of resources. The existing system is a significant public investment that must be maintained and preserved for future generations. Concerns about congestion, safety, access, and freight movement must be balanced with available funding amounts, sources, and long-term sustainability.

While some gaps remain, the region’s principal arterial network is essentially complete and must now be rebuilt. Those rebuilding and replacement needs are increasing as federal, state, and local resources for roads and bridges lose ground to inflation. Moreover, gas tax revenues are declining due to improved fuel efficiency and changing travel patterns. The [Minnesota State Highway Investment Plan](#) (2013–2033) shows that the region will have \$52 million available annually from 2014 to 2022 for highway mobility improvements. This is a reduction from 2030 Transportation Policy Plan projections and falls significantly short of the anticipated need. Beyond 2023, all state highway funding will be devoted to rebuilding existing highway assets.



While the region must operate, maintain, and rebuild the existing highway system, these investments alone cannot accommodate the growing region. Congestion on regional highways—a sign of economic activity—will likely be a reality in the coming years, particularly during peak commuting hours. Moving more people and more freight on the system with limited fiscal resources will require more coordinated approaches than simply expanding the pavement footprint.

Strategic investment in the transportation system as a whole will be needed to ease congestion, and improve safety and capacity. To accomplish this, the region will focus its investments on affordable, high-return-on-investment projects, including:

- Placing priority on safely operating, maintaining, and rebuilding the existing state highway system with improvements to better accommodate bicycle and accessible pedestrian travel where appropriate.
- Implementing mobility improvements such as Traffic Management Technologies (TMT), spot mobility improvements, new and extended MnPASS lanes, and affordable strategic capacity enhancements.
- Implementing projects to increase access to Job Concentrations and Manufacturing/Distribution Locations.
- Continuing to support enhancements to the A-minor arterial system.
- Encouraging, supporting, and coordinating efforts beyond investments in the physical highway system, including Travel Demand Management such as carpools, vanpools, and staggered work hours; implementing transit, bicycle, pedestrian, and park-and-ride facilities that encourage use of the full range of transportation modes; and coordination with local land use guidance that increases job and housing concentrations.

The intersection of land use, urban form, and the transportation system shapes the effectiveness of stewardship of transportation investments. The Council will work with municipalities to align development patterns and highway investments by focusing growth and investment along corridors with strong potential for future transit or managed lanes. Areas outside these corridors may continue to develop but will receive only limited investments from federal or state sources for new or expanded highways. This approach will be described in detail in the *2040 Transportation Policy Plan*.



### Leveraging transit investments with higher expectations of land use

The region has been building its highway system for more than 50 years, but only in the last decade have we started to build new fixed-route transitways to supplement our extensive bus network. Our transitway network is largely still in development with opportunities to invest in transit across the urbanized parts of our region. We have learned that effective stewardship of public transit dollars requires a more strategic coordination of regional transit investments with more-intensive surrounding land uses, connected development patterns and urban form. Since much of our region developed around roads and private automobiles, the changes in land use and urban form required to make transit successful are significant. To effectively leverage our regional transit investments, the Council will need strong local partners who are willing to plan and invest in their communities and coordinate with neighboring communities to develop around transit. The Council will:

- Prioritize expanded bus service and transitway investments in areas where infrastructure and development patterns to support a successful transit system are either in place or committed to in the planning or development process, balancing transit ridership with added connectivity.
- Expand the geographic coverage of bus service and transitway investments in areas with a local commitment to transit-supportive development patterns and the market for future development.
- Stage transit modes, coverage, and service levels to match the intensity of development to both minimize the risk to public resources and maximize return on public investments.
- Define the Council’s expectations for transit-supportive land use planning—including expectations for connectivity, density and intensity, environmental considerations, opportunities for a mix of housing affordability, and zoning near major transit investments (policy will be refined in the *2040 Transportation Policy Plan*).
- Collaborate with municipalities to coordinate land use and development patterns with frequent, all-day bus service and transitways to increase transit ridership, increase the likelihood of successful transit investment, and respond to new market opportunities around transit investment.



A photograph of three construction workers at a site. They are wearing hard hats and high-visibility safety vests. One worker in the center wears a white hard hat and an orange vest. Two workers in the foreground wear blue hard hats and green vests. They are gathered around large rolls of dark material, possibly geotextile fabric, on a bed of gravel. The background shows more of the site under bright sunlight.

In addition to being a responsible steward of its existing resources, we must also focus on our economic prosperity to expand our pool of resources for future investments.



## Prosperity ●

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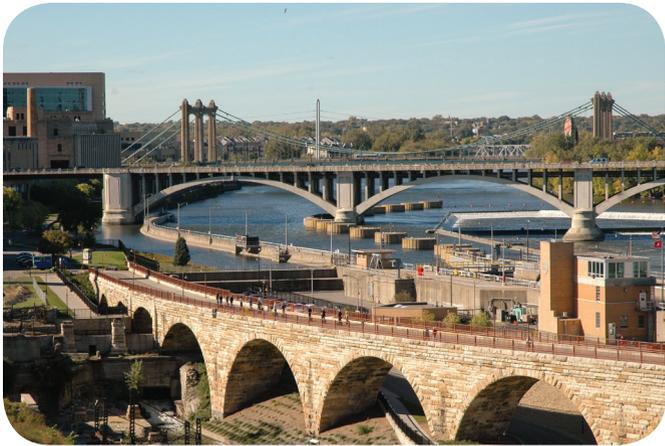
Prosperity is fostered by investments in infrastructure and amenities that create regional economic competitiveness, thereby attracting and retaining successful businesses, a talented workforce, and, consequently, wealth. Regional economic competitiveness results from strategic, long-term public and private decisions that build on and grow our region's economic strengths relative to other regions. Collectively, the region must provide great locations for businesses to succeed—particularly the industries that export products or services beyond the metropolitan area and bring revenue into the region.

### Advancing prosperity involves:

- Fostering the conditions for shared economic vitality by balancing major investments across the region.
- Protecting natural resources that are the foundation of prosperity.
- Planning for and investing in infrastructure, amenities, and quality of life needed for economic competitiveness.
- Encouraging redevelopment and infill development.

Prosperity

Minneapolis and Saint Paul developed as cities because of their favorable locations. Saint Paul was considered the navigable head of the Mississippi River, while Minneapolis found its origins alongside the hydropower provided by Saint Anthony Falls where milling blossomed. James J. Hill's Great Northern Railway brought the agricultural wealth of the entire northwestern United States through Minneapolis and Saint Paul, creating and reinforcing the region as a financial hub.



Though the economy has evolved over the last 150 years, businesses still seek locational advantages, particularly access to a skilled workforce, access to markets, and an overall environment that allows them to compete in the global market. Some businesses rely more heavily on freight and the movement of goods, while knowledge-intensive services concentrate on moving people to jobs and on the quality of life that attracts and retains a highly-skilled workforce.

