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Foreword

Authority for Blueprint 2030

The authority for preparing Blueprint 2030 is found in state statutes that direct the Metropolitan Council to:

...prepare and adopt...a comprehensive development guide for the metropolitan area. It shall consist of a compilation of policy statements, goals, standards, programs and maps prescribing guides for the orderly and economical development, public and private, of the metropolitan area. The comprehensive development guide shall recognize and encompass physical, social or economic needs of the metropolitan area and those future developments which will have an impact on the entire area including but not limited to such matters as land use, parks and open space land needs, the necessity for and location of airports, highways, transit facilities, public hospitals, libraries, schools, and other public buildings.... (Minnesota Statutes, section 473.145)

The Council’s Metropolitan Development Guide consists of Blueprint 2030 and the policy plans that the Council adopts. Blueprint 2030 is the initial “chapter” and unifying theme of the Metropolitan Development Guide. Once Blueprint 2030 is adopted by the Council, it will become the umbrella statement of regional policies, goals, and strategies that will inform the Council’s other Metropolitan Development Guide chapters including the system plans for airports, transportation, regional recreation open space, and metropolitan wastewater service, as well as other policy plans adopted by the Council.

Mission

The mission of the Metropolitan Council is to improve regional competitiveness in the global economy so the Minneapolis-Saint Paul metropolitan region is one of the best places to live, work, raise a family and do business.

History

During the 1960s, as outlying suburbs—and, in turn, the metropolitan area—grew, consensus formed around the need for a regional approach to resolve several issues that transcended municipal and county boundaries. The most pressing issue involved increasing groundwater contamination caused by suburban developments using individual septic systems to treat their wastewater, and the need to provide those communities with centralized wastewater treatment services. At the same time, there were other problems facing the region. The privately owned Twin City Lines Bus Company was experiencing serious financial difficulties; tax base disparities among local communities were increasing, resulting in competition for commercial and industrial development; and the dumping of solid waste throughout the metropolitan area was threatening the environment.

Key metropolitan area organizations and individuals—such as legislators, mayors, the Citizens League, the Metropolitan Planning Commission, the Metropolitan Section of the League of Minnesota Cities, the League of Women Voters, Chambers of Commerce, and business people—were galvanized into action. Together they called for regional governance to address pressing regional problems. In
response, in 1967, the Minnesota Legislature created the Metropolitan Council to “coordinate the planning and development of the metropolitan area comprising the counties of Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, Scott and Washington.” The Council is governed by a 17-member board appointed by the Governor.

During the decades since the Council’s creation, the Legislature has continued to modify or add to the Council’s roles and responsibilities in response to emerging regional issues and changing priorities.

The Metropolitan Council Today

The Council, working closely with its many partners...

- Conducts long-range planning to guide the region’s growth, and, with local governments, coordinates decisions that affect the area’s development.

- Supports development through design and financial support to produce models of mixed-use, walkable, transit-oriented development.

- Provides technical assistance and grants to increase affordable-housing opportunities, clean up polluted sites for redevelopment, and reduce polluted stormwater runoff that flows into rivers, lakes and streams.

- Operates the regional transit system—through Metro Transit, Metro Mobility, and contracted Regional Routes, the Council provides 95% of all bus rides in the region. The system includes the region’s first light rail transit line.

- Collects and cleans wastewater for 90% of the region’s population and most of the region’s businesses, operating 8 treatment plants and 550 miles of major sewer lines.

- Establishes the planning framework and administers the funding process for the 55,000-acre regional park system.

- Provides housing opportunities for over 6,600 low- and moderate-income households on behalf of 134 cities through the Council’s Metro Housing and Redevelopment Authority, and develops housing units within the area for families with very low incomes through its Family Affordable Housing Program.
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Summary

More and more people want to live in the Twin Cities area, which is both a mark of success and a major challenge.

With growth has come new prosperity for the region—new jobs, rising incomes, new tax revenue and the highest rate of home ownership in the nation.

But, as many Twin Cities communities already have discovered, accommodating growth is not always easy. Traffic congestion throughout the metro region has increased. Home prices and rents are increasing. Open spaces are dwindling.

The region is expected to grow by 461,000 households by the year 2030. Unless we make good choices about how the region will grow, we risk damaging the quality of life that makes the Twin Cities region a wonderful place to live.

The Metropolitan Council’s Blueprint 2030 lays out a framework for growth that reduces stress on the natural environment, improves our commutes to work, strengthens our sense of community—and saves billions of dollars in taxes.

The Blueprint grows out of the ideas of citizens, local officials, businesspeople, and community organizations that, for the past two years, have helped the Metropolitan Council identify directions for the region’s growth through polls, workshops, meetings and on-line forums. These people and organizations have told the Council they want to expand transportation options and housing choices and, most important, maintain the character of the region as a whole, with a variety of land uses ranging from farms to dense urban centers.

What’s important in Blueprint 2030?

In many ways, Blueprint 2030 is an extension of previous Blueprints developed by the Metropolitan Council—with the benefit of new projections for growth for the region and of the experience and efforts of individual communities and the region as a whole. But this Blueprint has a different emphasis than the ones that have gone before it:

This Blueprint focuses more on how we’re going to grow—not simply how much—and on the benefits of new growth patterns.

The emphasis of Blueprint 2030 is on:

- Growing near highways and transit. Historically, communities grew up along transportation corridors, whether that was the ocean, rivers or railways. The proliferation of the automobile and highways has generally followed that same pattern. Blueprint 2030 encourages growth where highways and transit already exist—and it encourages clustering development on these corridors. For residents of a community, clustering housing, businesses, retail and services along a transportation corridor means that many ordinary household needs can be taken care of quickly and easily, with one short auto trip, one parking spot. For the region, this translates to better access to jobs, fewer—and shorter—auto trips (and therefore less air pollution), more housing choices and more options for reaching destinations. [Pages 2, 4, 10, 12, 16-18, 21-24.]

- Creating a sense of place in developing areas. The “bedroom community” is an idea of past decades. Increasingly, people want to live in places where there are a number of housing
options, retail activity, services, green space and other amenities. They want these things well integrated and close to both roads and other kinds of transit. And they want to live in a community that has a strong sense of place. In short, they want communities that resemble in character the kind of cities, suburbs and small towns that have been the heart not only of this region but of this country. [Pages 2, 4, 16-18, 21-24.]

- **Housing for different needs.** We will need more housing in the next 30 years, but we also will need a different mix of housing—and we need it throughout the region. The population of the Twin Cities area is changing in a number of ways. There are new immigrants with families that may include several generations in one household. There are aging Baby Boomers who want to turn in their single-family homes for apartments, townhomes or other living arrangements with reduced upkeep requirements. There are more singles and young couples without children who want affordable housing near their work, and near retail, services and entertainment. *Blueprint 2030* recognizes that people have different housing preferences and needs—and that at different points in people’s lives, those preferences and needs change. [Pages 2, 5, 11-13, 17, 25-27.]

- **Highlighting natural areas.** We live in a region that has a rich and varied natural environment—it’s a regional asset, created and protected by community leaders over decades. In many parts of the region, the lakes, rivers, green space, forested areas and even wildlife are a crucial part of what define individual communities. This *Blueprint* emphasizes the importance of protecting and extending the natural areas of the region. It puts environmental features into the planning process, rather than off to the side. At the same time, it gives communities more flexibility in incorporating natural features—required green space may not have to be contiguous with a new housing development, for example, but somewhere that serves the whole community. [Pages 2, 5, 14-16, 21, 34-36.]

- **Reinvesting in urban areas.** For several decades, the region’s older cities and suburbs lost population, as families moved farther and farther out into new developments. Growth is now occurring throughout the region—including in the older communities. These communities can accommodate considerable growth with some reinvestment, and it makes economic sense—it can save billions of dollars in road and sewer costs, and it can preserve thousands of acres of farmland and natural areas. *Blueprint 2030* calls for accommodating a third of new growth with reinvestment and infill. That means finding creative ways to develop new housing—and rehabilitate some existing housing—in the older cities and suburbs. [Pages 2, 4, 31-33.]

- **Maintaining rural areas.** Active farms, rural communities and undeveloped rural areas are important to the character of the region. Unfocused growth can too quickly diminish or even eliminate much of this rural character. *Blueprint 2030* emphasizes sustaining rural communities as rural places, and preserving agricultural lands as a long-term asset of the region. The Metropolitan Council will help rural towns along transportation corridors with infrastructure—in particular, with wastewater treatment—as those communities accommodate new growth. [Pages 2, 5, 37-39.]

- **Recognizing existing efforts.** The Metropolitan Council doesn’t have a monopoly on ideas for growth. In fact, many of the ideas in the *Blueprint* grow out of activities and strategies already under way in the region. A number of communities are moving in the direction outlined in the *Blueprint*. For example, Burnsville, St. Louis Park, Maple Grove, Chaska and others are building town centers that integrate a variety of uses. [Page 26.]
• **Collaborating on strategies.** The Metropolitan Council can’t guide growth and development by itself. Meeting the goals in the *Blueprint* can only be accomplished through the collaborative work of governments, communities, developers, nonprofits and individuals. The *Blueprint* incorporates the ideas of a broad group of stakeholders—and it will need the collaboration of those same stakeholders to be successful. [Pages 6, 69-73, 82-86.]

• **Aligning strategic tools.** The Council has developed a number of new tools for guiding growth, from financial incentives to legislative authority to infrastructure development to technical support. It also recognizes that additional tools are needed—new financial incentives, for example, and new monitoring techniques. More than has been done with previous strategies, *Blueprint 2030* aligns tools with the vision it sets out. [Pages 6, 19, 64-90.]

• **Monitoring and reporting progress.** There are many specific, measurable outcomes in *Blueprint 2030*—for example, adding 15,000-18,000 housing units per year, region-wide. The Metropolitan Council is responsible for monitoring progress towards these outcomes—and it will report on them annually. More measures of success also will be part of the handbook used by local communities as they develop their comprehensive plans. This emphasis on measurement—and therefore accountability—is a major difference from previous *Blueprints.* [Pages 13, 25, 33, 39, 55, 86-90.]

**Why does the Blueprint matter?**

Local governments are required by state law to do their planning within a framework set by the Metropolitan Council. All community comprehensive plans must be updated by 2008—and those plans must reflect the policies set out in the *Metropolitan Development Guide.* *Blueprint 2030* is the keystone chapter of the development guide.

But the statutory relationship, albeit significant, is only a part of the reason the *Blueprint* is important.

New ideas about how to grow and yet preserve the character of the region can serve as a rallying point to encourage and support efforts that work in the same direction. Ideas are powerful, and the *Blueprint* represents the best ideas about growth—with the needs and sensibilities of this metropolitan region always in the forefront. *Blueprint 2030* is a call to action for everyone—government, the business community, nonprofit organizations, builders, state agencies and others.

The Council pursues regional strategies that support local identity. It assists communities with their growth plans by using the kinds of incentives it has—transit, wastewater services, grants, housing and other technical resources to encourage development consistent with the *Blueprint.*

As the Council puts together a legislative agenda for coming years, the *Blueprint* will be its consistent guide. Legislators, from the metro area and beyond, can understand the context for the Council’s proposals by consulting the *Blueprint.*

**What’s the result?**

We can’t avoid growth. Nor should we. Growth strengthens our economy and—when thoughtfully planned—provides us with the resources both to maintain what we cherish and to embrace new ideas and technologies. The strategies in *Blueprint 2030* let us turn growth into an opportunity to shape the region in ways that make sense—and that offer real choices for communities and for individual lifestyles.
The benefits of these strategies are interconnected. For example: If more communities have mixed uses—retail and commercial, as well as residential—more people can work in the same community in which they live. Which means fewer people commuting on freeways. Which means faster trips for those who do commute. And fewer automobile emissions—which means cleaner air for all of us.

Although the Blueprint emphasizes quality of life, and that is the long-term legacy it can leave for future generations, there is also a hard-edged practical aspect to its strategy—it will save public money.

Putting growth where the infrastructure to support it already exists means sewers and roads that don’t have to be built. Providing transportation options that include buses, light rail and trains, as well as automobiles, means freeway lanes that don’t have to be added. And, where new infrastructure is necessary, investments in the more connected land-use patterns described in the Blueprint will be the most fiscally responsible use of limited public resources.

This Blueprint has been developed during a particularly difficult time for our state and national economy. Seeking new funding may not be easy, but the Blueprint is a 30-year plan and the Council must pursue a multi-year implementation strategy. As we look at drastic short-term measures to save money, we must also look at major long-term savings and benefits.

In addition, funding and regulations are not the only tools available to the Council. An extensive public process has confirmed the goals of the Blueprint as the goals of the region—not the goals of the Council. In challenging economic times that fact becomes especially important, because success will depend even more heavily on partnerships, collaboration and shared resources among the Council, local governments and the private sector.

It is important for the Council to begin to lay out all the options it intends to pursue in Blueprint 2030 while recognizing that “getting there” will require resources and energy far beyond what the Council, alone, can provide. Now, more than ever before, is the time to invest in the ideas of Blueprint 2030.

**How is the Blueprint organized?**

Blueprint 2030 contains five chapters:

1. **Purpose and Goals** (pages 1-7)—a vision for the region’s future and seven interrelated goals to achieve it.
2. **Challenges, Opportunities and Benefits** (pages 8-18)—issues facing the region, approaches to resolve them and the gains for the region when we succeed.
3. **Blueprint 2030 Policy Directions** (pages 19-39)—the integrated and aligned plan of action the Council will take to attain the seven goals.
4. **Implementation** (pages 40-89)—the strategies and tools the Council will use to implement its policies and measure progress.
5. **Definitions** (pages 90-105)—the meanings of words, phrases and terms used in the Blueprint.

A separate companion document, *Appendices Blueprint 2030*, contains 12 appendix documents that provide additional Blueprint-related information and maps. (See table of contents for a list of the appendices.)
1. Purpose and Goals

Blueprint 2030: A Plan for Growth and Change

A strong economy, successful schools, stunning parks and lakes, a vibrant cultural life and a beautiful natural environment have transformed the Twin Cities into one of the fastest growing metropolitan areas in the northern half of the United States. Growth has brought new jobs, rising incomes, new tax revenue, higher property values, and the highest rate of home ownership in the nation. It has stimulated the revitalization of the region’s older areas, attracted new businesses and workers, and strengthened the geographic clustering of industries that make the region competitive in a world economy. Growth has brought more consumer choices, employment options and social diversity.

And the Twin Cities will keep growing over the next 30 years. We can expect an increase in the number of households that is slightly more than that of the past three decades. We’ll see increasing population, but a slower rate of job growth as large numbers of Baby Boomers retire.

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The metropolitan area faces the same issues confronting other successful regions—highway congestion, rising housing costs and the continuing loss of farmland and natural areas. At the same time, there’s a growing consensus that the region has new opportunities to shape its growth. The crucial question is how the region grows, not how much.

The challenge is: How can the region accommodate expected growth while improving our quality of life?

Metropolitan area citizens recognize the fundamental, underlying value of our neighborhoods and cities. We want a sense of community—that feeling of place, special character and connections.

At the city and neighborhood level, we see that sense of community in the local civic and historic buildings, parks, shared spaces, and connected street patterns that tell each of us we’re “home.” In workshops, community dialogues and focus groups, people told personal and heartfelt stories of what is unique and special about where they live. They are eager to hold on to what is working—but aware of the need to change what is not.

Local communities are not islands. Land uses, street patterns, housing and employment opportunities cross city boundaries so that every city affects its neighbors. It is the many variations on the theme of community that enhance our quality of life and our choices of where to live. It is the collective strength of local economies that makes our regional economy competitive.
The Metropolitan Council brings together the emerging trends in individual city and township plans, the aspirations of citizens, the ideas of the business community and public groups, and a wide variety of census, land use, environmental and transportation data, to give voice to what makes the larger "place"—the community that is the Twin Cities metropolitan area—one of the country's most successful urban regions.

Goals

The vision of what the region can become over the next 30 years echoes the mission of the Metropolitan Council: To create a metropolitan region that is one of the best places to live, work, raise a family and do business. The seven interrelated goals set out in this Blueprint are designed to do just that. The goals are:

Integrated Land Use, Transportation and Natural Resources
- The region's growth patterns are shaped to improve mobility, create connections among local land uses, sustain the natural environment, and expand choices in housing types and locations.

Growth and Redevelopment in Centers along Transportation Corridors
- Urban and rural centers along transportation corridors are the focus for growth and redevelopment that integrate land use and transportation to build and support a sense of place.

Increased Lifecycle and Affordable Housing
- Expanded choices of lifecycle and affordable housing meet changing demographic trends and market preferences, and support the region's economic competitiveness.

Efficient Infrastructure and Flexible Staging in Developing Communities
- Developing communities accommodate new growth through a connected and sustainable pattern of land use based on the adequate, efficient provision of infrastructure and flexible, balanced staging of development.

Increased Reinvestment and Infill
- Fully developed communities and older areas are the focus for reinvestment to ensure their continued vitality through land, parks, streets, water and sewer lines, and other public and private infrastructure.

Protected Natural Resources
- Natural areas have been conserved and protected in ways that sustain a healthy natural environment and enhance the quality of life.

Preserved Rural Areas and Agricultural Land
- Rural communities are sustained as rural places and productive agricultural lands are preserved as a long-term asset of the region.

These are realistic goals. The Blueprint builds on efforts already under way and projects already being implemented. It draws on new approaches for guiding development currently being carried out by local governments through their comprehensive plans and land use ordinances. It leverages private and public investments in ways already proven successful by existing programs. And it grows out of a strong popular sentiment to move the region toward a new vision of growth and change.
The Council’s investments in regional systems (wastewater treatment, transportation, airports, and regional recreation open space) and in local communities, its incentive programs, technical assistance efforts and regulatory authority will be applied to help achieve goals set out in the Blueprint.

The Blueprint, together with the Council’s system plans and the rest of the Metropolitan Development Guide, is the fundamental land-use policy guide for local communities as they plan for the future. It is the first step to implement the statutory requirement that the Council prepare and adopt a comprehensive development guide for the region that addresses the physical, social and economic needs of the metropolitan area, and it provides system plans for land use, parks and open space land needs, airports, highways, transit facilities, and wastewater treatment.

