

The Metropolitan Council Vision for the Twin Cities Region

Good planning is the basis for good outcomes. Residents of the Twin Cities region have benefitted from the foresight of previous public policymakers. We have a well-thought out highway transit and aviation and transit system, the existence of regional sewer infrastructure, and a beautiful system of regional parks, trails and greenways that winds throughout our seven county metropolitan area. Our wetlands, lakes and rivers are protected by a coordinated system of environmental regulation, and our cities, counties and regional and state government agencies work together to plan effectively for future growth and infrastructure. In this region, we have a long and valued history of working together- collaboratively and in partnerships- to address important regional and local planning issues, concerns and trends.

As the Metropolitan Council begins its work of updating the Comprehensive Development Guide, it is important to explain the operating mission, values, and outcomes that the Council envisions for the region in the next thirty year planning horizon.

Operating Mission

The Metropolitan Council will use its resources to:

Create a 21st century transportation and transit system with a sustainable financing structure that allows the region to grow and to be healthy and vital.

Build and preserve vibrant strong communities that offer a range of affordable housing options for all.

Play a leadership role increasing and preserving housing and economic opportunities throughout the region.

Metropolitan Council Values

The Metropolitan Council will base its actions on several core values, most importantly partnership, collaboration, and consensus. We intend to listen respectfully to our stakeholders and residents to understand their concerns and positions and to communicate the regional perspective in a helpful and collaborative manner. We recognize that while we may have different positions and ideologies, we are all residents of the same region and we all are entitled

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to have a say in its future. Providing the requisite regional and local amenities comes from listening to residents and stakeholders. This does not involve imposing a vision on anyone, but instead working collaboratively to achieve consensus about what works, and acknowledging as a group the challenges which face our region. We want to work together to create a place people want to come to and where residents want to stay

The Metropolitan Council will use evidence based-decision-making to guide the development and implementation of regional policy. As it develops policy, the Council will review the best available data and policy analysis, including, where appropriate, comparison to peer cities or regions. The Council will work to integrate comments and divergent viewpoints from a wide variety of regional stakeholders. And the Council will commit to regularly evaluating and reporting on the effects of regional policy decisions. The Twin Cities is a region that is known for its resiliency and fairness. As a Council, we intend to build on these strengths.

The Outcomes

In the next thirty years, the Metropolitan Council envisions the Twin Cities metropolitan area as welcoming and diverse place, with a competitive, vibrant economy that affords opportunities for all. A truly vibrant economy must include equity as a component of regional progress.

The Metropolitan Council will be a wise steward of the region's resources- both financial, and natural. The Council will work with its partners to maintain physical assets and infrastructure-- the roads, bridges, water systems school, transit and housing which our residents rely on to live their lives safely. We will target public assets to renew the physical assets and infrastructure that is already built. We recognize that economic sustainability is important for a healthy region, and will integrate that value into our regional planning. The Council defines "sustainability" as "creating more than we consume, and meeting present needs without compromising future resources, options or opportunities". That definition includes an economic component: to efficiently build, operate, and maintain physical infrastructure. It incorporates ecological sustainability: protecting air quality, water supply and quality, and other regionally significant natural resources.

This is a diverse region, with agricultural, rural, suburban and urban areas. Our residents are diverse in age, income, and interests. A basic minimum for all of our residents—and future residents-- is the assurance of a clean environment- air, water, natural resources; and the provision of safe, varied, affordable housing stock as well as the ability to move freely around the region. At a local level, people want and need parks, trails, and safe and pleasant neighborhoods. Beyond physical infrastructure needs, it is necessary for us all to feel a connection to this place, whether it be a street, a neighborhood, a community, a nearby park, or the entire greater metropolitan region.

We need to plan for the requisite amenities for this diverse new region and changing economic landscape. Some of the amenities which are important include sports, arts, and the wide variety of cultural and educational amenities currently available. But we need to recognize that it is also important to provide access to intangible infrastructure needs such as quality health care, and an educational system that is supportive and offers opportunity to diverse communities, ages, races, ethnic groups, and income-levels. A key goal is to move towards a region that is integrated without disparities. A healthy region offers economic opportunities to all of its residents. It's a safe place, where people feel secure in their community, their economic future, and that their leadership will work collaboratively to steward resources efficiently and to provide the necessary infrastructure to keep the region competitive

A shared vision of future prosperity will allow us as a region to build on the history of good planning and civic pride, which is a Minnesota tradition. A sense of place is the medium through which we connect to others. If we increase ties for our residents to the community we help create a legacy of shared investment. This attracts and keeps talent and is the catalyst for the investment of social and financial capital. It is important to be a welcoming region with strong institutions and a non-profit community that will help provide vital civic infrastructure, and allow opportunities for involvement and shared pride and investment. An educated, innovative and motivated workforce is an important component of any regional economic development plan.

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A key desired outcome is providing a 21st century transit-system connecting people to jobs and destinations. Our buses and light rail cars will be full of riders, heading to jobs, school, shopping centers, sports facilities and museums and theaters. Our bus and light rail corridors will connect distinct neighborhoods and centers with greenways, trails and sidewalks. There will be many people actively using these facilities- and they will be safe for a range of people in varying ages and physical conditions. Throughout the region there will be a range of housing and job opportunities available, but increasingly focused along transit corridors. Station areas in these transit corridors will not be cookie cutter copies of each other, but distinct places with architectural character and services tailored to the needs of area residents. Our region will offer a plentiful range of good jobs, as well as entrepreneurial opportunities. Our universities and colleges will continue to thrive and provide opportunities for our children, as well as attracting students from other parts of the country and world. We will be a necessary part of a global economy.

Throughout the region we will have safe and ample housing choices. There will be opportunities to provide new housing but also an emphasis on preserving the housing stock already built. Programs will exist which recognize the incredible need for investment in preservation and maintenance of housing stock. Safe homes are critical to healthy, stable families. Regional and local stakeholders will work to preserve and maintain the investments which have already been made.

Our economy and housing stock will innovate and adapt to changing conditions so that young families with children, working adults and retired seniors are all welcome in their communities.

Our Operating Principles

To increase opportunities for all of our residents we will focus on creating pathways to work and work to support effective public and civic institutions.

Where possible, we will prioritize infrastructure to play multiple functions. Trails also serve as essential transportation corridor for commuters. Innovative zoning regulations that allow for more creative land uses will help achieve desired regional and local outcomes.

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We will partner with an engaged and robust philanthropic sector to achieve a region that works together and shares a vision for the future.

We will partner with the business community, state agencies and other stakeholders to protect and develop a regional economy which innovates, builds on technology, and is adaptable to changing conditions.

We will continue to work with local governments, developers and other stakeholders to create, preserve and maintain distinctive places that attract and retain people.

We will align the various activities we do, measure the level of success of our planning programs access, and integrate our transportation planning with land-use patterns.