The Metropolitan Council's regional planning and infrastructure set the stage for our region's economic competitiveness and prosperity. While local economic development authorities and others work directly with businesses, the work of creating and retaining businesses in the region requires coordinated efforts. The Council's contributions to regional economic competitiveness lie in the arena of community development—that is, supporting the infrastructure, amenities, and quality of life that are essential to attracting and retaining businesses and talent. The Council will use its existing role and capacity to plan and invest in community development and consider prosperity and economic competitiveness as a lens through which to evaluate its planning, operations, and investment decisions.

## Fostering the conditions for shared economic vitality by balancing major investments across the region

To advance prosperity across the Twin Cities area, the Council will intentionally consider regional balance—that is, balancing its investments and activities across the region—in its planning, operations, and investment decisions. The Council’s intent is that no part of the region is consistently favored or consistently ignored. The issue of regional balance has multiple dimensions; sometimes the issue is north and east vs. southwest, other times the issue is Suburban Edge vs. Suburban vs. Urban Center. For example, are investments supporting new development at the edge of the region as well as redevelopment in the oldest parts of the region? Are transit investments supporting the needs of the entire region rather than serving only one quadrant? Because development patterns vary across the region, advancing regional balance does not guarantee that all parts of the region will receive the same level or intensity of investments, activity, or attention. Rather, advancing regional balance will be a consideration that helps all parts of the region receive investments that promote prosperity at their stage and level of development.



## Protecting natural resources that are the foundation of prosperity

Location is only one of the Twin Cities region’s attributes that create economic prosperity; our metropolitan area is also endowed with rich natural resources, such as soil, water, and aggregate that help make our region prosperous.

**Prime agricultural soils** support the region’s farm economy and sustain local food production. Agricultural land creates economic opportunity for a variety of residents, ranging from farmers growing crops on century-old family farms to new Americans bringing their farming experience into small-scale local food production serving farmers markets. About a half-million acres in the region, one-quarter of the region’s land, are planned, guided, and zoned to maintain agriculture as the primary long-term land use—mainly in a crescent-shaped area through Dakota, Scott, and Carver Counties. The Council supports preserving agricultural land to protect the agricultural economy in the region, provide economic opportunities for farmers, and promote local food production and processing.

The Council limits urbanization in rural areas to reduce development pressure on farmland and to avoid the premature extension of roads and sewers. Some of the region’s agricultural lands are identified as part of the Council’s Long-term Wastewater Service Area for sewer development only after 2040. This designation gives the Council greater authority to enable long-term agricultural uses and avoid premature development until urban densities are needed to accommodate regional growth. The Council acknowledges that local jurisdictions are best-positioned to address agricultural needs within their communities.

From its role in the early historical development of our region, water is a critical prerequisite of regional growth and prosperity. Access to clean water through both groundwater and the Mississippi River will be a competitive advantage for our metropolitan area during the next century when many other regions around the globe will struggle to provide clean water at a reasonable cost. Illustrating the economic importance of water supply, the City of Minneapolis has calculated that a shutdown of its water supply system would cost businesses over \$65 million a day (2013 analysis).



The Council’s long-term approach to planning water sustainability gives our region a competitive edge—particularly considering that other regions across the country are planning for water supplies in days or weeks, not decades and generations. The Council’s regional vision and approach to managing our regional water resources consider the interrelationships of land use, development patterns, transportation and other regional services, and water resource protection. Managing and using our water resources wisely will sustain the region now and into the future.

**Aggregate**—i.e., gravel and crushed rock—is another resource vital to our area. Regional transportation systems and the building industry need large volumes of aggregate for construction and maintenance. The local availability of aggregate helps reduce construction costs for roads, bridges, and housing. Because aggregate is a limited resource to the construction industry, it is essential to avoid building over aggregate until aggregate has been removed. Analysis that was published in 2000 found that as of 1997, 45% of the region’s aggregate deposits had either been built over by development or already mined.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Minnesota Geological Survey Information Circular 46, “Aggregate Resources Inventory of the Seven-County Metropolitan Area, Minnesota”, 2000.

To protect soils, water, and aggregate, the natural resources that are the foundation of economic prosperity, the Council will:

- Encourage local governments to promote and preserve agricultural land and locate and design new developments in ways that reduce development pressures on this limited resource.
- Maintain and update the *Master Water Supply Plan* to promote a sustainable water supply for the long-term.
- Incorporate water sustainability considerations in all areas of Council policy and actions, including overall development patterns, water management, transportation, housing, and regional parks.
- Require local governments to address water sustainability in their local comprehensive plans.
- Work with regional and local partners to identify subregional and local solutions to water sustainability that balance regional needs and local objectives.
- Implement the statutory requirement that local jurisdictions with aggregate resources within their borders address their goals, intentions, and priorities concerning aggregate in their local comprehensive plans.



## Planning for and investing in infrastructure, amenities, and quality of life needed for economic competitiveness

While Thrive MSP 2040 identifies economic competitiveness as a new emphasis, the Council’s long-range planning and infrastructure investments already advance regional economic prosperity. The benefits of the Council’s regional approach include planning for the efficient movement of people and freight, providing cost-effective and efficient wastewater treatment, and contributing to a quality of life and cost structure that attract and retain businesses and talent. In fact, today the Council’s wholesale wastewater treatment rates are as much as 40% lower than comparable regions. Regional transportation systems provide efficient, effective, and reliable access to materials and regional, national, and international markets. Time spent in transportation—for raw materials, commuting, or finished goods—does not add value to businesses, so strategic locations require access to efficient transportation. The region’s bustling international airport, rail and river freight systems, regional highways, and growing transit system all work together to support our vibrant regional economy.

A thriving [regional aviation system](#) is an economic asset to the region, providing businesses and people with competitive access to the global economy. Airport access is particularly important for our region’s corporate headquarters and industries dependent on travel and shipping high-value goods. Our system of reliever airports provides alternatives for general aviation that are dispersed across the region and creates options to using the Minneapolis-Saint Paul International Airport, the region’s only commercial service airport. The Council reviews major capital projects of the Metropolitan Airports Commission and supports investment in airport facilities to keep pace with market needs and maintain the region’s economic vitality.



Our region has a competitive advantage over many regions in its [multimodal freight system](#). With four Class I railroads (large railroads with a nationwide or continental network) and several short-line railroads, barge shipping on the Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers, and an extensive highway system anchored by two interstate highways, the freight movement system ensures the accessibility of the region to markets and raw materials. In addition to the aviation system described in the previous paragraph, the region's freight system has four components:

- Trucks, the workhorses of the local freight system, carry 75% of all freight in the region. They are the most flexible mode of the system but need nearby highway access, appropriate development patterns, and predictable mobility to work efficiently.
- Freight rail is used for longer-distance (500 miles or more) trips, moving materials, liquids, commodities or containerized goods, often in specialized cars, at low cost and with low carbon impact. Industries that ship these bulk products require direct access to freight rail.
- Barges on the Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers move bulk commodities such as aggregate, fertilizer, or grain long distances at very low cost and with low carbon impact. Barge traffic needs continued access to ports to succeed.
- The final component of the freight system is the intermodal transfer facilities where freight can be moved between trucks, trains, and barges. In addition to river ports, the region has two well-used major intermodal terminals—the BNSF Midway Hub in Saint Paul and the CP Shoreham Yard in Northeast Minneapolis—that serve the transition from rail to truck. In recent years, the rise of containerized shipping has made the transfer facilities even more critical to our freight system's efficiency. These transfer facilities have great value to regional economic competitiveness and should be recognized and protected.