**Common Ground**

The vision and goals of Blueprint 2030 are grounded in the hopes of the region’s people and our connections to the land and its water. Sculpted by glaciers and rivers, dotted with lakes and wetlands, blessed with a rich variety of soils, the region’s land is our original source of wealth and natural beauty. It is a meeting ground of hardwoods, conifer forests and prairie—the unique landscapes that typify the area’s natural geography. It is infused with lakes, wetlands, streams and habitats that support abundant wildlife. Half the seven-county area remains rural or agricultural, testimony to both the region’s origins and the efforts of regional government and metropolitan area communities.

From this land, we have created a vital, successful region, with strong economic foundations, livable communities, and deep connections to our natural surroundings. Our region is a mosaic of 189 cities and townships spread over 3,000 square miles in seven counties.

**THE LANDSCAPE**

The region’s communities are united by their appreciation for the land but distinguished by their own local identities. The core of the region is two historical river settlements, Minneapolis and Saint Paul.

Development in adjacent cities after World War II imitated the street patterns of the central cities, framing neighborhoods of bungalows. That was followed by development in the second- and third-ring suburbs of larger homes on larger lots, reflecting the growing prosperity and market preferences of the baby-boom generation.

The region’s rural area, though smaller than in decades past, consists of small towns and residential areas interspersed with farmlands and open spaces.

Tying the region together is a network of freeways and highways, shaping a pattern of job concentrations that extends from the central cities to the developing suburbs.

This land is home to 2.6 million people and will see nearly a million more—930,000—over the next 30 years. During the 1990s, the metropolitan area gained more new residents than in any decade in its history. With a handful of other urban regions, we experienced more growth than any place outside the Sun Belt.
THE PEOPLE

The region's population is becoming increasingly diverse. Economic opportunity and a better quality of life have drawn new residents in growing numbers, and refugee communities have grown through the services of the area's resettlement organizations. The 1990s marked the largest-ever influx of immigrants into the Twin Cities metropolitan area.

The population of the metropolitan area's racial minorities and ethnic communities currently accounts for about one in five persons and is growing rapidly. While the American Indian population remained relatively stable in the last decade, the African American population increased by nearly 90% in the 1990s, the Asian population nearly doubled, and the Latino community grew by more than 160%.

We may be different in our backgrounds and our personal preferences, but we share common aspirations—employment at a living wage, high-quality schools, and opportunities for our children. We want livable, safe communities, a healthy natural environment, efficient public services, access to open space, and excellent transportation connections to opportunities around the area and beyond.

A New Direction

The region cannot rely solely on what has made it a success in the past. We need new approaches that are shaped by emerging trends, market demands, citizen values and preferences, and leading-edge data, woven together into an overall, comprehensive strategy.

This new direction means:

• **Focusing attention on the pattern and arrangement of land uses.** Previously, the regional growth strategy focused on how much development occurred in growing communities at the region’s urbanizing edge. *Blueprint 2030* pays more attention to how development occurs—such as the mix of land uses, the number of housing units per acre, and the potential for transit and local street connections. The pattern and arrangement of land uses offer opportunities to leverage a range of benefits—expanded housing choices, improved transportation mobility (shorter vehicle trips and more travel choices), and more livable communities with an enhanced sense of place.

• **Using transportation to shape land use patterns.** The *Blueprint* plans for intensified development in centers along transportation corridors and in rural towns that want to grow and that lie along major highways. Regional investments can create a transportation system that includes innovative transit solutions—including exclusive transitways and service improvements—that support attractive, walkable neighborhoods with homes, green space, public places and other amenities.

• **Emphasizing reinvestment in older areas.** The *Blueprint* calls for accommodating approximately 30% of new households over the next three decades—most of it in Developed Communities—through infill, adaptive reuse and reinvestment. This contrasts with the 26% of new growth in Developed Communities that is currently occurring as infill, adaptive reuse and reinvestment. By reinvesting in currently underused land and by redeveloping at higher densities, the region can accommodate growth on a much smaller urban “footprint,” slow the rate of increase in traffic
congestion, ease development pressures on rural land, save billions of dollars in local sewer, water and road construction costs, and strengthen the vitality of older areas.

- **Developing a metro-wide natural resources inventory and assessment to foster development that is more sensitive to the environment.** An inventory and assessment of the region’s natural resources, now documented in overlays of computerized maps, can help local governments plan development that respects the integrity of natural areas and incorporates environmental features into development projects. Conserving and restoring natural resources of regional or local importance contributes to a healthy natural environment and enhances our quality of life. Connecting regional and local features by natural-resource corridors helps sustain wildlife and plant habitat and shapes how development looks on the ground.

- **Emphasizing increased housing production that reflects market demand, shifting demographics, employment locations, and a diversity of incomes.** The new-housing market has been weighted in favor of single-family housing over such alternatives as townhomes and condominiums. Already that is changing. The oldest baby-boomers are now in their 50s, and newcomers to the metropolitan area are likely to expect a variety of housing types and prices. The market demand for single-family detached housing is expected to decline in the next 30 years, even as the overall demand for housing remains strong.

  A mix of housing types and prices enables people to work, raise a family and retire in the same community, attracts jobs, and improves local economic competitiveness. Affordable units, incorporated into attractive market-rate developments, can expand housing opportunities for lower-income families and households.

- **Supporting expanded protections of farmland and natural resource areas.** Approximately 73,000 acres of natural-resource areas are currently unprotected from development, and tens of thousands of acres of farmland may be converted to home sites over the next 30 years without additional protections. Strengthening the Regional Parks and Open Space system will help preserve regional natural resource areas. We can also strengthen existing preservation programs such as Metropolitan Agricultural Preserves. To preserve more of the remaining open, rural areas, however, we need additional tools involving the purchase of development rights—such as conservation easements and agricultural preservation easements.

- **Offering more flexibility in the location of new development in growing communities.** Some cities at the urban edge have portions of their jurisdictions lying within the region’s urban area and portions within its rural area. The Metropolitan Council is committed to providing these cities with regional wastewater service to accommodate 10 years of growth, as it has in the past. A growing city has the flexibility to decide where development occurs within its areas that are planned and staged for urbanization—provided that regional infrastructure is available and adequate—with the expectation that the city will make efficient use of public investments and develop in a manner that conserves natural features and provides transportation options. Cities are encouraged to plan and make available for potential development an area needed to accommodate up to 20 years of growth.

- **Supporting rural towns that want to grow.** The spread of scattered development in rural areas threatens the very qualities that attracted residents in the first place. The Council supports growth in “Rural Growth Centers” in ways that absorb much of the development that would otherwise occur in the countryside. For those Rural Growth Centers hampered in their growth potential because they are reaching the limits of their wastewater-service capacity, the Council
will consider offering regional wastewater services, provided the centers meet Council criteria qualifying them for assistance.

**Principles**

Four principles are fundamental to the way the Metropolitan Council will pursue the approaches outlined in *Blueprint 2030*.

- **Collaboration and Partnership.** The continued involvement of citizens (particularly under-represented communities), local governments (especially the region's mayors), state and federal agencies, business leaders, community organizations and public-interest groups is needed to shape solutions and initiatives.

To increase mobility and housing production, to ensure sustainable land use patterns, and to protect the natural environment, the region will need collective and collaborative approaches together with focused tools and strategies. The Mayors' Regional Housing Task Force is an example of effective collaboration and partnership. Seventeen mayors met to develop recommendations on ways to increase affordable housing production. The task force produced and released a report in December 2000 that called for additional funding and identified a number of changes to local government practices, policies, planning and zoning that would make it easier to produce affordable housing. Implementation strategies were developed by a second Mayors' Regional Housing Task Force, focusing on ways to expand housing opportunities region-wide for people of all income levels and stages of life.

The Twin Cities economic region is much broader than the seven metropolitan counties. Since 1960, as the population of the seven metropolitan area counties has grown, the six adjacent counties in Minnesota and Wisconsin that make up the rest of the 13-county, census-defined metropolitan statistical area have grown at an even faster rate—39% in the 1970s, 18% in the 1980s, and 31% in the 1990s. The strongest growth in these adjacent counties is in the cities and townships closest to the metropolitan area core—in eastern Wright and Sherburne Counties and in western St. Croix County, Wisconsin. The reality is that the metropolitan area is no longer the seven counties that are the region's center, but rather a larger area that includes the adjacent counties as part of one metropolitan economy.

The common issues affecting the seven-county region and the adjacent areas offer an opportunity to expand partnerships with local governments that can fashion solutions to benefit the larger region. (See additional discussion in "Implementation" section.)

- **Alignment and Integration.** The Council will align current tools, resources and incentives, and seek new ones to support communities striving to improve their livability and economic competitiveness. For example, the Council adopted criteria in 1999 governing the alignment of federal TEA-21 grants with the Council's approval of an applicant community's comprehensive plan and with a community's performance in expanding affordable- and lifecycle-housing opportunities. Regional investments and incentives include expenditures for highways, transit, wastewater facilities, airports, housing, brownfield clean-up, environmental remediation, financial incentives for development and redevelopment, regional parks and open space, and conservation of the regional natural-resource areas identified in the Regional Natural Resource Inventory and
Assessment (NRI/A). The Council will continue to identify opportunities to more effectively use its resources to support local efforts while achieving regional objectives.

- **Fully Utilized and Increased Resources.** The Council intends to use all its tools to the fullest extent possible and will seek new and enhanced resources to achieve Blueprint goals. The Council will work to increase resources for its regional systems and current financial incentives available to local communities. It will also look for ways to support promising initiatives, programs and projects when opportunities arise, providing regional services such as wastewater and transit service at a quality and cost that are competitive with any public or private provider in the nation. The new 10-year Investment Framework provides a funding plan that identifies incentives and investments necessary to carry out Blueprint 2030 (see "Implementation" section). The Council will also partner with others in both the public and private sector to leverage additional investments in Blueprint goals.

- **Accountability in Implementation.** The Council will work with local governments, other public agencies, the Legislature, the private sector, and nonprofit organizations to identify benchmarking indicators and a process for regularly assessing the progress of local and regional efforts (see "Implementation" section for a preliminary list of implementation milestones). Rather than looking to rigid indicators, the Council will foster use of flexible tools for measuring progress, such as performance-based standards, which identify an agreed-upon outcome but do not dictate how the outcome is achieved. In addition, the Council will use its authority under the Metropolitan Land Planning Act to implement the Blueprint through the Council’s review of local comprehensive plans.
2. Challenges, Opportunities and Benefits

An Effective Transportation System

CHALLENGES

- **Highway congestion is worsening at a disturbing rate.** The percent of peak-period travel occurring under congested conditions increased more than fivefold between 1982 and 2000—an increase that tied with Atlanta’s for the second fastest rate of congestion growth in the nation. In 2000, traffic tie-ups cost the average Twin Cities commuter more than $1,000 per year in wasted fuel and lost time and cost the business community more than $300 million in comparable penalties for goods distribution.

- **Transportation investments are not keeping up with rapid growth in travel demand.** Over time, transportation investments have not kept up with rapidly growing regional transportation needs. Transit expenditures per capita are about 60% of what comparable metro areas spend, and Minnesota is the seventh lowest state in capital outlays per highway lane mile. Annual unmet needs are estimated at $450 million for regional highways, $50 million for minor arterials (many of which are county roads), and $200 million for transit capital and operating costs. Developing a multimodal funding package to meet those critical unmet needs is a major unresolved issue facing the region.

- **The region’s population gains mean greater congestion challenges in the future.** The 2000 Census showed that during the 1990s our population grew more than in any previous decade in its history. The region gained 353,000 people, bringing the total population to more than 2.6 million. Continued population growth over the next 30 years (930,000 additional people) will pose serious congestion issues in the future. These new residents are projected to generate almost 4 million additional daily trips and the number of congested highway miles could more than double by 2030. There have already been several times during the last few years when air emissions have exceeded federal standards. Asthma and respiratory problems related to poor air quality are on the rise. Increased trips and highway congestion will add to the need for fossil fuels. Use of fossil fuels is one factor that impacts the quality of the region’s air. More incidents where federal air quality standards are exceeded may cause the federal government to designate the metropolitan area an ozone nonattainment area.

- **Increased congestion threatens the ability of the transportation system to provide the safe and efficient movement of people and goods that is critical to the region’s economic vitality.** Transportation provides vital linkages for a strong regional economy. Striving for the safe and efficient movement of people and goods is a critical challenge to maintaining the economic competitiveness of the Twin Cities region.

- **Focusing only on roads is not enough to solve the congestion problem.** Large investments are needed to remove bottlenecks that cause serious congestion on the metropolitan highway system and to create an adequate minor arterials network, including county roads, to accommodate new growth. However, the cost of a massive highway construction program in the metropolitan area would be prohibitive, and major highway expansions through existing neighborhoods and communities would reduce their livability. A roads-only approach may reduce congestion in the short term, but congestion will return because people will drive more miles in response to
available highway capacity. Building roadways while ignoring transit reduces alternatives to highway travel and only worsens the congestion problem.

- The current transit system is grossly undersized to meet the transportation challenges of the future. The region’s per-capita transit expenditure is one of the lowest compared to other regions of similar size. Over the last 20 years, the size of the transit system and demand for transit service has remained fairly constant, yet the urbanized area of the region has gained in both size and population.

- The aviation industry is experiencing stress. After years of growth in airline activity at Minneapolis Saint Paul (MSP) International Airport, airlines are reducing the number of flights in response to reduced travel demand caused by a slow economy and reaction to the events of September 11, 2001. These recent trends, however, may be reversed in the future. Even with these uncertainties, the region needs to ensure that adequate airport capacity is provided to support its long-term economic vitality.

- The regional transportation systems, especially for aviation and highways, require substantial volumes of aggregate—sand, gravel and crushed rock—for upgrading, expanding, and maintaining various facilities. However, the metropolitan area is rapidly depleting or losing access to its aggregate resources. Without proper management of those resources, the region will have to import all the aggregate it needs for roads, airports, housing, parks, commercial and office buildings. The result would be that highway system costs will increase substantially, and the cost of constructing and maintaining local roads and streets will be similarly affected.

OPPORTUNITIES

- There is strong citizen support for an effective transportation system. According to the 2002 Twin Cities Area Survey, an overwhelming majority of residents believe that light rail, exclusive busways and commuter rail lines are a necessary part of an overall transportation system. An effective transportation system can improve mobility, strengthen economic competitiveness, and expand economic opportunity. Many in the region take advantage of current transit options. Metro Transit provides over 70 million rides annually. Metro Mobility, a service for riders with disabilities, has approximately 24,000 certified riders. In addition, there is widespread sentiment in favor of increasing funding for road and bridge improvements that are necessary to improve the region’s mobility. The 6,000 Metro Commuter Services registered car and vanpools are among those traveling the region’s roadways.

- Major transportation initiatives needed to accommodate future growth are well documented. The Council’s 2025 Transportation Policy Plan and Mn/DOT’s Transportation System Plan document the long-range transportation needs of the region. Once Blueprint 2030 is adopted, extending the planning horizon to 2030, further analysis will be done to determine the implications for these two policy plans. The plans will be updated to reflect the results of the analysis, adding more clarity to the needs that have already been identified:

  ✓ Highway needs in three major categories: 1) removal of bottlenecks which cause serious congestion problems; 2) improvements to inter-regional corridors that connect the most important regional centers in the state to the metro area; and 3) provision of an adequate minor arterial system, including county roads, to supplement metropolitan highways and accommodate new growth.
Transit improvements that include: 1) doubling the capacity of the existing bus system over a 20-year period; and 2) developing a network of dedicated transit corridors consisting of bus-only shoulders, HOV lanes, busways, LRT and commuter rail.

• Strengthening the connections among transportation, land use patterns and jobs offers the greatest opportunities to keep the region mobile and its economy vital. More efficient land use patterns and more transportation choices can result in fewer and shorter auto trips. This reduced travel demand, coupled with higher transportation investment levels, can help preserve regional mobility and the high quality of life.

Mobility will improve somewhat with capacity expansions in a number of highway corridors, especially minor arterials, and improvements to the area’s freeways. But regional investments will create a future transportation system that relies more extensively on innovative transit solutions—including exclusive transitways and service improvements—that support attractive, walkable neighborhoods, with homes, green space, public places and other amenities along major transit corridors. Expanded park-and-ride bus service in promising markets around the metropolitan area will provide commuters with an alternative to congestion during the morning and afternoon rush hours.

• There is increasing awareness of the importance of protecting the region’s supplies of available aggregate resources to allow aggregate materials to be extracted prior to developing the lands where they are located. The region’s aggregate supplies are well mapped and strategies for conserving them have been proposed by both a statewide task force and the Council’s Rural Issues Work Group. The work group spent considerable time meeting with representatives of local communities, the aggregate industry, state agencies, environmental groups and citizens prior to making its recommendations to the Council in October 2001. It is clear from those meetings that the issue of good stewardship of aggregate resources requires multiple solutions. The Council intends to continue to work with affected communities and other interested organizations and individuals to resolve this issue.

BENEFITS

• An effective transportation system—one that recognizes the importance of transit as well as highways, railroads and airports—is key to maintaining the region’s economic competitiveness through the efficient movement of people and freight. Together with wise land-use decisions, an effective transportation system supports attractive, livable communities, thriving businesses, affordable housing, and viable neighborhoods. It would improve highway efficiency, expand transit services, promote sustainable land use patterns, support both existing and new businesses, expand local tax base and foster a more mobile labor force. The Council’s policy plans/guide chapters for transportation and aviation, including the transportation and airports system plans, will address in greater detail the Council’s plans to meet the challenges and make the most of the opportunities.

• Linking transportation and land-use decisions increases choices for metropolitan area residents. Encouraging development that is focused along major transit corridors at key urban and rural centers offers the potential of livable neighborhood settings that combine transit, housing, offices, retail and services, open space and connected streets that support walking and bicycle use. Such an approach enables those who choose to reduce their single-occupancy automobile use to meet their daily needs and makes it possible for those who no longer drive to live more independently.
• **Efficient transportation connections from the metropolitan area to state, national and world markets can help ensure a thriving regional economy.** An effective transportation system facilitates freight flows that use various modes (such as truck, rail, water and air), and interconnects them with national and international freight movement systems. The region's interregional highway connections already influence economic growth and development patterns in adjacent counties and throughout the state.

• **Ensuring the availability of the region's aggregate resources for extraction before development will save the region millions of dollars in transportation and other construction costs.** To better ensure that the region's limited supplies of aggregate materials are available for use in construction projects, the Minnesota Legislature has directed each local unit of government in the metropolitan area to amend its local comprehensive plan to address issues related to aggregate, when such resources are present in a community. This is a step toward preserving sources of aggregate for the future, but the region will need additional protections and incentives to ensure their continued local availability.