This interconnected freight system contributes to economic competitiveness by offering optimal shipping options for a variety of industries.

[Industrial land](#) provides locations for export industries and good-paying jobs; the Council discourages redevelopment of industrial land in strategically important locations along rivers and railroads in the region into other uses. Local government plans should also consider the potential conflicts and impacts resulting from residential communities, commercial districts, and parklands encroaching upon rather than coexisting alongside existing industrial land uses.



Some locations possess unique characteristics or assets that are significant to the regional economy—for example, airports, intermodal freight terminals, barge terminals, highways, freight railroads, and major manufacturers. Many of these locations serve region-wide needs despite a cost to the neighboring area—whether noise, nuisance, or a loss of tax base. The Council will work with local communities to monitor and manage these land use conflicts and recommend solutions that balance the region’s overall needs with local needs.

The region’s highway investments are part of a coordinated, interconnected, and multimodal regional transportation network that safely, reliably, and affordably connects people and freight with destinations in the region and beyond. In fact, the vast majority of the region’s freight moves by truck. The Council works with the Minnesota Department of Transportation, counties, and local units of government to preserve and improve these roadways. To make the regional highway system more efficient, the Council and the Minnesota Department of Transportation are building managed lanes—MnPASS lanes—which provide a congestion-free alternative for transit users, carpools, and those willing to pay. This market-based solution allows auto drivers and small trucks to price the value of their time spent in congestion and pay for a faster alternative. Independent evaluation of local MnPASS lanes has found that people of all income levels use and support them, especially to increase the reliability of their travel times for inflexible work schedules. These managed lanes also create more capacity for larger trucks in the general highway lanes during peak traffic periods.

Employers locate worksites to maximize their accessibility and proximity to the workforce they need. Our region competes with other regions across the world to attract the talented young workers who are necessary to meet the needs of the region’s growing economy and replace retiring baby boomers. To compete successfully for this generation, our region must provide the housing, transit, transportation, and quality of life amenities that will continue to attract the talent needed by employers in our region—including an exceptionally high concentration of corporate headquarters and business service firms. The region’s transportation system—including highways, transit, the emerging bicycle network, and pedestrian amenities—provides our residents options for commuting to their workplaces and enhances our quality of life. Accessibility to transit benefits employers by reducing their costs to provide parking, decreasing employee transportation costs, and expanding their pool of potential employees to include those who do not drive.



To plan for and invest in the infrastructure, amenities, and quality of life the region needs to be economically competitive, the Council will:

- Contribute to a quality of life and cost of living that attract and retain a talented workforce.
- Continue to provide cost-effective and efficient wastewater treatment at wholesale rates that are as much as 40% lower today than in comparable regions.
- Pursue additional funding for the multimodal transportation system including highways, transit (both transitways and bus capital investment and operations), local roads, and the bicycle and pedestrian systems.
- Collaborate with the Counties Transit Improvement Board, a major transit funder, to create a regional transitway network.
- Plan for the efficient and multimodal movement of freight globally, nationally, and regionally to support the region's industries.
- Focus expansion of bus service and transitway investment to and within existing and emerging high-density Job Concentrations, high-density activity centers (such as shopping and educational institutions), and dense residential areas.
- Construct and support park-and-rides to provide access to transit in less dense residential areas.
- Collaborate with [GREATER MSP](#) and other partners in providing information resources and technical assistance to help local communities benefit from the region's economic development strategy.
- Plan for adequate capacity at Minneapolis-Saint Paul International Airport and maintain, improve, and preserve our system of reliever airports.
- Use its authority and provide technical assistance to protect and preserve compatible land uses around resources such as airports, railroads, and industrial land.
- Conduct a metrowide inventory and analysis of industrial land to assess the supply of and demand for industrial land with freight access.
- Encourage the expansion of industrial land and supportive infrastructure as needed to fulfill demand for industrial land with freight access.
- Investigate and assess cost-effective options for regional and subregional water supply infrastructure in collaboration with local, regional, and state partners.
- Encourage workforce housing that is affordable to a variety of income levels across the region.

## Encouraging redevelopment and infill

Development on undeveloped or agricultural land—greenfield development—traditionally costs developers or builders less because the costs of demolition or pollution remediation are minimal. However, development on greenfields often has higher long-term public costs because it requires extending regional infrastructure to new areas. On the other hand, infill development and redevelopment require less new regional infrastructure but can cost more for the developer up front, both in the direct costs of demolition and pollution remediation as well as the increased complexity of integrating projects into existing neighborhoods. Over the long-term, proportionately more infill development and redevelopment compared to greenfield development will result in a denser, more compact region, minimizing the loss of agricultural land, reducing travel distances, and enhancing the ability of the region to support transit. Redevelopment projects may require direct public subsidy or indirect support through specific infrastructure investments. Because healthy, thriving regions need both a strong periphery and a strong core, the Council will work to encourage redevelopment and infill development across the region by:

- Compiling locally identified priority sites for development and redevelopment, as included in local comprehensive plans, into a regional inventory of development priorities.
- Analyzing the market readiness of these sites and working with local and regional partners to develop investment and redevelopment strategies customized to the needs of different types of strong and weak markets, including Areas of Concentrated Poverty and Racially Concentrated Areas of Poverty.
- Working with cities and other regional partners to explore the need for new and additional tools to support and finance redevelopment.
- Using its role and authorities to streamline redevelopment processes and help equalize the playing field—including differences in cost—between redevelopment, infill development, and greenfield development sites.



To leverage the full power of our region's economic assets, we must help all of the region's residents access opportunity and participate in regional economic competitiveness.





# Equity ●

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Equity connects all residents to opportunity and creates viable housing, transportation, and recreation options for people of all races, ethnicities, incomes, and abilities so that all communities share the opportunities and challenges of growth and change. For our region to reach its full economic potential, all of our residents must be able to access opportunity. Our region is stronger when all people live in communities that provide them access to opportunities for success, prosperity, and quality of life.

## Promoting equity means:

- Using our influence and investments to build a more equitable region.
- Creating real choices in where we live, how we travel, and where we recreate for all residents, across race, ethnicity, economic means, and ability.
- Investing in a mix of housing affordability along the region's transit corridors.
- Engaging a full cross-section of the community in decision-making.