**Increased Housing Production**

**CHALLENGES**

• **The region's production of housing is not providing adequate choices to a population made up of increasingly diverse households.** An adequate supply of housing to provide households with options at all stages of life and all levels of income is important to local and regional livability and economic competitiveness.

While the number of housing units added in the 1990s raised the region's housing stock count to over a million, the production of housing is still not keeping pace—not for the right mix of rental and ownership options and not for the necessary mix of single-family and multi-family housing choices.

The metropolitan area's population and household income experienced considerable growth during the 1990s, but the output of new housing has remained relatively flat. In the 1970s, an average of 17,000 housing permits were issued annually; in the '80s, about 18,000; and in the '90s, about 15,000.4

Meanwhile, the region grew more rapidly in the 1990s than anticipated. The result was low vacancy rates, higher rents and higher home prices. The Council's revised 2020 forecasts, based on 2000 Census data, show 75,000 more households than communities had planned for pre-2000 census. (Many communities raised their forecasts following the census.) In the 1990s, the number of households seeking rental housing increased as the number of rental units being constructed decreased. In the 1970s and 1980s, more than 61,000 new multifamily rental units were added to the housing stock. In the 1990s, production dropped to less than half that. Vacancy rates dropped to less than 2% in some areas of the region.5 Five percent is considered the threshold for a healthy market—one where there are enough units to allow for some choice.

• **Prices for new and existing homes have risen faster than household incomes, and a tight rental market has meant rent increases.** In recent years, home prices have increased at two or three times the rate of inflation. Vacancy rates among more expensive rental properties remain higher while vacancies for affordable rental housing continue to be low and the demand strong.6
According to the 2000 Census, almost one in four Twin Cities households had to pay at least 30% of their income for housing costs.\(^7\) Percentages were slightly higher in 1990, with 26% fitting the Department of Housing and Urban Development’s definition of households with cost burdens.

The plight of lower-income households, however, has improved little—in both years, 8 out of 10 of lower-income household renters paid more than they could afford for housing costs. Also, proportions of low-income owners in this situation have grown significantly over the decade. The 2000 Census statistics show about two-thirds of owners, earning less than $20,000, spent at least 30% of their incomes for mortgage and other housing costs.

- **The adequacy of an available land supply on which to locate a variety of housing for the region’s growing population continues to be a concern shared by the Council, local communities, housing advocates, and homebuilders.** Buildable land with urban services is a key to the provision of a variety of housing choices and prices. With housing occupying more land than any other urban use, sufficient land supply is essential to making the most efficient use of both land and infrastructure. While the opportunity to build more homes on less land does not guarantee lower-cost housing, it does offer the possibility. On the other hand, insufficient serviced land for building necessitates the construction of homes on larger parcels whose cost precludes lower-cost options.

**OPPORTUNITIES**

- **A growing number of employers recognize the importance of locating jobs in places that offer a variety of housing choices linked by easily accessible transportation options.** They are urging cities to respond.\(^8\) Cities are seeing the economic advantages of facilitating a mix of housing that provides choices for a range of ages and incomes. Many are planning for mixed use areas in their comprehensive plans and making changes to local ordinances and official controls to encourage those types of land uses.

- **A variety of programs are in place to expand the supply of lifecycle and affordable housing.** The widening supply-demand gap has created a housing problem that the marketplace cannot remedy by itself. Housing and Redevelopment Authorities (HRAs) in the region administer federal rent-subsidy programs. The Council’s HRA administers the largest Section 8 program in the region. It provides affordable housing opportunities for over 6,600 seniors, families and people with disabilities. It provides housing assistance for low-income households on behalf of 134 suburban and rural communities. Through the Family Affordable Housing Program the Council is using federal dollars to acquire, improve and lease up to 150 affordable housing units throughout the metropolitan area. The Livable Communities Act administered by the Council works through competitive grant processes to help communities create affordable rental and ownership housing, clean up polluted sites, and support mixed-use, transit-oriented development. Other discretionary funding programs within the Council include housing performance criteria, set-asides, and the Inclusionary Housing Incentive Program (SAC waiver) to provide additional financial support for the development of housing.

But the decades-old approach of attempting to address affordable housing shortages with subsidy programs alone cannot keep pace with growing demand. Coalitions of special interest groups, public agencies, businesses and foundations continue to seek and implement solutions. Several regional partnerships have been formed to address housing issues. Among them is the Council’s Housing and Land Use Advisory Committee, the Mayor’s Regional Housing Task Force and the Metropolitan Housing Implementation Group. Local governments also will need to review and reconsider the housing elements of their local land use plans and how they can promote the
availability of land for the development of low- and moderate-income housing to meet the growing number of low- and moderate-income households that are projected to occur within this region during the next 30 years.

- **Population changes are expected to shift consumer preferences in the housing market.** The region's greatest population gain during the 1990s was experienced in the 45-to-54-year-old age group—the leading edge of the baby-boom generation. Age groups in all categories under 35 years of age posted unexpected gains, fueled by the in-migration of ethnic groups from cultures where family sizes tend to be larger, plus 7,000 more births than were expected.

The new-housing market has historically been weighted in favor of single-family housing over multifamily homes such as townhomes and condominiums. But with these population shifts, the market demand for single-family detached housing probably peaked in the early to mid-1990s, and is expected to decline during the next 30 years. While the housing market as a whole is expected to remain strong, the region will see a growing demand for alternatives to the single-family home.

- **Shared interest in maintaining a sufficient supply of buildable, urban-serviced land will strengthen the partnerships necessary to monitor land supply, use existing supplies efficiently, and increase supplies when such adjustments are indicated.** The regional growth strategy emphasizes the importance of how development occurs, guiding much of the anticipated growth in the region toward centers of varied, connected land uses near transit and transportation corridors. It calls for locating 30% of new growth as redevelopment, reuse and infill in older portions of the metropolitan area. These land use strategies bode well for the future of lifecycle and affordable housing only to the extent that mixed, connected land use patterns are achieved. The urgent need to provide more housing options has resulted in new commitments from both the public and the private sector to gauge regularly the available land supply, evaluate actual land uses against the uses indicated in regional and local plans—including designation of urban reserve lands for development post-2030—and work together to respond appropriately to changing markets.

**BENEFITS**

- **The overall well-being of the region relies, in large part, on the adequacy of its housing supply.** From an economic perspective, a blend of housing types enables the business community to draw on the talents of new wage earners entering the workforce. From the standpoint of livability, a mix of housing enables residents and their children to stay in the same community through the various stages of their lives, strengthening community involvement and associations.

- **Having a variety of housing opportunities located near employment concentrations offers a number of advantages to workers, employers and the region as a whole.** For workers, it shortens daily commutes providing more time for personal or family activities. For employers, it reduces business costs related to commuting congestion delays that reduce worker time on the job. And it will increase productivity as commuting-related stress on employees is reduced. For the region’s highway network, it reduces the strain on the system during peak travel periods, opens up local roadway alternatives for the trip to work and the movement of goods, and expands employment opportunities for citizens of the region.
A Protected Natural Environment

CHALLENGES

• **Current patterns of growth threaten the region’s natural resources.** The metropolitan area boasts three majestic rivers, 950 lakes, rolling hills, extensive wetlands, native prairies and woodlands, and a multi-layered underground aquifer system capable of yielding a large supply of good-quality water, provided it is used wisely and protected from pollution.

But development patterns have increased the risk of flooding, and they are short-changing the recharge of aquifers because areas are not protected that would allow the infiltration of stormwater. Current water use does not appear to be sustainable uniformly across the region, and our aquifers are not recharging at the same rate that they are being depleted. Inadequate stormwater management and the increasing amount of impervious surfaces (buildings, roads and parking lots, for example) are degrading the water quality of the region’s lakes and streams with polluted runoff. Destruction of natural habitat has contributed to increased runoff and decreased water quality, as well as loss of vegetation that can improve air quality and support natural areas necessary for the vitality of plant and animal species. While additional lands will be needed for urban uses, patterns of new development can be located and designed in a way that is sensitive to the environment.

• **Additional park and open space lands will be needed to provide the growing population with access to green space and water resources.** The region's expanding population will need additional parks and open spaces if it is to experience the same level of access to green space and water resources that current residents enjoy. That need, coupled with the pattern of land development over the last several decades, suggests that the current level of investments will not be enough to maintain the region's natural heritage—that many remaining natural places are likely to be lost if the current prevailing patterns of separate and poorly connected land uses continue. Natural areas for future parks and open space need to be identified and their acquisition planned before the opportunities to do so are lost.

• **Six ozone alerts have been declared in the last two years raising concerns about the quality of the region’s air.** During the summers of 2001 and 2002, Twin Cities air quality monitors detected increasing amounts of ozone ground levels approaching national ozone 8-hour air quality standards. The levels of increase in ozone led the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency to declare six ozone alert days. If the region begins regularly to exceed the national standard, it seriously risks being reclassified as a non-attainment area for ozone. The Environmental Protection Agency would then direct the region to undertake timely and aggressive measures designed to bring it back into compliance. A non-attainment status for ozone would also seriously impact business operations and expansion.

OPPORTUNITIES

• **Connecting regional and local natural features by natural-resource corridors helps sustain a healthy environment and give shape to the region’s development.** There is a growing awareness that setting aside isolated areas for preservation will not be enough to conserve natural areas for current and future generations. A more comprehensive and sustainable approach is to connect natural features with natural-resource corridors. This encourages communities and developers to incorporate the conservation and restoration of natural areas, parks and other green space into developments in creative and respectful ways.
The Mississippi River Corridor from Saint Paul to Hastings has been an environmental, economic and cultural asset for generations of Minnesotans. The Mississippi River Initiative has united a broad coalition of community leaders, environmental advocates, non-profit organizations, land developers, transportation specialists, government officials and industry and commerce to bring the efforts and visions of all riverfront partners into a cohesive investment and development plan. The work does not focus on jurisdictional boundaries, but instead looks at projects that can be implemented within the context of an integrated and linked corridor. The initiative was funded by the McKnight Foundation with guidance provided by the Metropolitan Council and the Trust for Public Land. Calthorpe Associates, Hoisington Koegler Group, Inc., Great River Greening and Real Estate Strategies LLC provided consulting services. The initiative supports multiple uses of the corridor, with commercial activities, increased residential development, and access to the river and its amenities by the public with the underpinnings of protecting and restoring the ecological integrity of the corridor.

- **Identifying natural resources of regional or local importance and taking steps to conserve and restore them contributes to a healthy natural environment.** Identifying natural resources at the beginning of the planning and development process and incorporating them into the land patterns of the community ensures that the natural environment we so cherish will enrich the lives of our grandchildren. An initial inventory and assessment of natural resources of regional importance are now completed. Local governments have the opportunity to use this regional-level information as a starting point from which to build more detailed maps of resources of local importance. Once local resources are identified, communities can then take steps to conserve them, such as purchasing conservation easements, clustering of development, and implementing best management practices for stormwater.

- **The metropolitan area has already made significant investments in conserving its green spaces through its regional parks and open space system.** From 1974, when the Metropolitan Regional Park System was created by legislation, to July 2002, the Council granted over $356.7 million of state appropriations and Metropolitan Council bond funds for the acquisition of land and improvements to the Metropolitan Regional Park System. The system now includes about 55,000 acres within park boundaries. Twenty-nine million visits were made to regional parks in 2001. Local communities have invested still more millions in community and neighborhood parks and recreation areas for their residents. The 2002 Twin Cities Area Survey shows how much we value access to parks and green space. The strongest agreement was recorded for the statement "As areas develop, governments should do more to protect natural features, such as wetlands, woodlands, lakes and streams." Seventy-two percent strongly agreed and 20% agreed. This high level of support can be helpful in securing the resources needed for additional park and open space lands acquisition.

- **Undertaking voluntary efforts now to reduce volatile organic compounds and nitrogen oxides in the region’s air can help keep the region in compliance with federal clean air standards.** Clean Air Minnesota (CAM) is a multi-stakeholder partnership similar to programs in other regions. It promotes voluntary reductions of volatile organic compounds and nitrogen oxides, the precursors to the formation of ground-level ozone. High levels of participation in the program's initiatives by businesses, governmental and non-governmental public health and environmental organizations in the Twin Cities can help protect the quality of the region's air.
BENEFITS

• In addition to esthetic and recreational benefits, the region’s natural environment performs ecological functions that provide significant economic benefits. Natural areas recharge aquifers for water supply, and they clean and slow the rate of runoff, reducing flood damage and improving the water quality of rivers, lakes and streams. They improve air quality by “filtering” air through tree and vegetative cover. Natural areas also increase the tax base by providing amenities that raise the value of nearby properties.

Conserving resources in order to take advantage of natural air and water filtration systems is far less expensive than the cost involved in replacing lost ecological treatment functions with much more costly technology to provide clean water and air. The Council’s policy plans/guide chapters on the environment and recreation open space, including the wastewater services and recreation open space system plans, will address in greater detail the Council’s plans to meet the challenges and make the most of the opportunities.

• With wise stewardship, the region’s water resources can support the area’s needs well into the future. Plentiful, clean water is essential to sustain the region and secure its future growth. The region uses nearly a billion gallons of water daily for drinking and other personal uses, for cooling power plants, and for commercial and industrial needs. This water satisfies our domestic needs, produces our commercial and industrial products, cools our power plants, irrigates our farmland, assimilates our wastes, conveys water-borne transportation, provides recreational experiences and enhances the urban scene.

Integrating Transportation, Housing and the Natural Environment

CHALLENGES

• Development patterns that disconnect land uses, requiring the use of a car, can limit travel alternatives, increase congestion, isolate seniors and children, and be an obstacle to creating a sense of place. In parts of the region where activities such as shopping, work, medical appointments, and recreational activities are located in widely separate locations, residents must drive from place to place to meet their daily needs. Those making local trips use the same roads being used for through traffic, work trips, and goods movement, meaning increased congestion.

• A spread-out pattern of development exacerbates highway congestion. It strains the capacity of the transportation system by increasing the number and length of vehicle trips, aggravating the congestion problem and forcing commuters and movers of freight to spend long hours in congested traffic. It is not environmentally, economically, or politically sustainable in the long term.

OPPORTUNITIES

• Cities experiencing growth or renewal can expand the range of housing choices, create more physical connections and incorporate unique features that strengthen community focus and a sense of place. Communities are finding that patterns that mix compatible land uses in closer proximity, with connected street patterns can shorten vehicle trips and offer more travel
choices. Changing demographics, rising housing prices and rental rates, and growing highway congestion have helped prompt a growing interest in neighborhoods and communities that provide for a variety of transportation options—walking and cycling, car and transit—and proximity of homes to local retail areas, open space and public places.

Some communities are working to create town centers and "main streets" that combine a mix of housing, retail, connections to parks, and a variety of housing. These efforts signal an emerging realization that development can go a long way to provide a community or neighborhood focus and a sense of place. An Urban Index is a tool that can support local decisions by providing a method to calculate the public benefits of land use patterns that support Blueprint 2030 policies. The Twin Cities' Urban Index will combine measures such as the Council's Regional Travel Demand Model with Smart Growth Twin Cities enhancements and the EPA's recently completed Smart Growth Index computer modeling software program.

- **Having a variety of housing opportunities located near employment concentrations offers a number of advantages to workers, employers and the region as a whole.** For workers, it shortens daily commutes providing more time for personal or family activities. Transit connections among home, work and other destinations can provide cost savings for many households. For employers, it reduces business costs related to commuting congestion delays that reduce worker time on the job. And it will increase productivity as commuting-related stress on employees is reduced. For the region's highway network, it reduces the strain on the system during peak travel periods, opens up local roadway alternatives for the trip to work and the movement of goods, and expands employment opportunities for citizens of the region.

- **There is growing support for changing land use patterns.** The large number of local government applications for funding from the Council's Livable Communities Demonstration Account is one indication. Fund dollars help create mixed-use development that is walkable and transit-friendly. The public funding awarded to local projects from 1996 through 2002 ($44 million) has resulted in a commitment of almost $1.4 billion more in private and other public investment. Communities are benefiting from opportunities to see and replicate successful examples of connected, mixed-use neighborhoods throughout the Twin Cities.

Partnerships with communities and developers are producing neighborhoods with access to transit, shops and open space, with a mix of housing types and costs, and with affordable housing integrated into attractive market-rate developments. Public investments in planning and infrastructure are attracting private investors as the market for this lifestyle continues to grow.

- **Development that integrates transportation, housing and natural resources does not hinge on a massive infusion of tax dollars.** Projects currently under construction clearly demonstrate that partnerships that bring together local government, nonprofit organizations, businesses, and state and regional agencies can secure the resources necessary to carry new efforts to a successful conclusion.

- **Land use patterns are an issue that merits ongoing discussions between metropolitan area communities and those in adjacent counties.** Land patterns in the seven-county metropolitan area both influence, and are influenced by, land use and development decisions in adjacent counties and their communities. Better coordination of land use planning can lead to a resolution of mutual issues.
BENEFITS

- The full potential of transportation, housing, natural features and other factors is best realized when they are considered together in well-conceived land use patterns and arrangements. The result is improved community livability and expanded choices for increased housing opportunities and traveling around the region.

- Redevelopment at centers along transportation corridors, with connections to highways, transit, pedestrian pathways and bicycle trails, could reduce congestion costs and expenditures for local roads and utilities. This approach will reduce long trips on congested roadways, lessen fuel consumption and pollution, and slow the negative impacts on the region's air quality while increasing the amount of worker and lifecycle housing and restraining land consumption. Planning the transportation system and network of connected natural resource features in a way that considers their respective needs and strengths will enhance the effectiveness of both.

- Land-use patterns that mix and connect activities expand choices and opportunities for metropolitan area citizens. Development focused on mixed-use centers allows people to make fewer and shorter auto trips, walk or bike rather than drive, and encourages more transit use. Such patterns of mixed and connected activities enable even those living in single-use, less walkable areas to park once and walk to various destinations.
3. **Blueprint 2030 Policy Directions**

**An Integrated and Aligned Approach**

The seven Blueprint goals are the foundation for key policies that reflect the importance of integration and alignment.

- **Integration** recognizes the connections among all the factors that are important to achieving Blueprint goals—for example, making decisions that consider roadways, transit, housing and parks together to expand choices for commuting to work or for enjoying open spaces. An integrated approach produces an outcome that is greater than the sum of its parts.