Equity

Over the next three decades, the Twin Cities region will become more racially and ethnically diverse. In 2010, 24% of our region’s population was people of color; by 2040, 40% of our region’s residents are expected to be people of color. The share of people of color increases among younger age groups; 54% of residents under age 18 will be people of color in 2040. This rich and growing racial and ethnic diversity should be an asset to our continued economic vitality. However, our region has some of the largest disparities by race and ethnicity of any large metropolitan area in the nation, and the region will not be able to realize its full economic potential if these disparities persist:

- In the Minneapolis-Saint Paul-Bloomington metropolitan area, 25.7% of all people of color are poor, compared with 6.4% of white non-Latino people.<sup>3</sup> This is the largest such disparity among the 25 largest metropolitan areas. The poverty rate for African Americans is 5.7 times greater than the poverty rate for white, non-Latino people—by far the largest such disparity among the 25 largest metropolitan areas.
- The per capita personal income for black and African American people (\$15,336) is just 40% of the per capita personal income for white, non-Latino people (\$37,943).
- The percentage of adults of color who lack a high school diploma is nearly six times that of white, non-Latino adults.
- The unemployment rate for people of color is more than twice that of white, non-Latino persons. The unemployment rate for blacks and African Americans is 2.9 times the unemployment rate for white, non-Latino people—the biggest such disparity among the 25 largest metropolitan areas.
- The homeownership rate among households of color is 37%, half of the comparable rate among white, non-Latino households. Just 22% of black or African American households own their homes.

For more information about the historical context of these disparities, see [Choice, Place and Opportunity: An Equity Assessment of the Twin Cities](#).

<sup>3</sup> Data from the 2012 American Community Survey. To enable comparisons with other regions, numbers describe the 13-county Minneapolis-Saint Paul-Bloomington metropolitan statistical area.

## Disparities by Race and Ethnicity in the Twin Cities, 2012

Measure	White, non-Latino	Persons of color	Rank of disparity among 25 largest metro areas
Percentage of population age 25+ with a high school diploma	96.3%	78.3%	3
Percentage of civilian working-age population that is employed	79.4%	64.8%	1
Percentage above poverty threshold	93.6%	74.3%	1
Per capita income	\$37,943	\$18,078	4
Percentage of householders who own their homes	75.8%	37.0%	1

These disparities are growing at the same time the share of our region's population of color is growing. Eliminating these disparities and accessing the full potential of our region's residents of color could have dramatic benefits. If everyone in the Twin Cities in 2040 enjoyed the same socioeconomic profile as white non-Latino people do today, the social and economic impact would be significant. Compared to the disparities continuing unabated, there would be:

- 171,000 more people with a high school diploma
- 124,000 more people with jobs
- 274,000 fewer people in poverty
- \$31.8 billion in additional income
- 186,000 more homeowners<sup>4</sup>

The combined impact of increased employment, income, and homeownership would go far to close today's disparities in wealth by race and ethnicity. Nearly all of our region's net workforce growth over the next three decades will come from residents of color. In short, all residents of the Twin Cities region need access to opportunity if the region is to have a healthy and prosperous future.

<sup>4</sup> These figures are Metropolitan Council staff calculations based on 2007-2011 American Community Survey data for the seven-county Twin Cities region and the Metropolitan Council's Revised Regional Forecast to 2040 (February 2014).

## Using our influence and investments to build a more equitable region

The Metropolitan Council will use equity as a lens to evaluate its operations, planning, and investments, and explore its authority to use its resources and roles to mitigate the place-based dimension of disparities by race, ethnicity, income, and ability.

To meet the expectations of the federal Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant, the Council developed [Choice, Place and Opportunity: An Equity Assessment of the Twin Cities Region](#). This assessment examined the historical and current geography of race, poverty, and opportunity in the region. The Council is asking itself and its partners whether and how public investments can effectively address a legacy of private disinvestment in select neighborhoods.

This process also introduced a focus on Racially Concentrated Areas of Poverty, defined for our region as census tracts where at least half of the residents are people of color and at least 40% of the residents live below 185% of the federal poverty line.<sup>5</sup> By 2010, nearly one in ten of our region’s residents lived in Racially Concentrated Areas of Poverty. Because Areas of Concentrated Poverty and Racially Concentrated Areas of Poverty can both limit the economic mobility of their residents and discourage private investment, our region cannot afford to allow these areas to either persist or grow.

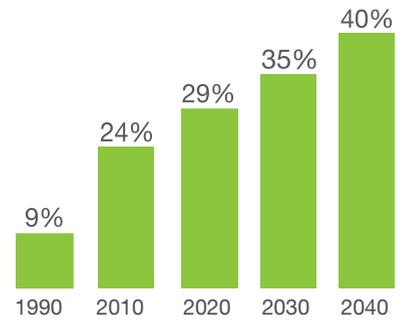
<sup>5</sup> \$42,589 in annual income for a four-person household in 2011.



### Homeownership

49%

HOUSEHOLDS OF COLOR are half as likely to own their home as white non-Latino households



The share of people of color in the region’s population is growing.

The Council will:

- Work to mitigate Areas of Concentrated Poverty and Racially Concentrated Areas of Poverty by better connecting their residents to opportunity and catalyzing neighborhood revitalization.
- Work with communities to create more income-diverse neighborhoods, including strategically targeted subsidies to develop market-rate housing in areas that lack market-rate options.
- Use Livable Communities Act resources to catalyze private investment in Areas of Concentrated Poverty and Racially Concentrated Areas of Poverty.
- Actively partner in neighborhood revitalization efforts such as Penn Avenue Community Works in North Minneapolis.
- Conduct a regional inventory of industrial land that considers the location of industrial land relative to the potential workforce eager to access nearby higher-wage job opportunities.
- Work with our partners and stakeholders to identify indicators used to measure how projects, supported with Council resources, advance equity, including helping residents of Areas of Concentrated Poverty and Racially Concentrated Areas of Poverty, lower-income households, or people with disabilities.

For our region to thrive, all parts of our region must prosper. By using public resources to catalyze investment in areas that have seen chronic private disinvestment—specifically including Areas of Concentrated Poverty and Racially Concentrated Areas of Poverty—the Council will seek to help the region grow and prosper more equitably.

Because the challenges of racial and economic equity require aligning efforts across multiple entities, the Council will convene multiple partners, including cities, counties, school districts, nonprofits, and philanthropy, to develop shared plans and investment strategies to address the issues of Areas of Concentrated Poverty and Racially Concentrated Areas of Poverty. The Council will play a leadership role in this strategy, bringing data to the table and co-convening discussions with partner institutions to address both effects and underlying causes. Based on these conversations, the Council may explore funding set-asides or special investment resources to help create opportunities in Areas of Concentrated Poverty and Racially Concentrated Areas of Poverty.



## Creating real choices in where we live, how we travel, and where we recreate for all residents, across race, ethnicity, economic means, and ability

To advance racial and economic equity across the metropolitan area, the Council will work to create and protect viable housing, transportation, and recreation options for the region’s residents, regardless of race, ethnicity, income, and ability. While different people will make different choices reflecting their own needs and preferences, the Council’s priority will be expanding real choices for housing, transportation, and recreation.



The region needs to offer housing options that give people in all life stages and of all economic means viable choices for safe, stable, and affordable homes. Individual housing preferences vary as each household considers factors such as access to desirable schools, proximity to jobs, the availability of transit, and nearby community amenities, including cultural or religious institutions. The Council’s goal is to expand housing options for all residents, whatever their choices may be. To help more households have real housing choices, the Council will:

- Use its resources, including investments in transit, infrastructure, and redevelopment, to help create and preserve mixed-income neighborhoods and housing choices across the region.
- Encourage preserving existing housing where rehabilitation is a cost-effective strategy to maintaining housing affordability.
- Invest in and encourage new affordable housing in higher-income areas of the region, particularly in areas that are well-connected to jobs, opportunity, and transit.
- Ensure that local comprehensive plans guide an adequate supply of land to meet each jurisdiction’s fair share of housing for low- and moderate-income households.
- Develop and provide tools, including competitive rent limits in higher-cost communities, to enable Housing Choice Voucher holders to choose the location that best meets their needs.
- Encourage increased resources for affordable housing at the federal, state, regional, and local levels to help close the gap between the region’s affordable housing need and the supply.
- Support efforts to expand the supply of affordable housing that is accessible to people with disabilities.
- Work with housing partners and local governments to expand the supply of affordable housing available at all income levels, including extremely low-income households earning less than 30% of the area median income (that is, \$24,850 for a family of four in 2014).
- Promote regional and local efforts to streamline the process and reduce the costs of developing housing, including affordable housing.
- Support research and other activities related to fair housing, residential lending, and real estate practices to determine if discriminatory practices are occurring and limiting housing choices.

Transportation choices are as important to lower-income households as housing choices and may be more important for people with disabilities. The Council will continue to strengthen bus and transitway connections between lower-income residents and opportunities such as jobs and education. To expand the transportation choices available to all households, including in some neighborhoods the choice to live without a car, the Council will:

- Include a measure of households who do not own private automobiles as one of the elements driving the Council's Transit Market Areas and defining the level of bus service neighborhoods expect to receive.
- Conduct Title VI service equity analyses—a federally prescribed process—to ensure that major changes in transit service do not lead to disparate impacts on low-income residents and communities of color.
- Complete environmental justice analyses that ensure no disproportionately high and adverse impacts of transportation projects to the region's people of color and low-income populations.
- Prioritize transportation investments that connect lower-income areas to job opportunities
- Provide accessible transit vehicles and facilities and offer Metro Mobility service to supplement regular-route transit service to create transportation choices for people with disabilities.
- Engage neighborhood residents in transit planning to understand how to most effectively use transit service and investments to promote access to opportunity.

Options for recreation in public open space contribute to vibrant communities and active living and thereby create positive health and well-being outcomes. While the Council encourages expanded recreational options by all partners, the Council's purview focuses on the Regional Parks System. To help more residents have real recreation choices, the Council will:

- Strengthen equitable usage of regional parks and trails by all our region's residents, such as across race, ethnicity, income, and ability.



### Investing in a mix of housing affordability along the region’s transit corridors

As our region makes significant investments in transit, particularly transitways, we must also ensure that the inevitable changes in neighborhoods along transit do not displace existing low-income residents. The increased accessibility that transit investments provide can lead to rising housing costs, making it more important to take proactive steps to preserve housing affordability and protect housing options for existing low-income residents. To promote a mix of housing affordability along the region’s transit corridors, the Council will:

- Align its resources and work with other partners to help preserve a mix of housing affordability along the region’s transit routes and corridors to help low-income households benefit from transit investments.
- Promote transit-oriented development that ensures a mix of housing affordability in transit station areas.

### Engaging a full cross-section of the community in decision-making

To move toward equity, our region needs the full range of voices at the table so all affected parties understand the issues, explore alternative approaches, and proceed with action. This will require new approaches for the Council. Beyond convening regional stakeholders, the Council is strengthening its approach to outreach, public participation, and community engagement by developing a Council-wide Public Engagement Plan. In the development of this engagement plan, the Council will:



- Define consistent expectations of how the Council will engage with the region’s residents and constituencies.
- Evaluate what types of policy, planning, and operational decisions need what levels of engagement, recognizing that not all decisions need and merit the same intensity of engagement.
- Collaborate and consult with members of the community, especially historically under-represented populations.
- Focus on developing lasting relationships with the region’s residents and constituencies.
- Highlight best practices for engagement in our region.
- Work toward making decisions with people, not for people.



We're committed to addressing racial and economic disparities so that all residents can live in a healthy, vibrant, and livable region.



# Livability ●

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Livability focuses on the quality of our residents' lives and experiences in our region, and how places and infrastructure create and enhance the quality of life that makes our region a great place to live. With abundant and beautiful open space, an active arts community, a range of housing options, and a reasonable cost of living, the Twin Cities region is widely recognized for its high quality of life.

The Metropolitan Council's focus on livability is on creating and renewing vibrant places and underlying infrastructure, investing in regional parks and affordable housing, and collaborating with partners to achieve the full range of possibilities that help our region thrive. Livability adds value to our region by helping to retain and attract a talented workforce, increasing living choices, building community identity, highlighting the unique qualities of local places, and supporting individual decisions that reinforce those qualities. The Council is committed to increasing livability for people of all ages, races, ethnicities, incomes, national origins, and abilities in the region through its authorities, its investments in infrastructure, and its collaboration with others to sustain and increase a high quality of life.

## Enhancing livability means:

- Increasing access to nature and outdoor recreation through regional parks and trails.
- Providing housing and transportation choices for a range of demographic characteristics and economic means.
- Supporting bicycle facilities to promote bicycling for transportation, recreation, and healthy lifestyles.
- Aligning resources to support transit-oriented development and walkable places.
- Promoting healthy communities and active living through land use, planning, and investments.

# Livability

Livability helps attract and retain the people and businesses that our region needs to thrive and compete economically. People are increasingly choosing where they want to live—especially in urban areas that offer attractive amenities and lifestyles—and then looking for jobs there. Young, creative professionals today are highly mobile and can live anywhere they want. They are choosing high-amenity places that have a diverse population, a rich arts and entertainment culture, natural beauty, abundant recreation, and sufficient walkability and transit systems that allow them to travel without a car.

Attracting younger talent through high-quality communities is also an investment in the future market for our housing stock. Many young urbanites look for more space as they have children and their lifestyle preferences change. As existing residents age out of their homes, these younger residents will be ready to move in. Businesses also place a high value on livability. Whether a large company seeking a location for an office or a talented entrepreneur looking to grow an innovative business, decision-makers want to know their employees can get to work and are happy living here.

Every community can strive for better livability, but the needs and challenges for infrastructure and place-making vary widely by location. A neighborhood in the urban core may need wider sidewalks, shared open spaces, careful building detailing, and a mix of activities to be livable. A suburban neighborhood may need increased housing options and more bike trails to access parks and transit stops. A rural center may need a traffic-calmed main street that allows pedestrians to cross more safely or renovated downtown buildings to catalyze reinvestment.