- **Alignment** involves directing resources—for example, dollars, regulatory requirements, technical assistance, and partnership actions—so they all work to achieve the same desired outcome and avoid working at cross-purposes. Policies and strategies that align resources help ensure success in achieving Blueprint goals. Integration and alignment are also about making efficient use of limited resources in ways that achieve regional objectives: recognizing that community planning and development in this metropolitan area do not occur in isolation, and that local planning decisions (e.g. housing density and location) may have substantial effects on the function and operation of the existing and planned regional infrastructure for the transportation, wastewater treatment, airports, and parks systems.

The policies work together to:

- Emphasize the importance of the pattern of growth more than the amount.
- Recognize the role that transportation and the conservation of natural resources can play in shaping growth rather than just serving it.
- Acknowledge that lifecycle and affordable housing requires not only the right number and mix of units at the right price, but also the right location, near the right mix of jobs and services connected by a choice of mobility options.
- Achieve regional growth targets with a greater emphasis on redevelopment and infill.
- Provide local governments with more flexibility to stage development.
- Align and seek new tools, resources and incentives to help every community in the region achieve a strong economy and maintain a high quality of life.

The Blueprint's policies incorporate the connections among transportation, natural resources, housing and other land uses into growth patterns that expand choices for people. The policies indicate what the Metropolitan Council will do to contribute to the region's progress toward that outcome.

The Council policies also reflect the new alignment of Council programs, systems, investments and incentives to focus all available resources on the achievement of the regional goals. They emphasize the partnerships that will be needed to accomplish the work by stressing assistance, incentives and facilitation rather than authority, requirements, and regulations.
At the same time, implementing the *Blueprint* is not a one-size-fits-all process achieved through a regulatory, command-and-control, bureaucratic approach. The Council’s *Blueprint* policies recognize there are different types of developments, community needs, and other factors, such as how much and in what manner that particular community will grow, that may be appropriate to consider at the subregional level.

These variations are reflected in “Geographic Planning Areas” designated by the Council and strategies related to those planning areas (see further detail in the section “Strategies for Geographic Planning Areas,” beginning on page 42).

The Council’s growth strategy for the region is illustrated by the “*Blueprint 2030 Growth Strategy*” map. The strategy map includes not only the geographic planning areas, but also regional transit corridors, the major highway network, regional natural resource areas, and regional parks and trails. Cities will be asked to prepare local comprehensive plans based on the regional growth strategy.

The Regional Growth Strategy map (see the last page of this document) identifies an urban area and a rural area, each of which occupies approximately half of the region. The urban area and the rural area are divided into six more specific geographic planning areas: the Developing Communities; the Developed Communities; Rural Growth Centers; the Diversified Rural Communities; the Rural Residential Area; and the Agricultural Preservation Area. If growth occurs consistent with Council forecasts for the region and related Council policies are successful, approximately 92% to 95% of new growth will be located in the urban area with the rest, 5% to 8%, in the rural area, particularly encouraged in small towns designated as Rural Growth Centers.
Policies

Goal: Integrated Land Use, Transportation and Natural Resources

The region's growth patterns are shaped to improve mobility, create connections among local land uses, sustain the natural environment, and expand choices in housing types and locations.

Policy 1: Foster local land-use connections that implement Blueprint goals.

The Council will assist urban-area communities and Rural Growth Centers to develop and redevelop in ways that:

• Connect public spaces, housing, parks, and retail centers within and among communities and neighborhoods.

• Incorporate higher-density residential developments into centers that blend housing with strong job and service uses.

• Incorporate a range of mobility options, conservation and restoration of natural resources, and a variety of housing choices.

Policy 2. Use natural areas to shape development.

The Council will:

• Promote and support the integration of natural resource conservation strategies into regional and local land-use planning decisions.

• Designate additional lands for the regional park system that enhance outdoor recreation for the region and serve important natural resource functions, including access to water bodies.

• Advocate for the production of lifecycle and affordable housing that respects environmentally sensitive areas and uses natural features and green space to enhance livability and access to recreation.

• Support protection of aggregate resources (sand, gravel and crushed rock) from premature urbanization in order to ensure the long-term availability of these resources for the economic and orderly development of the region, including the metropolitan aviation and highway systems, and the ultimate reclamation/reuse of the land.
**Goal: Growth and Redevelopment in Centers along Transportation Corridors**

Urban and rural centers along transportation corridors are the focus for growth and redevelopment that integrates land use and transportation to build and support a sense of place.

**Policy 3: Use centers along highway and transit corridors as a framework for future development.**

The Council will:

- Coordinate transportation investments to support and encourage development at centers along major transportation corridors within the Developing and Developed Communities and in Rural Growth Centers.

- Support an integrated mix of land uses in centers along transit and highway corridors.

- Work with local communities to plan local transportation and transit systems that relate to and support the regional system.

- Enhance the regional travel-demand model to improve sensitivity to the effects of transit-oriented design and density on forecasted travel for all modes.

- Improve and expand the transportation and transit system and transportation choices and opportunities for all the region’s citizens consistent with strategies for Blueprint 2030 Geographic Planning Areas.

**Discussion: Increased Mobility and Access to Opportunities Through Integrated Land-Use Patterns**

A more integrated land-use pattern—combined with an improved, more effective transportation system—can provide greater opportunities to the region’s citizens while meeting new market demands created by both the aging baby-boomers and younger generations.

Recent studies from urban areas around the country document that increased diversity in land use and increased population and employment densities, along with improved pedestrian connections, reduces the traveling public’s reliance on the private automobile. This is because when jobs, housing and services are concentrated in a mixed-use area and connected by walkable streets, people are more likely to walk, bike or use transit to reach their destination, and the auto trips they do make tend to be shorter. The result is a significant reduction in the number of vehicle trips (VT) and vehicle miles traveled (VMT), contributing to improved air quality and a healthier environment compared with a more spread-out, single-use pattern of development.

Some regions, including Portland, Oregon, use an “urban index” that combines these land use factors into a single composite value, based on job density, housing density, and pedestrian quality (which can be measured by block size or number of intersections per 100 acres and by the percentage of streets with sidewalks). Such an “urban index” can be used to compare different neighborhoods or areas and can help transportation modelers estimate the likelihood that local trips will be made by non-auto modes.

As part of the Council’s Smart Growth Twin Cities project, Fehr and Peers Associates evaluated the effects of these land use patterns on Twin Cities travel patterns using the Council’s 2000 Travel...
Behavior Inventory and found results consistent with other urban areas in the U.S. Those results are documented in the technical appendices to the Smart Growth Twin Cities Regional Development Options Report. Fehr and Peers also developed enhancements to the Council's Regional Travel Demand Model that allow Council transportation staff to estimate the effects of these land use patterns on travel behavior when evaluating transportation and land use concepts.

This research shows that per-capita trip and VMT reductions in the range of 10% to 15% can be achieved through land use factors alone. However, the location of development within the region has a larger effect on VMT than all the land use factors combined. Development at the periphery of the region, no matter how well designed, will tend to yield higher VMT and VT per capita than comparable development near the region's core, which is more accessible to many more destinations.

Development located in centers along transportation corridors can offer a mix of uses that combine a variety of housing choices with jobs, retail facilities, green spaces, pedestrian pathways and other uses to achieve the benefits documented by the enhanced travel model. Combining the proximity to transit connections with attractive walking and bicycle paths within such centers reduces the number of trips and shortens travel distances, improving air quality by reducing future commuter mileage associated with energy use. In Rural Growth Centers along transportation corridors through rural and agricultural areas, a mixture of housing, jobs and services in a small-town setting provides an attractive location for those seeking a small town or rural lifestyle.

Centers take the ingredients of standard contemporary development and arrange them in patterns that add up to more than the sum of their parts. Centers integrate land-use patterns, mixing jobs, housing, retail, services and—potentially—open space, and connecting them with walkable streets. Centers can be desirable places to live, visit and do business because they are accessible, attractive and rich in amenities. In creating or strengthening centers, communities can make memorable places that enrich their quality of life.

Centers vary in scale, from the downtowns of the region's two central cities to small centers that provide services to neighborhoods or rural areas. Smaller centers can place lifecycle housing choices within easy walking distance of services and create a "park once and walk" environment for those who drive there. Larger centers can create synergies among civic, employment, retail and residential uses, making places that are active throughout the day and evening and creating a market for high-quality transit service. Centers can be planned as part of new development or created incrementally by adding the "missing pieces"—be they housing, jobs, services or street connections—to existing places in all parts of the region. (See a more detailed description of various types of centers in Appendix C and benchmarks for centers in the "Implementation" section.)

**Outcomes: Council Support to Strengthen Local Land Use Connections**

The increased choices in housing and transit, healthy natural environment, access to open space and rural landscapes, and viable agricultural economy envisioned in the Blueprint's goals will be accomplished only to the degree that local land-use patterns change to provide for them. Actions at the local level need to mirror regional actions to implement Blueprint goals. The way in which each community grows is critical to neighboring communities and the region's continued success.
The Council will use its regional investments and incentives to link Blueprint goals and policies to the local on-the-ground results necessary to make the vision a reality. Funding criteria—revised, if necessary—for incentive programs such as the three Livable Communities Programs (Demonstration Account Development Grants, Housing Incentives Account, and Tax Base Revitalization Account), Regional Parks grants, and TEA-21 Affordable Housing Enhancement Demonstration (AHED) funds will reward projects that meet regional as well as local goals.

For example, Demonstration Account grants are available to fund projects in all parts of the region that create connected places, linked to transit where available, and support walkable neighborhoods; propose a mix of uses; expand housing choices, especially in locations close to jobs; foster distinctive community place; and protect and enhance natural resources.

Council staff and resources will also be available to assist with the implementation of such projects. The Council’s Service Availability Charge (SAC) can be waived for projects that include a variety of housing prices and designs (see discussion of the Inclusionary Housing Incentive Program in the Inclusionary Housing portion of the "Implementation" section).

The Council, with others, will explore the creation of a Revolving Loan Program to assist communities with development projects that blend a variety of housing choices with jobs, shops and services connected to transit, parks and green spaces. (See the "Implementation" section for further discussion.)

In centers located in rural and agricultural areas where regional transportation investments are limited, the Council will consider new regional investments in wastewater treatment facilities to help interested rural cities add more services along with households and jobs. To further reduce development pressures on rural and agricultural lands, the Council will also support enhancing the Metropolitan Agricultural Preserves Program and establishing additional new programs such as the purchase of agricultural preservation easements and local transfer of development rights agreements.

The Council will work with local governments, businesses and development interests to identify corridor locations with the greatest potential to link land use and transportation to create or expand centers. Potential locations along 2025 Transitways, Freeway Transitway Corridors, 2025 Metropolitan Highway System and Interregional Corridors through the region's rural and agricultural areas will receive particular attention.

Providing access to green space and recreational opportunities and incorporating natural features into the design of developments can contribute significantly to the attractiveness of neighborhoods and the quality of life they provide. The Natural Resource Inventory and Assessment is one tool that communities can use to help identify resources that might be protected or restored as a community asset.

In addition to protecting natural resources in suburban and rural areas, current efforts are providing more recreation open space in the developed area—for example, creating regional trails that provide expanded access to regional parks; converting private open space to public open space; and converting land from other uses to parks or open space.
Goal: Increased Lifecycle and Affordable Housing

Expanded choices of lifecycle and affordable housing meet changing demographic trends and market preferences, and support the region’s economic competitiveness.

Policy 4. Increase the production of housing, expand choices in housing locations and types, and improve access to jobs and opportunities.

The Council, with other housing partners, will:

• Support the preservation and production of lifecycle and affordable housing in locations with links to employment accessible by auto, transit, biking or walking.

• Plan for and monitor a land supply sufficient to foster the development of lifecycle and affordable housing.

• Work to increase housing choices that:
  - Are located throughout the region consistent with strategies for Blueprint Geographic Planning Areas.
  - Meet changing market preferences and needs of a population that is shifting in age composition and cultural makeup.
  - Are connected by a choice of mobility options to opportunities around the region as well as to local services and amenities.

Discussion: Growing Housing Imbalances

Affordability. More communities are recognizing the benefits of facilitating a blend of housing types and prices in a variety of community and neighborhood settings. This approach is good for communities, good for families and good for business. To remain economically competitive, lifecycle and affordable housing must become an integral part of the region’s communities and subregions rather than an “add-on.”

And that integration must occur quickly. The region is falling short on production of affordably priced housing. Construction of affordably priced rental housing has not kept pace with demand. As more households enter the ownership-housing market, they discover a similar shortage of low- to moderately priced homes available for purchase.

The Council estimates that almost one-quarter of Twin Cities households live in housing that exceeds 30% of their income—and the numbers are growing. The Family Housing Fund reports that, in June 2002, the 30-percent measure would mean that a family would have to earn $36,640 a year to afford to rent a typical two-bedroom apartment (a monthly rent of $916) or $50,000 per year to afford to buy a modest three-bedroom house (a selling price of $148,000).

Jobs and Housing Locations. The mismatch between jobs and housing adds an additional dimension to the housing supply challenge. As the Family Housing Fund notes, “[t]he need for affordable housing for working families is especially acute in communities with high levels of employment growth but few lower-priced apartments and houses. Many developing communities are experiencing significant job growth, but most affordable housing is concentrated in the center cities and first-
ring suburbs. As a result, while many workers earning low and moderate wages are providing essential services for residents of local communities—child care, food service, or health care, for example—they often are priced out of housing in the communities in which they work.15

The focus of the Council's housing policies is on production, choice and affordability. As surveys show increasing concerns about the adequacy of the region's housing supply,16 the current goal to "increase lifecycle and affordable housing" continues that emphasis. The persistent issue is the "how" of providing a range of housing styles and prices to meet the diverse requirements of the region's households. As the largest user of urban land, housing is a major shaper of development in the region. The vast majority of housing is built by the private sector.

Therefore, while public investments and nonprofit assistance can add to the range of housing choices, a regional approach that supports the private housing market is even more critical. That support must go well beyond the provision of subsidies for the construction of affordable housing units.

**Outcomes: Multiple Strategies Needed**

Multiple strategies are necessary to provide adequate housing to support job growth, connect that housing to jobs with a variety of transportation options, and enable people to remain in their community when their housing requirements change. Some strategies are regulatory and some focus on incentives and partnerships. The Council will identify opportunities to use its investments in infrastructure such as regional transit, and incentives such as brownfield clean-up to leverage private investments in housing. A sufficient supply of land to provide housing options is the foundation upon which other strategies are built.

**Regulatory Strategies.** Minnesota Statutes section 473.859 subdivision 2 requires that cities include "standards, plans and programs" in the housing elements of their comprehensive plans "for providing adequate housing opportunities to meet existing and projected local and regional housing needs, including but not limited to the use of official controls and land use planning to promote the availability of land for the development of low and moderate income housing." The Council, in turn, is required to "review and comment" on the cities' housing plans (Minnesota Statutes section 473.175, subdivision 1).

**Incentives and Partnerships.** In 1995, the legislature added incentives to the regulatory housing requirements with the passage of the Livable Communities Act (LCA). The LCA put in place a voluntary, incentive-based arrangement between local governments and the Council to expand the availability of lifecycle and affordable housing. To be eligible for funds, participating communities, urban and rural, negotiate affordable and lifecycle housing goals with the Council and prepare a housing action plan that identifies programs and activities local governments will implement to achieve the goals.

In return, participating communities are eligible to receive grants for polluted site cleanup, construction and rehabilitation of affordable rental and ownership housing, and development of compact, transit-oriented development that includes a mix of uses, a range of housing types and housing affordability. Such models—for example, Burnsville's Heart of the City and St. Louis Park's Park Commons—provide examples from which other communities can borrow as they plan their own
housing-jobs-transportation connections. Community interest in the LCA programs has been strong. Applications for funding have grown fourfold and requests consistently exceed the dollars available.

The Council has taken a leadership role in convening city leaders, planners, advocacy groups and citizens in several efforts to further encourage the integration of lifecycle and affordable housing into the fabric of all the region's communities. These meetings have helped to shift the discussion in this region from whether we should provide affordable and lifecycle housing to how we will provide it because we understand the benefits it can bring to our communities' economic well-being and quality of life.

Among those efforts have been a Mayors' Regional Housing Task Force that enlisted the help of 17 mayors representing a variety of communities to develop recommendations on ways to increase affordable housing production. Over 6 months, the task force produced a well-received report, released in December 2000, that not only called for additional funding but also identified a number of changes to local government practices, policies, planning and zoning that would make it easier to produce affordable housing. Implementation of the report's recommendations is under way, including the enactment of a number of the task force's proposed legislative changes. The second mayors' task force report was completed in October 2002. It recommends strategies the region could use to meet the demand for housing.

Other partnership efforts have focused on funding. The federal funding that once provided direct appropriations that supported the production of more than 500,000 housing units per year has been significantly curtailed or shifted to directly supplement the incomes of poorer households so they can afford housing. These federal-level changes have placed more responsibility for the production of affordable housing on local communities and nonprofit organizations. Council funding and programs such as its Family Affordable Housing Program, the Livable Communities Act (LCA) Local Housing Incentives Account, the TEA-21 Affordable Housing Enhancement Demonstration (AHED) funding negotiated by former Metropolitan Council Member Carolyn Rodriguez, and the Metro Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) have been used in partnership with other housing programs.

An article in the Nov. 7, 2001, Chicago Tribune contrasted the failure of Chicago's effort to place low-income housing in its suburbs with the success of the Council's Family Affordable Housing Program. The article credited the partnership that brought together suburban developers, politicians and business leaders with the City of Minneapolis and the Metropolitan Council to reach workable agreements. The Council continues to work with the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency, the Family Housing Fund, the Minneapolis Public Housing Authority, Habitat for Humanity, and other agencies and nonprofit organizations to support a variety of projects that provide housing choices throughout the metropolitan area.
Goal: Efficient Infrastructure and Flexible Staging in Developing Communities

Developing communities accommodate new growth through a connected and sustainable pattern of land use based on the adequate, efficient provision of infrastructure and flexible, balanced staging of development.

Policy 5. Support Developing Communities as they grow with regional services, investments and incentives.

A. The Council will invest in regional systems infrastructure (wastewater treatment, transportation, parks and open space, and airports) to serve an adequate supply of land in cities at the urbanizing edge to:

• Accommodate growth forecasts that take into account infill and reinvestment opportunities and the availability of regional services.

• Help increase lifecycle and affordable housing opportunities.