Livability for all areas also requires the network of businesses—whether an ethnic restaurant owned by new immigrants or the small-town bar owned by the same family for generations—that makes our communities unique, both supporting local residents and attracting visitors from across the world. Each jurisdiction has a unique combination of natural landscape, built environment, and local culture; communities that recognize and value their particular character, needs, and opportunities can more effectively invest in their future.

LIVABILITY



## Increasing access to nature and outdoor recreation through regional parks and trails

Our regional parks are essential in keeping our region at the top of national livability rankings. The Twin Cities area's 59 regional parks, park reserves, and special recreation features plus over 300 miles of regional trails showcase the unique landscapes of the region and provide year-round recreation. Our residents have consistently singled out the region's parks, trails, and natural environment as the most attractive feature of the region.<sup>6</sup> Drawing nearly 46 million annual visits in 2012, the Regional Parks System provides access to natural space that contributes to physical and emotional well-being. Many of our region's most well-known and iconic sites—the Minneapolis Chain of Lakes, Como Zoo and Conservatory, Lebanon Hills Regional Park, Bunker Hills Regional Park, Elm Creek Park Reserve, and Lake Elmo Park Reserve—are part of the Regional Parks System. Regional parks, along with local, state and national parks, also provide valuable co-benefits that contribute to all of the regional outcomes, including transportation, carbon capture, heat island mitigation, water quality and recharge, active living and wellness, and many others. The Council will collaborate with the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission, regional park agencies, and state partners to:

- Expand the Regional Parks System to conserve, maintain, and connect natural resources identified as being of high quality or having regional importance, as identified in the *2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan*.
- Provide a comprehensive regional park and trail system that preserves high-quality natural resources, increases climate resiliency, fosters healthy outcomes, connects communities, and enhances quality of life in the region.
- Promote expanded multimodal access to regional parks, regional trails, and the transit network, where appropriate.
- Strengthen equitable usage of regional parks and trails by all our region's residents, such as across age, race, ethnicity, income, national origin, and ability.

<sup>6</sup> For more information, see the [Metro Residents Survey](#).

### Providing housing and transportation choices for a range of demographic characteristics and economic means

Over time, our region has grown into a variety of communities and neighborhoods with a wide range of housing. Single-family homes comprise 58% of our region’s current housing stock. Demand for this housing stock is projected to continue, but the segments of our population that are growing will consist of households that may increasingly prefer alternative forms of neighborhoods. Recent trends support this shift. Since 2000, only 43% of our region’s building permits have been for single-family detached homes; in both 2012 and 2013, the region issued more building permits for multifamily units than for all housing units in 2008, 2009, 2010 or 2011. The livability challenge around these shifts is to create communities that offer satisfying experiences and meet the daily needs for living, shopping, working, and recreation for each group, not simply housing developments that offer a place to own or rent.



As residents age, their needs, preferences, and travel behavior shift; some communities may be poorly designed to accommodate their residents’ future needs. Growing cohorts of residents, including international immigrants and young professionals living alone, may need housing and transportation choices beyond what our region now offers. Going forward, each jurisdiction should examine whether it offers satisfying living options to attract and maintain a competitive workforce and meets the needs of current residents as they age.



Growing demographic groups that could define new housing needs include:

- Seniors—the “Silver Tsunami” of those age 65 and older—will be the fastest growing segment of our population, doubling in absolute numbers by 2030 and reaching one in five of our region’s residents by 2040. As people age, their housing preferences tend to change. Some seniors choose to move to a downtown condo. Other seniors want to age in place, close to their places of worship, friends, or family members (especially the grandchildren). Across these locational preferences, most seniors share common interests in less household maintenance, one-level or accessible living, and easy access to nearby goods and services, especially health care. Are there adequate housing choices, including age-integrated options, available for seniors to stay active, conveniently access goods and services, and/or be near friends and family?
- The Millennial generation, born in the 1980s and 1990s, is already the largest generation demographically and seems to have different lifestyle preferences. Millennials tend to favor urban amenities, access to transit and bicycling options, and more dense and active neighborhoods rather than the auto-oriented subdivisions of their youth. Between stagnant entry-level wages, higher student loan debt, and delayed marriage and child-rearing, Millennials are moving into homeownership at later ages than previous generations. Critical to the region’s future prosperity, will we have places that retain and attract these young individuals and households? If their living preferences continue to diverge from their parents’ generation’s, will our region’s communities continue to offer them satisfying living situations, particularly as they start to have children?
- New Americans move to our region from across the globe, bringing with them unique cultural histories that build the richness of our region. Some of these new Americans also bring preferences for more multigenerational living than our current housing stock supports. As these residents come to the region, will they find places that facilitate their settlement, provide affordability, community and employment, and offer opportunities to prosper?

To support the livability of our region for our changing demographics, the Council will:

- Continue to provide regional wastewater treatment services at rates that today are among the lowest in the country.
- Encourage and invest in a wide variety of housing options throughout the region to serve the increasingly diverse population, including viable housing choices for low- and moderate-income households and multigenerational households.
- Invest in bus service and transitways to expand the spectrum of transportation options, particularly to connect workers to jobs and opportunities throughout the region.
- Construct and support park-and-rides to expand access to transit as an alternative to driving in less dense residential areas.
- Support and encourage Complete Streets approaches to enhance transportation choices (in other words, highways, streets and roads designed to consider the needs of pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users and vehicles, motorists, and commercial and emergency vehicles, and to serve all ages and abilities. For more information about Complete Streets, see Minn. Stat. 174.75 and the Minnesota Department of Transportation’s Complete Streets policy.).
- Promote the preservation of existing housing, especially affordable housing, to cost-effectively maintain affordability and preserve the unique historical characteristics of the region’s housing stock.

## Supporting bicycle and pedestrian facilities to promote bicycling for transportation, recreation, and healthy lifestyles

Over the last 10 years, bicycling as a mode of transportation has increased as a result of growing interest in physically active lifestyles, concern about climate change, improved connections to transit, and the preferences of the Millennial generation. Our region has earned a national reputation for bike-friendliness, in large part due to the infrastructure investments made by local governments. Data from the 2010 Travel Behavior Inventory show that bicycling’s share of work commute trips has grown by 70% over the past decade and now represents one in 11 work commutes in the central cities. Facilities for walking—which makes up 6% of all trips—are also important for transit ridership, healthy active lifestyles, and safety. The Council will collaborate with local communities, the Minnesota Department of Transportation, the Transportation Advisory Board, nonprofit organizations, and other partners to connect and improve bicycle and pedestrian facilities. Specifically, the Council will:



- Focus its bicycle and pedestrian efforts on regional-scale issues and coordination among jurisdictions in the region, including:
  - Aggregating local bike plans into a shared regional format.
  - Identifying regionally important bicycle corridors in the *2040 Transportation Policy Plan*.
  - Reducing gaps and barriers and improving links across jurisdictional borders.
- Work with its partners, including the Minnesota Department of Transportation, the Transportation Advisory Board and local jurisdictions, to expand the region’s bicycle and pedestrian system and increase these modes’ share of regional trips over the coming decades by:
  - Encouraging local jurisdictions to recognize planning and building of bicycle and pedestrian facilities as a component of new development.
  - Encouraging adoption of Complete Streets solutions by local communities where appropriate.
  - Encouraging local communities to include bicycle plans and pedestrian plans in their comprehensive plans.
- Work with partners to plan, construct, and maintain bicycle and pedestrian connections to regional systems (such as transit stations, highways, or regional parks).

## Aligning resources to support transit-oriented development and walkable places

Transit-oriented development (TOD) is walkable, moderate- to high-density development served by frequent transit that can include a mix of housing, retail, and employment choices designed to allow people to live and work with less or no dependence on a personal car. To promote these vibrant, mixed-income places, the Council will:

- Support local efforts and lead regional efforts to foster transit-oriented development through the Council’s Office of Transit-Oriented Development, which will lead Council efforts to:
  - Prioritize transit-oriented development in the planning, engineering, and operation of transit and in the development of Council-owned land and facilities.
  - Pursue private sector and local government partnerships to accelerate development and land acquisition for transit-oriented development.
  - Develop and share technical resources and education materials to improve capacity in the region for transit-oriented development.
  - Provide clear policy guidance to local partners concerning the types of plans and local controls that will be needed to effectively implement transit-oriented development.
  - Collaborate with partners, including local governments and private sector stakeholders, in transit-oriented development activities including policy development, specific Council-led development projects, site-specific transit-oriented development resources and opportunities, and station area planning to enable transit-oriented development.
- Provide Livable Communities Act grants to local government to support transit-oriented development projects.
- Explore the expanded use of local planning assistance grants and loans for local station area planning efforts in support of transit-oriented development.
- Encourage transit-friendly development patterns, including increased density and concentration of uses, to expand walkability and lay the groundwork for future transit-readiness.



## Promoting healthy communities and active living through land use, planning, and investments

Land use and planning decisions can promote active living and healthy communities. Populations living in walkable places are more active and therefore healthier than populations living in car-dependent areas. Considering the immense costs of obesity and sedentary lifestyles to our health care system, promoting active living through land use decisions provides a key opportunity to improve livability, equity, and our region’s health outcomes.

Land use decisions can create opportunities for people to walk or bike to their destinations rather than drive door-to-door, provide active outdoor recreational options, and offer access to open space. Achieving healthy communities also requires efforts by many sectors beyond land use decisions. Planning offers opportunities to coordinate actions and investments across multiple sectors. To promote healthy communities and active living through land use, planning, and public investments, the Council will work with its partners to:

- Incorporate active living considerations when evaluating competitive funding proposals, infrastructure investments, and operations.
- Encourage local communities to conserve, protect, and interconnect the full range of local open spaces to provide seamless active living experiences across systems, including local parks, green corridors, and boulevards.
- Promote walkable neighborhoods, pedestrian-oriented town centers, and compact development patterns to expand walkability.
- Expand the region’s bicycle infrastructure.
- Encourage communities to adopt active living strategies across sectors and pursue partnerships to improve health outcomes.
- Recognize opportunities for urban agriculture and small-scale local food production.
- Encourage policies and investments that improve access to safe and healthy food.



OLIVER

regional  
bar & food

People are increasingly choosing to live in urban areas that offer attractive amenities and lifestyles.



## Sustainability ●

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“Our greatest responsibility is to be good ancestors,” Dr. Jonas Salk once said. And that responsibility calls us to live and act sustainably. Sustainability means protecting our regional vitality for generations to come by preserving our capacity to maintain and support our region’s well-being and productivity over the long term. The region’s investments in prosperity, equity, and livability will fall short over the long term if the region exhausts its resources without investing in the future.

### Planning for sustainability means:

- Promoting the wise use of water through expanding water conservation and reuse, increasing groundwater recharge, and optimizing surface water and groundwater use.
- Providing leadership, information, and technical assistance to support local governments’ consideration of climate change mitigation, adaptation, and resilience.
- Operating the region’s wastewater treatment and transit systems sustainably.

Sustainability

### Promoting the wise use of water

The Twin Cities metropolitan area is endowed with a relative abundance of high-quality ground and surface water. Three major rivers, vast underground aquifers, and over 900 lakes make us the envy of urban areas the world over. Aside from the beauty and recreational value of the region’s lakes and rivers, water is necessary to sustain our residents and our economic prosperity. The area’s plentiful water supplies and the proximity of navigable rivers sustained indigenous communities and supported the development of the region’s growing cities. The Mississippi River and the region’s prolific aquifers continue to provide residents with a reliable water supply. Our rivers are natural highways that serve commerce. Our region’s lakes, rivers, and streams nurture wildlife and offer people a variety of recreational opportunities.

*In parts of the region, groundwater levels are declining.*

Yet our water supplies are not limitless. Population growth, development, localized water shortages, contamination, drought and the impact of groundwater withdrawal on surface waters, are affecting our future water supply. Increasing reliance on groundwater as our main source of drinking water has become a significant issue. In parts of the region, groundwater levels are declining. In some cases, it is affecting, or has the potential to affect, lake and wetland levels.

A pressing concern is the impact that current groundwater use and future development might have on the reliability of groundwater as a municipal water source.

In 2010, 70% of our region’s drinking water came from groundwater, with the remainder coming from surface water sources. Groundwater analysis indicates that our aquifers are showing signs of depletion—water levels in some locations have declined by 40 feet in the last 40 years—which in turn has begun to have impacts on our lakes and wetlands in the region. Forecasts indicate that the region will add over 800,000 residents over the lifetime of this plan. Continuing current practices of using groundwater as a primary drinking water source will lead to continued depletion of groundwater supplies across the region. Conservation measures alone are inadequate to protect the region’s water supply. Rather, the region needs to restore balance among water sources, maintain and enhance groundwater recharge, and expand the use of conservation measures. To achieve our long-term vision of the region’s prosperity and livability, our region’s water resources must be sustainable, supported by a regional strategy that balances growth and protection to improve and maintain the quality and quantity of our water in our lakes, rivers, streams, wetlands, and aquifers.

The Minnesota State Legislature uses the following definition of water sustainability:

*“Water is sustainable when the use does not harm ecosystems, degrade water quality or compromise the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”*

The Metropolitan Council is committed to collaborating with its partners to promote the long-term sustainability of the region’s water resources and water supply. This regional strategy will balance growth and protection to improve and maintain the quality and quantity of our lakes, rivers, streams, wetlands, and groundwater supplies. The Council will work with state, local, and regional partners to provide for sustainable water resources through effective planning and management of water supply, surface water, and wastewater. To promote adequate and high-quality groundwater and surface water supplies, the Council will:



- Promote water sustainability in communities through the *2040 Water Resources Policy Plan* and the *Master Water Supply Plan*, and through the review of local water supply plans, surface water management plans, comprehensive plans, and comprehensive sewer plans.
- Promote the wise use of water through optimizing surface water and groundwater use, conservation, reuse, aquifer recharge, and other practices.
- Collaborate with partners, including providing technical assistance to local governments about wastewater, water supply, and surface water management.
- Address the reliability, resiliency, security, and cost-effectiveness of the region’s water supplies.
- Incorporate water sustainability considerations in all areas of Council policy and actions, including overall development patterns, water management, transportation, housing, and regional parks.
- Identify subregional and local water sustainability solutions that balance regional needs and local objectives.