B. The Council will:

• Support cities accommodating forecasted urban growth in a manner consistent with Blueprint 2030 Geographic Planning Area strategies when making investment decisions.

• Provide investments and incentives for local governments to plan for and stage development in a balanced, efficient, flexible and integrated manner.

Discussion: Regional Systems and Planning Partnerships to Support Development that Incorporates Blueprint Goals

Tools for Coordinating and Supporting Growth. The 2000 Census showed strong growth in the region during the 1990s, and Council forecasts estimate a continuation of the trend. The regional infrastructure systems (highways, transit, airports, wastewater treatment, and parks and open space) overseen by the Council are among its most powerful tools for coordinating development and supporting growth in the metropolitan area. Minnesota Statutes sections 473.146, 473.1465, and 473.147, direct the Council to adopt long-range comprehensive policy plans for transportation, airports, wastewater treatment, and regional recreation open space. The Metropolitan Land Planning Act (Minnesota Statutes sections 473.175 and 473.851 to 473.871) gives the Council authority to review local comprehensive plans. (See “Implementation” section for a discussion of the Council’s authority for regional systems.)

While the Council’s review of local comprehensive plans is generally limited to providing comments, under the Metropolitan Land Planning Act, when the Council finds that local plans may have a significant impact on or may contain a substantial departure from regional system plans, the law authorizes the Council to require local governments to change their local plans to ensure conformity with metropolitan system plans.

Together, the regional systems for transportation, airports, wastewater treatment, and regional recreation open space—along with related local infrastructure and services—serve the region’s
urban area and delineate its boundaries. Conversely, the absence of urban-level services in the rural parts of the region influences the amount and type of growth that can occur there.

During November and December of 2002, the Council was in the final stages of revising its city and township forecasts for the Blueprint based on 2000 census data and recent contacts with local governments. Although the revised regional Blueprint household forecasts for 2020 are 75,000 more than the household forecasts in the 1996 Blueprint, the comments from local communities regarding their forecasts indicate that communities, on the whole, are planning to accommodate this growth. Continued planning with local communities will be important to ensure the region will have the infrastructure and services in place to accommodate the expected growth, maintain a strong, competitive economy and high quality of life.

**New Approach to Growth in Developing Communities.** For decades, lands within the urban boundary have been referred to as the Metropolitan Urban Service Area (MUSA). Lands outside the urban boundary have been referred to as the Rural Area. The availability of urban services dramatically changes development patterns, generally making the boundary between urban and rural areas very clear. Over time, the MUSA "area" (that is, the entire area receiving urban services) became secondary to the MUSA "line" as interest centered on communities along the urban edge where the MUSA boundary often divided urban from rural uses within a city's borders.

Most conversations between the Council and cities were about the location of the line and about moving it into or keeping it out of a particular area. And, despite visible reminders of the regional highway, transit, airport, and parks and open space systems within MUSA communities, the term "MUSA" itself came to focus almost entirely on the provision of wastewater treatment services.

This emphasis on the location of boundary lines and wastewater treatment services did not serve the region well, to the extent that it centered on how much growth would occur rather than what kind of growth and focused attention largely on edge communities. It ignored the importance of land use patterns within the MUSA and the Rural Area and the influence all the systems—including transportation, transit, and parks and open space—have on those patterns.

**Blueprint 2030 changes that focus.** Recognizing that, throughout the region, the amount and pattern of expected growth are important for orderly and economic development and a high quality of life, the Council is taking an approach that considers both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of growth and development and uses all the regional systems to shape land use. In the case of Developing Communities, the manner in which land is developed is a matter of both local and regional concern. The increased housing choices, improved connections to jobs, access to transit and recreation, healthy environment, and conservation of natural resources and agricultural lands sought by the region's citizens require careful attention to the way development occurs.

The Council's discussions with Developing Communities will focus not on the location of an urban service "line," but on how regional services can shape and support local planned land use patterns while also achieving regional goals. The Calthorpe report (Appendix E) clearly shows that the amount of infill and redevelopment and the way in which lands in Developing Communities are developed directly influence how long the current supply of urban-serviced land will last, and how much and when additional lands will need such services—services that will call for substantial new investments.\(^{19}\)
Outcomes: Investments and Incentives in Developing Communities

From the '50s to the present, Developing Communities have accommodated the greatest share of the region's growth, and the Council expects they will continue to attract new growth through 2030—approximately 62% of anticipated household growth and about half of the employment growth. Although the Developing Communities' portion of new growth won't change much, the Blueprint calls for changes to the pattern of growth. Land use patterns in today's Developing Communities began during the years following World War II—the familiar arrangement of separate large housing subdivisions, office parks and shopping centers possible only on the large tracts of undeveloped land at the edge of the urban area. In the Twin Cities metropolitan region, that outward expansion of urbanization has occurred at a rate of about one ring of new communities per decade.

Local comprehensive plans for Developing Communities already designate sufficient land to accommodate forecasted growth through 2030, either as areas currently planned and staged for urban services through 2020 (a regional total of 668,000 acres) or in areas designated as urban reserves for growth after 2020 (regional total of 69,000). Even if the percentage of new growth that occurs as reinvestment drops to 15% and housing mix and land use patterns do not fully meet Blueprint performance-based standards, the expectation for additions to the land supply from urban reserves through 2030 is 57,000 acres, well within the 69,000 acres of designated urban reserves. The Council is committed to making that 69,000 acres last longer. (See the Developing Communities portion of the Implementation section for additional details regarding investments and incentives.)

Rather than planning for and building the same patterns of separated uses to the boundaries of current Developing Communities and expanding urban infrastructure into a new ring of communities to replicate this model, the Council will use its investments and incentives to support a more fiscally sound, efficient and sustainable pattern of mixed and interconnected uses linked not only by roads but also by transit options. It's a pattern that will provide each community with more choices for housing and travel, enable those who choose to be life-long residents, slow the need to extend public infrastructure and services to new areas, and conserve today's developable lands and urban reserve lands for continued urban growth through at least mid-century.
Goal: Increased Reinvestment, Redevelopment, Adaptive Reuse and Infill

Fully developed communities and older areas are the focus for reinvestment to ensure their continued vitality through maintaining and renewing buildings, land, parks, streets, water and sewer lines, and other public and private infrastructure.

Policy 6. Support the revitalization of communities as they change and respond to market preferences.

The Council will:

• Work in partnership with Developed Communities, Developing Communities, and Rural Growth Centers to plan for and locate a significant percentage of new jobs and new housing units, including lifecycle and affordable housing options, as redevelopment on currently used lands or infill on lands previously passed over for development.

• Give high priority to investments in regional infrastructure that support infill and redevelopment in the region in a manner consistent with Blueprint 2030 Geographic Planning Area strategies.

• Provide incentives to cities and businesses to reclaim, infill and redevelop underutilized land, paying particular attention to opportunities to create centers along transportation corridors.

• Use the Minnesota Land Recycling Act and Livable Communities Tax Base Revitalization Account to fund the cleanup of contaminated lands, restoring them to productive commercial, industrial and residential use.

• Continue to invest in rehabilitating existing regional park system infrastructure and developing new recreational facilities in the Developed Communities.

• Support making additional tools and resources available to local government units to implement reinvestment projects and activities.

Discussion: A Cycle of Change Requiring Reinvestment

The Aging Process of Cities. All communities and neighborhoods go through cycles of growth, change and renewal. Each part of the cycle offers its own set of challenges and opportunities. Maintenance and investment in public infrastructure and residential, commercial, industrial and institutional buildings is necessary throughout these cycles to keep buildings and neighborhoods attractive and safe and communities desirable locations for existing and new households and jobs.

But there are points throughout the life of a community when significant changes occur, requiring additional investments. Over time, community demographics change, market preferences and needs shift, and both buildings and infrastructure become inadequate or obsolete. These natural, recurring changes require investments that go beyond basic maintenance to adapt or replace buildings, remodel or replace infrastructure and improve community amenities to meet the needs of a growing and changing population and economy. Without adequate resources, regional and local strategies to renew communities will ultimately fail, contributing to higher overall costs resulting from the provision of additional roads, sewers, and other services to former greenfields in order to accommodate growth.
Advantages of Reinvestment. Reinvestment and redevelopment can save money in the long run by effectively using existing infrastructure and reducing the need to expand services. By lessening the need for greenfield development, reinvestment can also help to preserve agricultural lands, rural areas and open space.

Reinvestment and reuse, particularly at centers along transit corridors, also provide significant opportunities to create or enhance desirable “small town” places within the urban area by incorporating improved access to transit, increased housing choices, better connections among land uses, and natural resource restoration and mitigation into reinvestment plans. Reinvestment and reuse can also help extend opportunities denied to low-income residents and communities of color by previous land use and investment patterns.

Outcomes: One-Third of Growth on Redeveloped or Passed-Over Land

Reinvestment efforts are succeeding. Local governments are offering their support and planning guidance. The Council’s Tax Base Revitalization Account is assisting with land cleanup costs; the Demonstration Account is moving projects from planning to production; and regional investments will help ensure that there is adequate regional infrastructure to support reinvestment. These dollars reflect the strong market demand for this type of development. Council grants totaling $83.6 million from these two Livable Communities Accounts since 1996 have leveraged private investment of $2.3 billion. If all the qualified applications were funded under these programs, the annual demand would require twice the funding levels currently possible.

But more support, more committed public/private partnerships, and more cooperation are needed in order to locate a significant amount of forecasted new households and jobs in redevelopment and infill areas. Additional financial support would put still more projects on the ground. More assistance with site assembly, land cleanup and required infrastructure improvements would help reduce both risks and costs. Political and public support, updated zoning ordinances, shorter and more streamlined review and permitting processes, and more flexible development regulations would attract additional projects and developers.

Restoration and redevelopment of sites that have known or suspected contamination are another way in which the natural environment can be used to help shape land use patterns. Minnesota continues to be a leader in brownfield redevelopment as it addresses the many challenges related to returning brownfields to productive use. Existing brownfield clean-up programs have a criterion that weights funding on the ability of a restored parcel to produce tax-base. These programs are very successful, with many more applicants than funds. Discussions are occurring to develop an additional funding source that would encourage redevelopment of contaminated lands for other purposes, based on community desires and the end-use of the land. A coalition of partners focused on expanding the redevelopment of brownfields to green space has defined the need for additional funding, identified potential clean-up sites and is seeking funding sources to pilot brownfield redevelopment that supports green space, public use and housing as an element of brownfield redevelopment activities. Redevelopment that incorporates a variety of end uses will help the region achieve its reinvestment goals as well as ensure sustainable, livable communities.
The Council will encourage cities to locate new housing units and jobs in reinvestment and reuse areas so that, overall, 30% of new housing units and about half of new jobs in the region are located on redeveloped land or land previously passed over for development. Building permit data for housing shows that over 26% of new growth in Developed Communities is currently occurring as infill, adaptive reuse and redevelopment. Increasing that percentage to 30% region-wide, while ambitious, is attainable without the necessity of converting lands communities have designated for commercial/industrial development to residential uses.

This type of development will take place in the central cities, the fully developed suburbs, and in the already built-up portions of the developing suburbs, Regional Growth Centers (larger rural cities like Hastings) and Rural Growth Centers. The Metropolitan Council will also encourage cities to organize development in reinvestment and reuse areas in communities that provide for adequate affordable housing for all citizens. (See additional details under “Strategies for Geographic Planning Areas.”)

The Council recognizes that the rate and pattern of growth can vary significantly from year to year and area to area. To track progress in each Geographic Planning Area, the Council will monitor population estimates and building permits annually. It will also periodically examine information about reinvestment, infill and new plats. In 2005, midway to the 2010 census, the Council will assess the degree to which the region’s development patterns and supply of urban-serviced, buildable land reflect the Regional Growth Strategy. Any necessary adjustments to land supply or growth expectations indicated by the assessment will be made as part of the process for preparing system statements to be sent to local governments to assist them with completing the updates to their 2008 comprehensive plans.

Council investments in and incentives for reinvestment and infill will help maintain current infrastructure; renew and improve infrastructure, buildings and land—such as vacant or underused strip malls—for additional growth, particularly at centers along transit corridors; and create developments that blend housing, retail, jobs, and green spaces.
Goal: Protected Natural Resources

Natural resources have been conserved and protected in ways that sustain a healthy natural environment and enhance the quality of life.

Policy 7. Conserve natural resources as the region grows.

The Council will:

• Work to conserve and enhance natural resources of regional importance as part of regional growth-management decisions and encourage and assist local governments to conserve natural resources of local importance as part of their own development decisions.

• Work with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and other regional and local partners to align policies, programs, and incentives to conserve, protect and enhance the region's natural resources.

• Work in partnership with others to protect all of the 73,000 acres of natural resources of regional importance identified as unprotected in the 2002 Natural Resources Inventory and Assessment.

Discussion: Natural Environment Under Strain

As the pull of the region’s strong economy enables those born here to fulfill their aspirations and encourages others to come, the region's natural environment is feeling the strain. Urbanization is infringing upon the remaining natural areas. The Natural Resource Inventory and Assessment indicates that natural resources of regional importance cover about 12% (approximately 230,000 acres) of the metropolitan area. About 73,000 acres of that total (about 4% of the metropolitan area) are unprotected and could potentially be damaged or lost (see list of maps from the NRI/A Atlas in Appendix L). Additionally, development on or near deposits of aggregate resources has eliminated access to about 45% of the aggregate originally available in the metropolitan area.20

The water quality of area rivers, lakes and streams has been affected as urban uses have increased stormwater runoff—runoff that contains phosphorus and other nutrients, along with chemical contaminants from lawn fertilizer, oils, road salt other pollutants from paved or hard surfaces. A Council study showed that the amount of phosphorus in runoff in storm-sewered urban areas ranged from 300 to 1,200 pounds per square land mile, versus phosphorus runoff in rural watersheds of 200 to 300 pounds per square land mile.21

Increased growth is putting a strain on surface and groundwater used for water supply and decreasing recharge of our aquifers. Groundwater levels in the region's principal aquifers have steadily declined. For example, water levels in an observation well in the Mt. Simon aquifer in Savage have declined 80 feet between 1980 and 2000. Levels in observation wells in the Jordan aquifer in Orono and Bloomington have declined by 30 and 20 feet, respectively. A Council study of 17 sites in urban and agricultural watersheds showed that average early runoff for storm sewered areas equals 15 inches per square mile versus only 0.2 inches per square mile for rural watersheds.22

Increased highway congestion is degrading the region's air quality. For example, in a 1999 Staff Paper on Air Toxics, the MPCA identified ambient concentrations of several air toxics in the
metropolitan area’s air that exceeded the Minnesota Department of Health’s Risk Values (levels
determined to be safe for public exposure), including benzene, formaldehyde and diesel particulate
matter. The report stated that these pollutants came from predominantly mobile sources (cars,
trucks and buses) and small stationary sources such as wood stoves and gas stations. Appendix A of
the report, published in 2001, noted “the MPCA is concerned about...air pollutants emitted by motor
vehicles ... and other gasoline-powered engines (lawnmowers, snowblowers, etc.). These engines emit
more than half of some air pollutants in Minnesota, including those that cause smog, or ‘ground-level
ozone.’ Engines also put out toxic air pollutants that can increase our risk of developing cancer.”

The MPCA’s declaration of six ozone alert days during the summers of 2001 and 2002 offers
further evidence that the region’s air quality is at risk. The alerts signaled high levels of ground-
level ozone, indicating that the region could be heading towards noncompliance with national clean
air standards. In 2001, for example, monitors recorded ozone levels equal to 97% of the 8-hour
national standard. When found as ground level concentrations, irritation of the respiratory
system—particularly in children, active adults, the elderly and people with respiratory diseases—
may occur. Coordinated action involving the private and public sectors is needed to avoid further
increases in ozone ground levels.

Outcomes: New Measures Needed

There is a growing understanding that achieving a sustainable natural environment requires certain
measures. Best management practices need to be followed to keep pollutants out of surface and
groundwater resources. Proper practices for individual on-site septic systems and local and regional
wastewater treatment need to be in place to minimize impacts from sewage disposal on our waters
and natural habitats. Development and redevelopment should occur in a manner that has no adverse
impact on the region’s water quality so that the quality of the water leaving the region is as good as
when it enters. Animals, birds and plants need habitats that allow for movement or migration from
place to place within a collection of "green corridors" linking natural resource areas. Those same
green corridors help to recharge aquifers, filter water and air, and can also provide access to
nearby natural settings and recreational opportunities to a larger number of urban residents.

A building block for a regional “green infrastructure” is a recently developed Regional Natural
Resources Inventory and Assessment (NRI/A)—a collaborative effort of the Metropolitan Council,
the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and a working group of the Regional Environmental
Partnership—a partnership effort involving the Metropolitan Council, representatives of state
agencies, nonprofit environmental organizations, county and municipal governments and private
businesses. (See Blueprint appendices for reference to map series showing results of the Natural
Resource Inventory and Assessment.)

The NRI/A created a series of maps that identify important natural resources and related
features. These maps are new tools that the Council, cities, townships and counties can use as they
make planning and development decisions. The maps and related data serve as a starting point for an
inventory and assessment of natural resources of local importance. Together the regional inventory
and the inventories completed by local governments will enable the Council and communities to
consider the inherent integrity of natural areas and integrate existing terrestrial resources, water
resources and related cultural features into the design of their communities and neighborhoods.
To protect the quality of the region’s air, the Council supports the objectives of the Clean Air Minnesota (CAM) program to promote, leverage and organize voluntary reductions of volatile organic compounds and nitrogen oxides (precursors to the formation of ground-level ozone). The Minnesota Environmental Initiative, an organization that creates and sustains innovative partnerships to improve the environment, is coordinating the CAM program. As an active member of CAM, the Council will lead by example, taking steps to reduce the creation of volatile organic compounds and nitrogen oxides in its own operations. The Council will also promote participation in CAM by other regional governmental and nongovernmental organizations and businesses.
Goal: Preserved Rural Areas and Agricultural Land

Rural communities are sustained as rural places and productive agricultural lands are preserved as a long-term asset of the region.

Policy 8. Preserve rural areas and agricultural lands as long-term features of the region.

A. To preserve the character of rural areas, the Council will:
   • Support Rural Growth Centers as the focus for the growth anticipated in the rural area.
   • Recognize a Rural Residential Area encompassing existing areas of near-urban level development where additional development should occur only if the local government has a plan and investment program consistent with the Metropolitan Council's plan review criteria.
   • Provide technical and/or financial support for wastewater services in Rural Growth Centers, where feasible.
   • Partner with local governments to limit growth in Diversified Rural Communities, Rural Residential and Agricultural Areas.
   • Support needed highway investments to connect agricultural lands to markets, and rail and water transportation terminals.

B. To preserve rural and agricultural lands, the Council will use regional system investments and local incentives to support two land-use types outside the urban area:
   • Agricultural Preservation Areas protected from non-farm development to ensure the continued use of prime soils for agricultural production and the continued presence of agriculture as a significant sector of the local/regional economy.
   • Diversified Rural Communities, the appropriate locations for a rural lifestyle option that conserves significant natural resources while providing for a mix of limited large-lot residential and clustered housing with agriculture and other uses including facilities and services of value to the metropolitan area but requiring a rural location (nurseries, campgrounds, etc.).

Discussion: Pressures on Rural Areas

Roughly half of the 3,000 square miles in the seven-county Twin Cities area are rural. That includes cultivated farmland, nurseries, tree farms, orchards and vineyards, scattered individual home sites or clusters of houses, hobby farms, small towns, gravel mines, woodlands, and many of the region's remaining important natural resources. The rural landscape and related rural land uses are integral to this region. They provide the foundation for a productive agricultural economy, contain aggregate resources, and support natural areas, recreational opportunities, and wildlife habitat.

But as the metropolitan area continues to grow, so do the challenges of balancing the needs of urbanization with the desire to preserve rural lifestyles, agricultural land and natural resources. Urban area cities need to grow in new ways, paying greater attention to the design of new neighborhoods, increasing cleanup and reuse of contaminated land, and developing on land previously overlooked for development. Rural area cities may need assistance in order to accommodate more of the region's residents who are seeking a home in a small rural town.
The rural landscape is changing. The amount of land in farming is declining. Open spaces are being transformed into more intensive uses. High-quality natural areas are being destroyed or degraded, and rural towns are facing the possibility of increased costs to provide the public services required to respond to market pressures for small-town and rural living.

More and more homes served by individual sewage treatment systems (ISTS) and private wells are scattered throughout the rural area, increasing concerns about the long-term effects on the region's groundwater and the health of rural area residents. Proposals for newer alternative wastewater treatment methods such as community drainfields have a limited history in the region making their long-term performance uncertain. Should such a system or a number of proximate individual systems fail, local communities would be expected to undertake costly mitigation measures.

Outcomes: New Approaches to Support Agriculture and Rural Living

Policies for the region's rural areas continue the Council's long-standing support for maintaining rural and agricultural lands and small towns in the seven-county area and propose several new approaches to accomplish that goal:

- For the first time the Council will offer assistance with infrastructure, particularly wastewater treatment, to guide growth to small towns—identified as Rural Growth Centers—as an alternative to scattered growth in rural and agricultural areas.

- A never-before-available inventory and assessment of natural resources of regional importance will be provided to rural communities as a starting point from which they can develop an inventory of natural resources of local importance that will enable them to integrate natural and cultural resources into their community design.

- Diversified Rural Communities will have more flexibility to plan their land use patterns. While forecasts and strategies continue to support an overall density of 1 house per 10 acres, calculations will be made on a 64/640 acre basis. Within these larger areas, communities are urged to plan land use patterns that will conserve natural resources of regional or local importance, be appropriate for rural roads, and maintain a "rural character" (as locally defined), rather than continuing what currently is often the practice of dividing the land into 10-acre parcels.

- The Council will advocate strengthening the existing Metropolitan Agricultural Preserves Program by adding an option for a longer enrollment term in exchange for a higher conservation credit and will work with counties and local governments to develop, fund and implement new programs for the purchase of agricultural preservation easements.

- A new geographic planning area—the Rural Residential Area—acknowledges locations in the rural area that have been developed on lots of 2 ½ acres or less, distinguishes them from the Diversified Rural Communities and provides specific guidance regarding regional expectations, investments and incentives.
The Council will use regional investments and incentives to help **Rural Growth Centers** accommodate growth as an alternative to scattered development in the rural area and to support the expansion of services, such as retail, that are needed to support residential development.

Regional parks, open space and green corridor investments in the **Diversified Rural Communities** will focus on patches and connections that contribute to the conservation of natural resources of regional importance as well as provide a balanced system of recreation for the region’s residents and visitors. Investments in wastewater treatment and transportation infrastructure will be consistent with the Council’s intent to limit the amount of development occurring in the Diversified Rural Communities. The Council will use other resources such as technical assistance, and approaches such as monitoring the management of wastewater treatment systems to assist Diversified Rural Communities with meeting regional goals.

Regional investments and incentives for the **Rural Residential Area** will be used primarily to encourage communities to identify opportunities to establish centers to provide convenience goods and services to community residents, rather than expanding low-density housing patterns.

In the **Agricultural Preservation Area**, the Council will focus existing incentives and support new initiatives to preserve high-quality soils for existing or future agricultural use. Investments in regional infrastructure such as roads, wastewater treatment, and parks and open space will be for rural levels of service consistent with the intent to preserve agriculture.
4. Implementation

Blueprint Strategies

GENERAL APPROACH

Four key strategies provide the framework for implementing Blueprint policies in partnership with local, state and federal governments; other regional agencies; the business community; and nonprofit, public-interest organizations. The focus of these strategies is on what the Council will do, but their success depends on the active participation of the Council's partners and the region's citizens. Because different parts of the region have differing characteristics and needs, these primary strategies are translated into more-specific initiatives tailored to six areas the Council has identified (see next section—"Strategies for Geographic Planning Areas").

1. Focusing Growth and Reinvestment in Urban and Rural Centers on Highway and Transitway Corridors

Integrating land use and transportation in centers along corridors offers great potential for combining transit, housing, offices, retail and services, open space and connected streets into livable neighborhood settings. The benefits accrue to the region as a whole—slowing the consumption of open land for urbanization; increasing proximity to transportation options; saving taxpayers money through avoided expenditures for local roads and utilities; saving billions of dollars in congestion costs; increasing the amount of housing that is affordable and matches the changing market preferences of the population; and slowing the increase in travel on our region's highways.

The Council will align its resources, support local governments and work with business and development interests to foster the development, expansion or renewal of centers that include connected streets and appropriate densities of housing and employment. (See Appendix C for a more detailed discussion of centers.)

2. Using a Regional Inventory and Assessment of Important Natural Resources to Protect Environmentally Sensitive Areas and to Shape Growth

The Natural Resource Inventory and Assessment (NRI/A) constitutes a valuable database of natural resources of regional importance across the metro area. Communities can use the information as a starting point from which to build more detailed local maps of local resources. Communities can then take steps to conserve identified resources, such as purchasing conservation easements, clustering development, or implementing best management practices for stormwater.

The Council will make these data available to local governments and pursue funding to enable communities to conduct their own local inventories and assessments.
3. Promoting a Connected, Flexible and Sustainable Pattern of Land Use as Developing Communities Grow

Between now and 2030, the Developing Communities are expected to accommodate 62% of the projected household growth. These communities are also expected to capture about half of the projected employment growth.

The Council will support local governments with incentives, regional systems, and technical assistance if their plans:

- Accommodate growth forecast for 2030 in balanced phases;
- Plan for the entire community and long term, post-2030 growth;
- Recognize that there will be a mix of growth areas and non-growth areas and encourage overall densities of 3-5 housing units per residential acre for new residential development, with 8-30 units per acre or more in centers and in infill and redevelopment areas;
- Maintain 20-year land supplies;
- Conserve natural resources; and
- Support centers along transportation corridors.

4. Increasing Reinvestment in Developed Communities and Other Older Areas

Over the next 30 years, the Developed Communities and the older parts of Developing Communities are expected to accommodate 30% of the region's household growth and about half of the employment growth on redeveloped or passed-over lands or through adaptive reuse of existing structures.

The Council will support local governments with incentives, regional systems, and technical assistance if their plans:

- Accommodate growth forecast for 2030 and beyond;
- Support infill, redevelopment, and adaptive reuse;
- Achieve densities of 8 to 30 or more residential units per acre in centers along transit corridors and 3 to 5 units or more outside of centers;
- Maintain current infrastructure as well as renew and improve infrastructure, buildings, and land;
- Conserve and restore natural resources; and
- Focus development in centers along transit corridors.

(See Appendix A for additional discussion of the regional growth strategy in Developed and Developing Communities.)
STRATEGIES FOR GEOGRAPHIC PLANNING AREAS

Developing Communities

Council investments in and incentives for the Developing Communities will focus on accommodating growth, supporting centers along corridors, encouraging connected land use patterns for new development, and encouraging the development of communities where shopping, jobs and a variety of housing choices co-exist by design.

Developing Communities are the cities whose boundaries form the edge of the urban area—places like Lakeville, Woodbury and Maple Grove, plus the rural city of Hastings. These are communities where the largest amount of vacant, serviceable and developable land is located and, therefore, where the most substantial amount of new growth will happen. Growth forecasts for this area indicate that approximately two-thirds of total regional growth will occur in the communities it contains.

The Council will encourage development in this area that incorporates a mix of complementary land uses, with 3 to 5 housing units per residential acre and 8 to 30 units per acre in centers along regional transitways and in infill or redevelopment areas. (“Residential acres” are defined as areas of residential land use that include local streets, alleys, parks, and locally protected natural resources but exclude major transportation rights-of-way, major parks and open space, National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) wetlands and steep slopes of over 18%).

The Council expects that Developing Communities will accommodate approximately 62% of anticipated household growth (some through reinvestment) and about 41% of the employment growth over the next 30 years. Local comprehensive plans already designate sufficient land to accommodate this growth through 2030. The Council is planning and staging its infrastructure systems to serve portions of Developing Communities in the decades ahead. To accommodate household growth projected to 2030, the region will need to add approximately 16,000 residential acres to the 2020 area of urbanization identified in local comprehensive plans.

In the event that permitted development does not fully meet the Council’s expectations for housing mix and land use patterns, or that reinvestment levels achieve only half (15%) of the 30% goal, the region could need to add as much as 32,000 residential acres. The Natural Resource Inventory and Assessment identifies approximately 5,000 acres of unprotected natural resources of regional importance in this residential land supply. Protecting all of these natural resource lands would require an additional 5,000 acres for residential development, bringing the residential acreage total to 21,000 (assuming 30% of regional growth is reinvestment) or 37,000 acres (assuming that 15% of regional growth is reinvestment). The region will also need to provide urban services to additional land for other uses such as commercial and industrial development (about 40% of the total demand), for a total future need for additional urban-serviced land of approximately 35,000 to 62,000 acres.
### Additional Land Needed for 2030 Metropolitan Urban Service Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assumptions</th>
<th>Residential Not Affected by Natural Resource Areas</th>
<th>Replacement Residential for Natural Resource Areas Needing Protection</th>
<th>Commercial, Industrial, Other</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expected housing mix, land patterns, reinvestment achieved</td>
<td>16,000 acres</td>
<td>5,000 acres</td>
<td>14,000 acres</td>
<td>35,000 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing mix, land patterns fall short: 50% less reinvestment</td>
<td>32,000 acres</td>
<td>5,000 acres</td>
<td>25,000 acres</td>
<td>62,000 acres</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Council will work in partnership with Developing Communities through the comprehensive planning process to identify which lands should receive metropolitan services and to establish staging plans that maintain a 20-year urban land supply over time. When reviewing a Developing Community's next comprehensive plan, the Council will then evaluate the amount and location of land proposed for urban services. If the Council is satisfied that development on the land identified by the city could be served in an efficient and economical manner and is in alignment with Council policies, the Council will then proceed to provide the city with a 10-year wastewater service commitment and begin planning its infrastructure investments accordingly. The cities, in turn, will need to consider how they will locally stage and serve the growth forecast for them, including how they will ensure a supply of serviceable land for growth beyond 2030.

The Council recognizes the 2020 Metropolitan Urban Service Area established in Council-reviewed local comprehensive plans as the regional service area through 2020. It will expedite reviews of comprehensive plan amendments that maintain a 20-year land supply by moving to the areas designated to receive urban services by 2020 in instances where regional systems will be available and adequate. Within that 20-year land supply the Council believes it is significantly more important to achieve the kinds of connected land use patterns described in the Blueprint than just to have contiguous growth. Provided regional services are adequate to serve the growth planned by a city, the city can determine the location of that growth based on local staging and timing decisions.

A Developing Community should plan for its whole area rather than merely focusing on increments of growth through amendments to its comprehensive plan. In the next round of comprehensive plan updates, required by state law once every 10 years (or in 2008), Developing Communities will be asked to plan an urban reserve for growth anticipated beyond 2030. The cities should consider their entire jurisdiction when proposing new areas for urbanization, taking into account municipal growth forecasts and infill and redevelopment opportunities, local and regional capabilities to provide infrastructure, environmental protection, community preferences, and other factors.
### Table 1: Strategies for the Developing Communities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy Direction</th>
<th>Transportation and Land Use Patterns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Policy Direction** | • Invest in regional infrastructure (roads, transit, wastewater treatment, and parks and open space) to support staged development and to expand locational choice for new development while meeting regional growth forecasts.  
  • Advocate that communities establish long-term urbanization areas (urban reserves) that will accommodate growth forecast beyond 2030. The Council would prefer densities averaging 1 unit per 40 acres where possible. However, recognizing that greater densities already exist in much of the urban reserve area, the Council will accept densities between 1 unit per 10 acres and 1 unit per 40, while favoring pre-urbanization strategies in the urban reserve that result in construction of the fewest possible number of homes.  
  • Invest regional resources in, and encourage communities to look for, opportunities for development that blends housing with other uses in centers along transportation corridors.  
  • Develop regional infrastructure (wastewater treatment systems, roads, parks and open space, and airports), in a way that conserves natural resources and avoids or protects sensitive natural resource areas. |
| **Transportation and Land Use Patterns** | • Plan and invest in a variety of transportation choices, including roads, busways, pathways, expanded bus/transit service, light rail and commuter rail service.  
  • Use transit stations and transit service (where available) as catalysts for development of centers along transportation corridors.  
  • Encourage cities to plan for various kinds of centers that are desirable places to live, shop and do business.  
  • Use regional systems (especially transportation) and incentive programs to serve centers in communities that choose to build them, with the type of service provided to be coordinated with the type of center.  
  • Use regional investments and incentives to improve connections between land uses and transportation.  
  • Support connecting workplaces, residences, retail and entertainment activities in centers along transportation corridors.  
  • When funding the development and enhancement of centers, the Council will give funding priority to centers where there is a high level of local commitment, clearly identified roles (public and private) and overall readiness to implement projects.  
  • Make strategic capacity expansions; support improvements to principal arterials and A-minor arterials, including county roads.  
  • Encourage cities and townships to plan for and implement a system of fully interconnected local streets, pathways and bikeways and support such projects in funding programs.  
  • Partner with cities and counties to plan for interconnected bicycle and pedestrian paths.  
  • Work with communities to meet legislative requirements to address aggregate issues in their comprehensive plans; provide technical assistance to communities as they do so. |
Table 1: Strategies for the Developing Communities

| Transportation and Land Use Patterns (continued) | • Promote the preservation and development of various freight modes and modal connections, such as timely access by the users of freight facilities, to adequately serve the movement of freight within the region and to provide effective linkages with statewide, national and international markets.  
• Develop transportation in a way that avoids sensitive natural resource areas and ensures that necessary additions and improvements take place in the most sustainable way possible.  
• Encourage cities to address the safety and mobility of principal arterials and A-minor arterials (some of which are county roads) by planning and developing a fully interconnected system of local streets, pathways and bikeways to provide the necessary internal access and circulation.  
• Work with Developing Communities to incorporate Mn/DOT's access management guidelines into local plans and ordinances.  
• Encourage compatible land uses as identified in the Land Use Compatibility Guidelines for Aircraft Noise. |
| --- | --- |
| Housing and Land Use Patterns | • Ensure an adequate land supply to meet the needs of the regional economy and respond to demographic trends.  
• Promote the provision of greater affordable and life-cycle housing opportunities through the adoption of, and commitment to, regional and local housing goals, the provision of technical assistance, and the use of regional investments and discretionary funding.  
• Endorse the use of performance-based density incentives to allow for a diversity of housing types and costs.  
• Encourage planning and zoning incentives to allow for a range of mixed-income housing types and costs, and a range of household incomes served.  
• Achieve community-wide housing densities of 3 to 5 units per residential acre for new residential development. ("Residential acres" are defined as areas of residential land use that include local streets, alleys, parks, and locally protected natural resources but exclude major transportation rights-of-way, major parks and open space, NWI wetlands and steep slopes of over 18%.)  
• Apply funding program criteria that give priority to connected mixed-use, mixed-income projects that include varied housing types (in project areas or when added to existing housing project areas) and contribute significantly to a project area's sense of place and quality of life.  
• Achieve densities of 8 to 30 units per acre or more in centers along transportation corridors.  
• Encourage investment in housing that incorporates environmentally sensitive techniques—for example, innovative stormwater management and/or habitat restoration.  
• Encourage and invest in housing that conserves and incorporates natural resources as amenities and attracts private housing investment.  
• Invest in housing that supports access to jobs through a variety of transportation choices. |
Table 1: Strategies for the Developing Communities

| Natural Environment and Land Use Patterns | • Conserve natural resources of regional importance, based on best available data, as part of regional growth management decisions by integrating environmental resource conservation strategies into regional and local land use planning decisions.  
• Support local government actions to conserve natural resources of local importance based on a local inventory and assessment and to integrate the inventory into their planning and development decisions.  
• Restore degraded natural resources.  
• Encourage local governments to develop performance-based standards to measure the impact of land uses on natural resources and promote sustainable development.  
• Encourage best management practices for prevention and control of polluted runoff and erosion in all development activities and especially creative solutions in areas where there are natural resources of regional and local importance.  
• Partner with others to preserve and connect natural resources of regional importance.  
• Provide wastewater services that are efficient, cost-effective and environmentally sound to areas that support the Council's Regional Growth Strategy.  
• Maintain or replace regional wastewater facilities as they age or become obsolete.  
• Support proper management of on-site septic systems (consistent with Minnesota Rules Chapter 7080) through information and training materials.  
• Implement and promote the most efficient practices for abating, preventing and removing point and nonpoint source pollution to reduce soil erosion and to protect and improve groundwater and surface water quality.  
• Maximize surface water infiltration to recharge groundwater supplies.  
• Encourage public and private entities to pursue environmentally sound and cooperative water use practices, conservation initiatives, joint planning efforts and implementation efforts.  
• Promote development and land use aligned with transit and transportation opportunities that minimize emissions of vehicles to mitigate impacts to air quality. |


Developed Communities

Council investments in and incentives for the Developed Communities will help maintain current infrastructure; renew and improve infrastructure, buildings and land—such as vacant or underused strip malls—for additional growth, particularly at centers along transit corridors; and create developments that blend housing, retail, jobs, and green spaces.