The Council’s *2040 Water Resources Policy Plan* will advance water sustainability through specific policies for water supply, surface water management, and wastewater.

## Providing leadership to support climate change mitigation, adaptation, and resilience

Over the long term, climate change will be one of the greatest threats to our region’s ongoing prosperity and livability. Climate change threatens our continued orderly and economical development. Our region is already seeing rising temperatures and increased severe weather events. Climate change looms large as an issue with the potential to adversely affect the region in the absence of intentional and proactive planning. Responding to climate change takes three approaches: mitigation, adaptation, and resilience. Mitigation



strategies focus on minimizing contributions to climate change—for example, reducing energy use that leads to greenhouse gas emissions. Adaptation strategies focus on how to change policies and practices to adjust to the effects of climate change. Resilience strategies recognize the difficulty of predicting what the impacts of climate change will be and emphasize increasing our flexibility to survive and thrive regardless of how climate change develops.

The nation has seen the risks and costs of not preparing for significant climatic events through the experiences of Duluth after its summer 2012 flooding, New York City after Superstorm Sandy, and, most recently, Colorado after the September 2013 rains. Hitting the most densely developed parts of the nation, Superstorm Sandy may cost the federal government \$60 billion. The total cost to the city of Duluth in infrastructure repair and replacement ran to \$80 million, or \$2,000 for each city household. While each event individually was impossible to predict, the growing frequency and large-scale impact of severe weather events demonstrate the necessity of planning for resilience.



The Council is committed to building a resilient region that minimizes its adverse contributions to climate and air quality and is prepared for the challenges and opportunities of a changing climate. Recognizing the importance of climate change mitigation, adaptation, and resilience, the Council will use climate impacts as a lens through which to examine all of its work. The Council will look for opportunities to use both its operational and planning authorities to plan for and respond to the effects of climate change, both challenges and opportunities. In addition to climate change, regional air quality factors (criteria pollutants) threaten both the quality of life and our economy as we may face severe additional regulations from the federal government.

The Council recognizes the State of Minnesota's goals for greenhouse gas reduction adopted in 2007's Next Generation Energy Act. By tracking regional greenhouse gas emissions, we will identify opportunities to reduce emissions in the region. Broadly, the Council's work supports the region's collective efforts to minimize greenhouse gas emissions by:



- Providing and promoting alternatives to single-occupant vehicle travel, including transit, carpooling, bicycling, and walking.
- Promoting compact, pedestrian-friendly development patterns and funding their development through the Livable Communities Act funds.
- Protecting industrial land with access to ports and rail to encourage carbon-efficient means of transporting freight.
- Supporting the Regional Parks System to protect open spaces and vegetative cover that mitigate the impact of the urban heat island and improve local wind circulation.
- Promoting more efficient water use and water conservation, which reduces the amount of energy used to pump and treat water, often one of a community's highest energy requirements.
- Protecting agricultural land for local food production and processing to reduce distance-to-market travel emissions.

The Council intends to expand its role supporting local governments in climate change planning to assist their efforts toward mitigation, adaptation, and resilience. The Council will:

- Expand the information and technical assistance it provides to local governments to support regional and local climate change planning.
- Work with partners to collaboratively identify and examine the feasibility of energy improvement opportunities, and pursue group purchasing to facilitate energy improvements where this might provide synergy and/or an improved economy of scale.
- Develop, collect, and disseminate information about climate change, including energy and climate data and the next generation of the Regional Indicators data.
- Work with the State of Minnesota on a greenhouse gas emissions inventory that informs regional discussion on emissions reduction.
- Provide technical assistance to the region’s local governments, including identifying risks, best practices, and model ordinances for climate change mitigation and adaptation, and working in partnership with the Minnesota GreenStep Cities program.
- Assess the risks and opportunities presented to the region from a changing climate and the potential rewards from addressing those risks and opportunities.
- Provide information to local jurisdictions about the risks of not responding to or preparing for climate change, and encourage local governments to plan and prepare for climate change, including incorporating climate change planning into their local comprehensive plans.
- Explore incentives to reward local governments that set and make progress on local greenhouse gas reduction goals.

In addition to its ongoing efforts to promote compact development, provide alternatives to single-occupant automobile travel, and protect natural resources and open space through the Regional Parks System, the Council’s approach to climate change will expand first into collaborative approaches—such as providing information, technical assistance, and incentives. Over 2014 and 2015, the Council will explore how to most effectively use its planning authorities to address climate change, including reducing vehicle miles traveled, regional greenhouse gas emissions, and the airborne fine particulate matter that threatens the region’s air quality attainment status with the Environmental Protection Agency.

In addition, the Council will collaborate with regional leadership and convene local governments and the broader community to address climate change mitigation and adaptation within the region. These expanded roles in information and technical assistance will help the Council serve as a resource to both local jurisdictions and the region at large. The Council intends to be a prominent player in elevating this serious and important issue which affects the long-term viability of the Minneapolis-Saint Paul region.

## Operating wastewater treatment and transit systems sustainably

The Council will mitigate its own contributions to climate change by reducing its own greenhouse gas emissions. In 2012, the Council adopted a Sustainability Policy for Internal Operations and Management. This policy states that the Council will conduct its own operations in a sustainable manner, when economically feasible, specifically to:

- Increase energy efficiency and use of renewable energy sources.
- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions from Council operations.
- Conserve and protect water resources.
- Reduce solid waste generation.
- Reuse and recycle materials.

Furthermore, the Council will monitor and track energy use and, when economically feasible, pursue opportunities to reduce energy use. The Council also will identify and pursue renewable energy opportunities; purchase Energy Star products; manage energy costs; review tariffs and peak control options; and track and, when feasible, reduce carbon-dioxide-equivalent emissions.

Both the Environmental Services Division and Metro Transit have set goals to reduce their facility energy purchases by 50% by 2020 from a 2006 baseline. The Council will continue to adopt innovative technologies to improve operations and use resources more sustainably. The Council will:

- Invest resources to continually reduce energy use in its buildings and operations and be among the efficiency leaders in the region.
- Pursue and invest in local generation of renewable energy at and for the Council's own operations, including large-scale solar facilities.
- Continue its program to reduce inflow and infiltration into the regional sewer system. Excess flows from wet weather into the system consume capacity that could otherwise be used to support future growth.
- Adopt technological advancements in the Metro Transit fleet to maximize operational efficiency and reduce fuel consumption through engine improvements, acceleration management, electrification, and other improvements.