The Developed Communities designation comprises the cities of Minneapolis and Saint Paul plus the first- and second-ring suburbs like Golden Valley, Roseville, Burnsville, and Bloomington. These are the communities where infrastructure is well established and efforts must go toward keeping it in good repair. These are also the communities with the greatest opportunities to adapt or replace obsolete buildings, improve community amenities and remodel or replace infrastructure to increase their economic competitiveness, enhance their quality of life and expand opportunities for low-income residents and communities of color. Regional infrastructure investments will focus on maintaining existing infrastructure and adding new infrastructure to support development in centers along transit and transportation corridors. Approximately one-third of the region’s total growth is forecast to occur in Developed Communities.

Much of the infrastructure—parks, roads, sewer pipes—in this part of the region has been in place for a century or more serving a steadily growing population. It is showing its age and in need of maintenance or replacement. Investing to keep this existing infrastructure—including airports—in good repair is essential to the health and vitality of the region, and expanding opportunities to all residents in the region. The same is true in older suburbs where well-maintained infrastructure in existing neighborhoods enhances property values, encourages homeowners to invest in their homes, and contributes to the confidence of new buyers in the future of the community.

But the region has reached the point where maintaining the infrastructure already in place is not enough. New investments are needed to capitalize on opportunities for redevelopment, respond to changing commuting patterns, address wastewater treatment flow and capacity issues, and improve surface water management. Linking infrastructure investments in transit with investments in other systems, such as parks and open space, and airports will increase the benefits of reinvestment to the community. For example, significant public transit investments are being made in the Hiawatha Light Rail Transit (LRT) Line. At the same time additional regional and local investments are being made in improved bus connections to LRT station stops, and pedestrian and bicycle pathways linking LRT stations to surrounding neighborhoods.

Regional funds, such as grants to clean up contaminated sites, are also being used to assist with local redevelopment, infill and reinvestment efforts. It is the Council’s intent to make its regional investment decisions in ways that support the existing communities in which these investments are made, and to use these investments to help expand opportunity in these communities to all regional citizens. Investing to make more effective use of lands within the urban service area will also reduce the need to expand services to currently unserved lands in other parts of the region.
### Table 2: Strategies for the Developed Communities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy Direction</th>
<th>Transportation and Land Use Patterns</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Invest regional resources in, and encourage communities to look for opportunities for, development that blends housing with other uses in centers along transportation corridors.</td>
<td>• Plan and invest in a variety of transportation choices including roads, busways, pathways, expanded bus/transit service, light rail and commuter rail service.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Reinvest in existing infrastructure (wastewater treatment systems, roads, transit, parks and open space, and airports) to support infill and redevelopment.</td>
<td>• Use transit stations and transit service as catalysts for development of centers along transportation corridors.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Reclaim contaminated lands for redevelopment.</td>
<td>• Encourage cities to plan for various kinds of centers that are desirable places to live, shop and do business.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Restore natural resources.</td>
<td>• Use regional systems (especially transportation) and incentive programs to serve centers in communities that choose to build them with the type of service provided to be coordinated with the type of center.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• When funding the development and enhancement of centers, the Council will give funding priority to centers where there is a high level of local commitment, clearly identified roles (public and private) and overall readiness to implement projects.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Make strategic capacity expansions; support improvements to principal arterials and A-minor arterials.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Encourage cities to plan for and implement a system of fully interconnected local streets, pathways and bikeways to support infill and redevelopment.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Partner with cities and counties to plan for interconnected bicycle and pedestrian paths.</td>
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<td>• Work with communities to meet legislative requirements to address aggregate issues in their comprehensive plans; provide technical assistance to communities as they do so.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Develop transportation in a way that avoids sensitive natural resource areas and ensures that necessary additions and improvements take place in the most sustainable way possible.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• As part of infill and redevelopment plans, encourage cities to address safety and mobility problems along principal arterials and A-minor arterials (some of which are county roads), including those created by strip development and indiscriminate access, by planning and developing a fully interconnected system of local streets, pathways and bikeways to provide the necessary internal access and circulation.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Work with Developed Communities to incorporate Mn/DOT’s access management guidelines into local plans and ordinances.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Encourage compatible land uses as identified in the <em>Land Use Compatibility Guidelines for Aircraft Noise</em>.</td>
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</table>
Table 2: Strategies for the Developed Communities

| Housing and Land Use Patterns | • Apply criteria for Council funding programs that give priority to connected mixed-use, mixed-income developments that include varied housing types (at the outset or added later) and contribute significantly to a development’s sense of place and quality of life.  
• Promote the provision of greater affordable and lifecycle housing opportunities through the adoption of and commitment to regional and local housing goals, the provision of technical assistance, and the use of regional investments and discretionary funding.  
• Achieve densities of 8 to 30 units per acre or more in centers along transportation corridors and 3 to 5 units per acre or more outside of centers.  
• Encourage investment in housing that incorporates environmentally sensitive techniques—for example, innovative stormwater management and/or habitat restoration.  
• Favor and invest in redevelopment and infill of housing to diversify the housing supply in patterns compatible with current neighborhood development and in locations in close proximity to jobs and neighborhood services.  
• Encourage housing reinvestment and preservation that significantly adds to the quality of life and attracts private investment.  
• Invest in housing that supports access to jobs through a variety of transportation choices.  
• Endorse the use of performance-based density incentives to allow for a diversity of housing types and costs as well as a range of household incomes served. |
| --- | --- |
Table 2: Strategies for the Developed Communities

| Natural Environment and Land Use Patterns | • Conserve natural resources of regional importance, based on best available data, as part of regional growth management decisions by integrating environmental resource conservation strategies into regional and local land use planning decisions.  
• Support local government actions to conserve natural resources of local importance based on a local inventory and assessment and to integrate the inventory into their planning and development decisions.  
• Restore degraded natural resources.  
• Encourage best management practices for prevention and control of polluted runoff and erosion in all development activities and especially creative solutions in areas where there are natural resources of regional and local importance.  
• Provide wastewater services that are efficient, cost-effective and environmentally sound to areas that support the Council’s Regional Growth Strategy.  
• Maintain or replace wastewater facilities as they age or become obsolete.  
• Support proper management of on-site septic systems (consistent with Minnesota Rules Chapter 7080) through information and training materials.  
• Implement and promote the most efficient practices for abating, preventing and removing point and nonpoint source pollution to reduce soil erosion and to protect and improve groundwater and surface water quality.  
• Maximize surface water infiltration to recharge groundwater supplies.  
• Encourage public and private entities to pursue environmentally sound and cooperative water use practices, conservation initiatives, joint planning efforts and implementation efforts.  
• Promote development and land use aligned with transit and transportation opportunities that minimize emissions of vehicles to mitigate impacts to air quality. |


Rural Centers and Rural Growth Centers

The Council will use regional investments and incentives to help Rural Growth Centers accommodate growth as an alternative to scattered development in the rural area.

Rural Centers and Rural Growth Centers are two of the types of Rural Communities defined in the Policy and Implementation Proposal for the Rural Area (see Appendix F). They are the small towns, like Belle Plaine and St. Francis, located throughout the Diversified Rural Communities and Agricultural Preservation Areas. Both Rural Centers and Rural Growth Centers share the same defining characteristics. They include one or more residential neighborhoods surrounding a center that provides basic consumer services and community activities to its own residents and those nearby.

These are older communities, many of them established more than a century ago to serve surrounding farms. They offer a small-town lifestyle attractive to many of the region's citizens and an alternative to scattered, large-lot development in Diversified Rural Communities and Agricultural Areas. Rural Centers that are interested in growing are identified as Rural Growth Centers. About 5% to 8% of new growth is forecast for the four rural geographic planning areas (Rural Growth Centers, Diversified Rural Communities, Rural Residential Area, and Agricultural Preservation Area), and especially encouraged to occur in Rural Growth Centers.

The 2000 Census showed that 3% of the new housing units built during the 1990s were built in Rural Growth Centers. Recent Minnesota Center for Survey Research surveys indicate a strong demand for small-town living. Rural communities report increasing pressures to provide more opportunities for people to live there. However, some of these communities are faced with aging and insufficient highways and wastewater systems, obsolete buildings and services too limited to respond to pressures to grow. Some have approached the Council for help in expanding or upgrading wastewater treatment systems, improving nearby highways, or redeveloping town centers.

Growth in Rural Growth Centers offers the opportunity to take advantage of existing infrastructure, provides municipal services as an alternative to individual wells and septic systems whose continued proliferation causes environmental concerns, and provides more households with the opportunity for small-town living. Therefore, although historically the Council's policy for Rural Growth Centers was that they could grow if they chose, but only to the extent they could provide their own services, Blueprint 2030 calls for regional investments to help some rural centers—particularly those along major regional and interregional transportation corridors—grow in ways that are consistent with regional policies.

The Council will offer a number of incentives, including planning assistance, and, for some, financial and technical support to maintain or expand wastewater treatment facilities. Assuming some responsibility for wastewater treatment services for a number of Rural Growth Centers that meet certain criteria is an important new strategy for addressing issues of growth in the Rural Area.

Transit investments in park-and-pool lots or, at some future point if growth warranted it and resources were available, park-and-ride lots or other transit service may also be considered for growing Rural Centers along major transportation corridors. The regional Natural Resources Inventory and Assessment will assist growing Rural Centers with integrating natural resources and
cultural features into their plans for additional growth. The type and amount of assistance offered will be commensurate with the regional benefits to be gained.

Rural Growth Centers, in return, will be expected to provide basic retail and commercial services; offer a diversity of housing types that provide adequate housing for a range of incomes and include both rental and homeownership options; and ensure a connected and adequate local street system. Expansion of Rural Growth Centers should involve surrounding governmental units in developing plans to accommodate the forecasted growth, including any necessary annexation agreements and the designation of additional areas that will be reserved for future growth and expansion.
| Policy Direction | • Invest regional resources in, and encourage communities to look for, opportunities for mixed-income housing and mixed-use development in Rural Growth Centers along transportation corridors.  
• Advocate for and evaluate community plans that establish long-term urbanization areas that will accommodate growth forecasts beyond 2030 and reflect Blueprint 2030 goals. |
| Transportation and Land Use Patterns | • Encourage Rural Growth Centers to plan for and implement a system of fully interconnected local streets.  
• Work with communities to meet legislative requirements to address aggregate issues in their comprehensive plans; provide technical assistance to communities as they do so.  
• Provide park-and-pool or, at some Rural Growth Centers—if warranted by growth and if resources are available—park-and-ride transit service or express-bus links to urban areas.  
• Encourage Rural Growth Centers to address the safety and mobility of the principal arterials and A-minor arterials by planning and implementing a system of fully interconnected local streets, pathways and bikeways to provide local circulation and property access.  
• Work with Rural Growth Centers to incorporate Mn/DOT's access management guidelines into local plans and ordinances.  
• Partner with cities and counties to plan for interconnected bicycle and pedestrian paths.  
• Encourage compatible land uses as identified in the Land Use Compatibility Guidelines for Aircraft Noise. |
| Housing and Land Use Patterns | • Encourage planning and zoning incentives to allow for a range of housing types and costs, and a range of household incomes served.  
• Provide a diversity of housing types, including affordable housing, at densities of at least 3 to 7 units per acre in the community's residential areas.  
• Promote the provision of greater affordable and lifecycle housing opportunities through the adoption of and commitment to regional and local housing goals, the provision of technical assistance, and the use of regional investments and discretionary funding.  
• Encourage investment in housing that incorporates environmentally sensitive techniques—for example, innovative stormwater management and/or habitat restoration. |
| Natural Environment and Land Use Patterns | • Conserve natural resources of regional importance as part of regional growth management decisions by integrating natural resource conservation strategies into regional and local land use planning decisions.  
• Support local government actions to conserve natural resources of local importance based on a local inventory and assessment and to integrate the inventory into their planning and development decisions. |

*For Rural Centers that choose to maintain their current size, the Council will offer planning and technical assistance. Other types of assistance may also be appropriate depending on the Rural Center's location (for example, a link to regional transit along a transportation corridor), its size, and its infrastructure needs—particularly wastewater treatment.*
**Table 3: Strategies for Rural Growth Centers**

| Natural Environment and Land Use Patterns (continued) | • Restore degraded natural resources.  
• Encourage local governments to develop performance-based standards to measure the impact of land uses on natural resources and promote sustainable development.  
• Encourage best management practices for prevention and control of polluted runoff and erosion in all development activities and especially creative solutions in areas where there are natural resources of regional and local importance.  
• Expand the regional park system, as appropriate, to preserve and connect natural resources of regional importance.  
• Partner with others to preserve and connect natural resources of regional importance.  
• Work to restore natural resources in areas where resources have been degraded over time.  
• Provide wastewater services that are efficient, cost-effective and environmentally sound to areas that support the Council’s Regional Growth Strategy.  
• Support proper management of on-site septic systems (consistent with Minnesota Rules Chapter 7080) through information and training materials.  
• Implement and promote the most efficient practices for abating, preventing and removing point and nonpoint source pollution to reduce soil erosion and to protect and improve groundwater and surface water quality.  
• Maximize surface water infiltration to recharge groundwater supplies.  
• Encourage public and private entities to pursue environmentally sound and cooperative water use practices, conservation initiatives, joint planning efforts and implementation efforts.  
• Promote the alignment of development and land use with transit and transportation opportunities that minimize emissions of vehicles to minimize impacts to air quality. |

*For Rural Centers that choose to maintain their current size, the Council will offer planning and technical assistance. Other types of assistance may also be appropriate depending on the Rural Center's location (for example, a link to regional transit along a transportation corridor), its size, and its infrastructure needs—particularly wastewater treatment.*
Diversified Rural Communities

Regional infrastructure investments in the Diversified Rural Communities will consist of expenditures for parks, open spaces and green corridor connections—including acquisition and development of regional parkland to serve the residents of the region. Investments in wastewater treatment and transportation infrastructure will be consistent with the Council’s intent to limit the amount of development occurring in the Diversified Rural Communities.

The Diversified Rural Communities designation applies to the sparsely developed parts of the region—generally townships—outside of Rural Centers, Rural Residential Area communities and the Agricultural Preservation Area. Examples include May Township and Burns Township. This area contains the greatest amount of natural resource areas of regional importance identified in a newly created Natural Resource Inventory and Assessment. The conservation of those resources is a high priority for the Council. The Diversified Rural Communities also host the widest variety of farm and non-farm land uses in patterns often referred to as "rural character." These are the parts of the region designated as appropriate locations for a mix of a limited amount of large-lot residential and clustered housing with agriculture and other uses, including facilities and services requiring a rural location.

The Diversified Rural Communities provide an opportunity for "country" living close to urban amenities for a small percentage of the region’s population. This is a costly pattern of land use available to only a few. But those who don't live in this area appreciate its proximity. It provides nearby recreational opportunities and open views for urban residents. Lands in the Diversified Rural Communities are not needed for urban development. Only limited growth is forecast for this Geographic Planning Area and the growth that does occur should be carefully planned to conserve the natural resources and maintain other characteristics that make the Diversified Rural Communities a valuable asset to the region.

The Council’s strategies for Diversified Rural Communities focus on working with local communities to develop performance-based standards that ensure development patterns respect and conserve natural resources; preserve rural character (features such as scenic landscapes, open views, woodlots, lakes and wetlands, and a mix of homes, farms, working forests, commercial operations and other activities); and allow only uses that do not require urban-level infrastructure and services.

Regional parks, open space and green corridor infrastructure investments in the Diversified Rural Communities will focus on patches and connections that contribute to the conservation of natural resources of regional importance. Investments in wastewater treatment and transportation infrastructure will be consistent with the Council’s intent to limit the amount of development occurring in the Diversified Rural Communities.

Beyond systems investments, the Council will use resources such as its Local Planning Handbook, technical assistance, and other approaches (for example, monitoring local plans for the inclusion of ordinances ensuring the proper siting, management and construction of individual sewerage treatment systems) to assist Diversified Rural Communities, primarily townships, with meeting regional goals. Continuing the diversified rural land use pattern in the region saves the costs of extending infrastructure, protects the natural environment, and provides groundwater recharge areas.
Agricultural uses such as tree farms, sod farms, berry farms, and farm-to-market vegetable and herb farms are an important part of Diversified Rural Communities. These farm businesses tend to involve fewer contiguous acres and have a greater diversity of neighboring uses than do farms in the Agricultural Preservation Area. While these farms are not the focus for application of regional agricultural land preservation tools, the Council will provide technical assistance and staff resources to encourage local governments to protect these farm operations as local land uses that contribute to the communities' rural character and economy.

For their part, local governments should carefully consider the effects that individual sewage treatment systems (ISTS) or alternative wastewater treatment systems such as community drainfields may have on the rural environment. The amount of growth occurring should be consistent with regional forecasts. While Council strategies for the Diversified Rural Communities offer flexibility regarding development patterns—including the option to cluster houses together—the overall amount of growth occurring should be consistent with regional forecasts and at overall gross densities of one house per 10 acres calculated on the basis of 64 houses per 640-acre section. This will help prevent the demand for infrastructure and services from growing beyond what the local tax base reasonably can support.

Individual on-site treatment systems should be installed consistent with Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) standards (Minnesota Rules Chapter 7080). Local governments, whose plans permit the use of either private wastewater treatment systems or individual sewage treatment systems (ISTS), shall ensure financial and environmental accountability for installation, maintenance, remediation and management.

MPCA permits are required for construction of community treatment systems of 40 units or greater. Permits should continue to be issued on a case-by-case basis that will allow the type and size of the system and the degree of treatment required to be determined based on site-specific soil conditions and effluent discharge points. To ensure accountability for the proper functioning and ongoing maintenance of community systems, the local unit of government should be the permit holder. Since regional infrastructure investments and services in Diversified Rural Communities will be limited, local governments allowing the use of community systems should also require the provision of a connected roadway system, a surface water plan and a water supply plan that uses a community well.

The Council and Diversified Rural Communities, working with other interested regional partners, should also explore the use of additional tools to ensure protection of natural resources of regional or local importance. For example, the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) is already in use as a tool to conserve natural resources. The CREP program purchases easements on lands along the Minnesota River to reduce the effects of agricultural and development runoff on the quality of the river. With the prospect of limited funds available for land acquisition by the regional park system, natural area easements may prove to be effective in supplementing other measures to protect resource areas.
Table 4: Strategies for the Diversified Rural Communities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy Direction</th>
<th>Transportation and Land Use Patterns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Develop regional infrastructure (roads, parks and open space, and airports) in a way that conserves natural resources and avoids or protects sensitive natural resource areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Develop transportation in a way that avoids sensitive natural resource areas and ensures that necessary additions and improvements take place in the most sustainable way possible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Maintain the safety and mobility of existing principal arterials and A-minor arterials (some of which are county roads) extending through this area by avoiding more local road or driveway connections; require any new development to take access from the existing public and private access connections.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Work with Diversified Rural Communities to incorporate Mn/DOT’s access management guidelines into local plans and ordinances.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Provide rural service-level transportation facilities.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Partner with cities and counties to plan for interconnected bicycle and pedestrian paths.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Work with communities to meet legislative requirements to address aggregate issues in their comprehensive plans; provide technical assistance as they do so.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Encourage compatible land uses as identified in the Land Use Compatibility Guidelines for Aircraft Noise.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Maintain the safety and mobility of existing principal arterials and A-minor arterials (some of which are county roads) extending through this area by avoiding more local road or driveway connections; require any new development to take access from the existing public and private access connections.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Encourage investment in housing that incorporates environmentally sensitive techniques—for example, innovative stormwater management and/or habitat restoration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Encourage local zoning of land that prescribes no more than 64 units per 640 acres or other official controls that are equally effective in preserving agricultural land and rural character.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Support clustered housing development consistent with 64-per-640 guidelines in order to preserve agricultural land and local natural features.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• In areas designated for agricultural preservation, support zoning that maintains an agricultural density standard of no more than 1 housing unit per 40 acres.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Conserve natural resources of regional importance as part of regional growth management decisions by integrating natural resource conservation strategies into regional and local land use planning decisions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Support local government actions to conserve local natural resources of local importance based on a local inventory and assessment and to integrate the inventory into their planning and development decisions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Invest to complete acquisition and development of land for the regional park system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Encourage local governments to develop performance-based standards to measure the impact of land uses on natural resources and promote sustainable development.</td>
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<td>• Encourage best management practices for prevention and control of polluted runoff and erosion in all development activities and especially creative solutions in areas where there are natural resources of regional and local importance.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Expand the regional park system, as appropriate, to preserve and connect natural resources of regional importance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Partner with others to preserve and connect regional natural resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Work to restore natural resources in areas where resources have been degraded over time.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Support proper management of on-site septic systems (consistent with Minnesota Rules Chapter 7080) through information and training materials.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>• Implement and promote the most efficient practices for abating, preventing and removing point and nonpoint source pollution to reduce soil erosion and to protect and improve groundwater and surface water quality.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Maximize surface water infiltration to recharge groundwater supplies.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Rural Residential Area

Regional investments and incentives for the Rural Residential Area will be used primarily to encourage communities to identify opportunities to establish centers to provide convenience goods and services to community residents.

The Rural Residential Area is a newly created geographic planning area that includes those existing places, generally within the Diversified Rural Communities or at the edge of the Developing Communities, that are currently developed at near urban densities (that is, 1 unit per 2 to 2 1/2 acres or less), but served by rural infrastructure and with no plans to provide urban infrastructure, such as centralized wastewater treatment. Communities in which at least a portion of land is identified as a Rural Residential Area are Ham Lake, Andover, Ramsey, Inver Grove Heights, and Credit River Township.

From a regional perspective these areas cause concerns such as the likelihood of eventual groundwater contamination caused by large numbers of individual sewage treatment systems in close proximity. For that reason, where such development has already occurred, strategies focus on protecting the environment and natural resources, ensuring sufficient public infrastructure, and limiting additional development of this type of land use pattern to infill and limited expansion within the community’s boundaries. These could be locations within the rural area where community drainfields and other alternative wastewater treatment systems might be appropriate. Existing Rural Residential Areas make up only a part of the communities’ area. As the five communities consider providing for current and future residents in 2030, 2040 and beyond, they should consider a range of land-use pattern options for currently vacant lands that both meet their long-term needs and are compatible with post-2030 plans of neighboring communities.

Regional infrastructure investments for Rural Residential Areas will be used primarily to encourage communities to identify opportunities to establish centers to provide convenience goods and services to community residents. For example, access points to state and county roads systems will be limited (consistent with state and county access management policies) with emphasis placed on the construction of an interconnected local public street system. Other Council resources such as technical assistance available to Diversified Rural Communities will be offered to Rural Residential Communities as well.

For their part, local governments should carefully consider the effects that individual sewage treatment systems (ISTS) or alternative wastewater treatment systems such as community drainfields may have on the rural environment. The amount of growth occurring should be consistent with regional forecasts. Individual on-site treatment systems should be installed, monitored, operated and maintained properly, consistent with Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) standards (Minnesota Rules Chapter 7080). Local governments, whose plans permit the use of either private wastewater treatment systems or individual sewage treatment systems (ISTS) shall ensure financial and environmental accountability for installation, maintenance, remediation and management.

MPCA permits are required for construction of community treatment systems of 40 units or more. Permits should continue to be issued on a case-by-case basis that will allow the type and size of the system and the degree of treatment required to be determined based on site-specific soil conditions and effluent discharge points. To ensure accountability for the proper functioning and maintenance of community systems, the local unit of government should be the permit holder. Since regional infrastructure investments and services in the Diversified Rural Communities will be limited, local governments allowing the use of community systems should also require the provision of a connected roadway system, a surface water plan and a water supply plan that uses a community well.
### Table 5: Strategies for the Rural Residential Area

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<tr>
<th>Policy Direction</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transportation</strong> and Land Use Patterns</td>
<td>• Advocate for sufficient public services and infrastructure (interconnected local streets, adequate water supply, and properly managed individual sewage treatment systems) to meet the needs of planned growth consistent with regional objectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Housing and Land Use Patterns</strong></td>
<td>• Encourage cities and townships to plan for and implement a system of fully interconnected local streets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Natural Environment and Land Use Patterns</strong></td>
<td>• Work with communities to meet legislative requirements to address aggregate issues in their comprehensive plans; provide technical assistance as they do so.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Maintain the safety and mobility of existing principal arterials and A-minor arterials (some of which are county roads) extending through this area by avoiding additional local road or driveway connections; require any new development to take access from the existing public and private access connections.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Work with Rural Residential Area communities to incorporate Mn/DOT’s access management guidelines into local plans and ordinances.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Partner with cities and counties to plan for interconnected bicycle and pedestrian paths.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Encourage compatible land uses as identified in the Land Use Compatibility Guidelines for Aircraft Noise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Encourage planning and zoning incentives to allow for a range of housing types.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Encourage investment in housing that incorporates environmentally sensitive techniques—for example, innovative stormwater management and/or habitat restoration.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Discourage development of Rural Residential Areas in communities other than the five in which such patterns already exist.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Conserve natural resources of regional importance as part of regional growth management decisions by integrating natural resource conservation strategies into regional and local land use planning decisions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Support local government actions to conserve natural resources of local importance based on a local inventory and assessment and to integrate the inventory into their planning and development decisions.</td>
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<td>• Expand the regional park system, as appropriate, to preserve and connect natural resources of regional importance.</td>
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<td>• Partner with others to preserve and connect natural resources of regional importance.</td>
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<td>• Work to restore natural resources in areas where resources have been degraded over time.</td>
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<td>• Support proper management of on-site septic systems (consistent with Minnesota Rules Chapter 7080) through information and training materials.</td>
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<td>• Implement and promote the most efficient practices for abating, preventing and removing point and nonpoint source pollution to reduce soil erosion and to protect and improve groundwater and surface water quality.</td>
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<td>• Maximize surface water infiltration to recharge groundwater supplies.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Encourage public and private entities to pursue environmentally sound and cooperative water use practices, conservation initiatives, joint planning efforts and implementation efforts.</td>
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</table>
Agricultural Preservation Area

In the Agricultural Preservation Area the Council will focus existing incentives and support new initiatives to preserve high-quality soils for existing or future agricultural use. Investments in regional infrastructure such as roads, wastewater treatment, and parks and open space will be for rural levels of service consistent with the intent to preserve agriculture and with the Council’s expectation that no nonfarm related housing development should occur.

The Agricultural Preservation Area contains large, contiguous land areas—about half a million acres—planned and zoned to maintain agriculture as the primary long-term land use. Most of this land is contained in a crescent shaped arc through the region’s southern and southwestern counties, Dakota, Scott and Carver, whose townships, such as Blakeley, Douglas and Camden, are home to long-established farms and farm-related businesses. These counties are covered by the best soils in the region. These soils are the foundation for an agricultural economy that, as the largest single commercial activity in its rural area, contributed more than $340 million to the regional economy in 1997 (see table below), and provides income to other sectors of the economy as well. Yet, between 1992 and 1997, metropolitan area lands used for farming declined by about 52,000 acres.

The Region’s Farm Economy

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<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anoka</td>
<td>$23,794,000</td>
<td>473</td>
<td>57,313</td>
<td>39,909</td>
<td>$50,305</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carver</td>
<td>$62,056,000</td>
<td>779</td>
<td>153,223</td>
<td>125,988</td>
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<td>Dakota</td>
<td>$102,979,000</td>
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<td>221,316</td>
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<td>Hennepin</td>
<td>$43,748,000</td>
<td>574</td>
<td>69,128</td>
<td>54,432</td>
<td>$76,217</td>
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<td>Ramsey</td>
<td>$6,235,000</td>
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<td>2,515</td>
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<td>Scott</td>
<td>$46,150,000</td>
<td>805</td>
<td>117,830</td>
<td>99,795</td>
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<td>Washington</td>
<td>$57,258,000</td>
<td>653</td>
<td>89,935</td>
<td>68,516</td>
<td>$87,685</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metro Area Total</td>
<td>$342,220,000</td>
<td>4,233</td>
<td>708,745</td>
<td>587,303</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minnesota</td>
<td>$8,290,264,000</td>
<td>73,367</td>
<td>25,994,621</td>
<td>21,491,743</td>
<td>$112,997</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture, 1997

If the economic contribution of businesses such as agricultural services, processing of food products, farm and garden machinery, farm product raw material and farm supplies are added to the value of agricultural products listed in the table above, the “absolute value” of agricultural products is much higher. For example, in a Farmland Preservation Report adopted by Dakota County in 2002, the county identified the following types of businesses in the county that are “dependent upon agriculture for their sales or purchases:"

1. Agricultural Services
2. Processing of food and kindred products (meat, dairy, grain, fruits and vegetables)
3. Farm and garden machinery
4. Farm product raw material
5. Farm supplies

The report states that “a 1995 study of the agricultural economy in Dakota County indicated that the combined impact of farms and farm related businesses exceeded $430,000,000, which is 4.77% of the county’s total economy and consisting of between 4,405 and 5,397 employees.”

The communities that identify lands as an Agricultural Preservation Area—likely those communities whose current plans identify lands for Permanent Agriculture—signal their intent to protect
remaining high-quality soils for existing or potential agricultural uses. To support these local goals, regional growth forecasts for this geographic planning area are very small, indicating the Council’s expectation that no non-farm related housing development should occur in these areas.

In addition to supporting local preferences, Council policy also recognizes that agriculture contributes significantly to the quality of life within the region. Beyond its economic contribution, the presence of an agricultural area adds to the amenities all area residents enjoy. Supplied by the region’s farms, thriving farmers markets provide fresh foods to urban residents. Landscape nurseries contribute to the beauty of the urban environment. Farmlands also provide opportunities for recreation such as hunting and snowmobiling.

There is a growing sense that the tools historically used by the state and region to protect prime soils and agricultural lands will not be sufficient to withstand the pressures of development threatening the current agricultural economy of the metropolitan area. New approaches are needed.

• Urban uses require urban infrastructure. By strictly limiting its investments in regional infrastructure in the Agricultural Preservation Area, the Council will assist agricultural communities to resist urban development pressures and contribute to the continued presence of agricultural activities in the metropolitan area. For example, connections to regional sewer interceptors passing through the Agricultural Preservation Area will be limited. Regional wastewater treatment assistance and investments will be directed to Rural Growth Centers. Only limited access points to road systems (consistent with state and county access management policies) will be provided.

• In this area, the Council supports zoning that maintains an agricultural density standard of no more than 1 housing unit per 40 acres. Communities desiring to take stronger action to protect productive agricultural lands will be encouraged to implement tools such as exclusive agricultural zoning, agricultural security districts, or lower densities (1 housing unit per 80 acres, for example).

• The Council will advocate strengthening the existing Metropolitan Agricultural Preserves Program by adding an option for a 30-year enrollment term in exchange for a higher conservation credit (see Appendix F for additional details).

• Another promising option, used in a number of states around the nation, is for a governmental unit or nonprofit organization to purchase easements that restrict some uses of land (generally urban development) while allowing the continued ownership and use of the land by others. In 2001, the Council developed a design for a purchase-of-agricultural-easements program that could implement Blueprint 2030 policies on preservation of farmland. For further information about the proposed design, consult the Council’s report Policy and Implementation Proposal for the Rural Area, found in the Appendix F.

As the Council explored regional options for a purchase of easements program, Dakota County developed a county-level program of its own. The county developed a citizen-supported Farmland and Natural Areas Protection Program followed by a successful 2002 referendum that will provide $20 million to acquire, preserve and protect natural areas and farmland from development. Using county-adopted criteria and a citizens advisory committee, and working with landowners that volunteer to participate, the county board intends to spend half of the funding to protect farmland and half to protect natural areas. The Council will continue to work with counties and local communities to develop and obtain additional funding for purchase-of-agricultural-preservation-easements programs for the metropolitan area.
Table 6: Strategies for the Agricultural Preservation Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy Direction</th>
<th>Transportation and Land Use Patterns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Invest in incentives, assistance and purchase of agricultural preservation easements to maintain farmland in agricultural use.</td>
<td>• Work with communities to meet legislative requirements to address aggregate issues in their comprehensive plans; provide technical assistance to communities as they do so.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Work to strengthen the existing Metropolitan Agricultural Preserves Program by adding an option for a longer enrollment term in exchange for a higher conservation credit.</td>
<td>• Maintain the safety and mobility of existing principal arterials and A-minor arterials (some of which are county roads) extending through this area by avoiding additional local road or driveway connections; require any new development to take access from the existing public and private access connections.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Direct wastewater system investments away from the Agricultural Preservation Area.</td>
<td>• Work with Agricultural Preservation Area communities to incorporate Mn/DOT’s access management guidelines into local plans and ordinances.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transportation and Land Use Patterns</th>
<th>Housing and Land Use Patterns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Work with communities to meet legislative requirements to address aggregate issues in their comprehensive plans; provide technical assistance to communities as they do so.</td>
<td>• Encourage farm-related housing to incorporate environmentally sensitive techniques, for example, stormwater management that includes draining, filtering and retaining stormwater in innovative ways that maximize use of natural systems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Maintain the safety and mobility of existing principal arterials and A-minor arterials (some of which are county roads) extending through this area by avoiding additional local road or driveway connections; require any new development to take access from the existing public and private access connections.</td>
<td>• Support zoning that maintains an agricultural density standard of no more than 1 housing unit per 40 acres.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Work with Agricultural Preservation Area communities to incorporate Mn/DOT’s access management guidelines into local plans and ordinances.</td>
<td>• Advise local governments of methods to increase protection of farmlands, such as exclusive agricultural zoning, agricultural security districts, and lower densities (1 housing unit per 80 acres, for example) and support their implementation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Encourage compatible land uses as identified in the Land Use Compatibility Guidelines for Aircraft Noise.</td>
<td>• Support zoning that minimizes conflict between agricultural and nonfarm land uses, including a prohibition on cluster developments that may cause conflicts with agricultural operations and demands for urban- or near urban-level services.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6: Strategies for the Agricultural Preservation Area

| Natural Environment and Land Use Patterns | • Conserve natural resources of regional importance, based on best available data, as part of regional growth management decisions by integrating environmental resource conservation strategies into regional and local land use planning decisions. |
| • Support local government actions to conserve natural resources of local importance based on a local inventory and assessment and to integrate the inventory into their planning and development decisions. |
| • Invest to complete acquisition and development of land for the regional park system. |
| • Restore degraded natural resources. |
| • Support proper management of on-site septic systems (consistent with Minnesota Rules Chapter 7080) through information and training materials. |
| • Implement and promote the most efficient practices for abating, preventing and removing point and nonpoint source pollution to reduce soil erosion and to protect and improve groundwater and surface water quality. |
| • Maximize surface water infiltration to recharge groundwater supplies. |
| • Encourage best management practices for prevention and control of polluted runoff and erosion in all activities and especially creative solutions in areas where there are natural resources of regional and local importance. |
| • Encourage public and private entities to pursue environmentally sound and cooperative water use practices, conservation initiatives, joint planning efforts and implementation efforts. |
| • Provide technical support for wastewater treatment in Rural Growth Centers to reduce development pressures on agricultural lands; limit wastewater treatment system hookups for sewer lines crossing Agricultural Preservation Areas. |
| • Direct wastewater system investments away from the Agricultural Preservation Area. |
Implementation Tools

Supporting Blueprint 2030 goals is the focus for Council investments and incentives programs and for more specific policies and plans to guide the transportation, wastewater treatment, parks and open space, and aviation systems. The technical assistance efforts and informational materials developed by the Council offer additional guidance about how the region can transform the vision of the Blueprint to an on-the-ground reality. The Blueprint is the basis for reviewing local comprehensive plans that are to be submitted to Council by 2008.*

The Metropolitan Council is pursuing a comprehensive approach that aligns its investments in regional systems and local financial incentives, strengthens partnerships and collaborations, and draws on its role as a convenor on regional issues in support of Blueprint 2030 policies.

The Council will be seeking new tools and resources to implement Blueprint 2030. Seeking new funding from the Legislature may not be easy, but the Blueprint is a 30-year plan and the Council must pursue a multi-year implementation strategy. In addition, funding and regulations are not the only tools available to the Council. An extensive public process has confirmed the goals of the Blueprint as the goals of the region—not the goals of the Council. In challenging economic times that fact becomes even more important, because implementation of the more connected land-use

*By resolution of the Council, the Blueprint adopted in 1996 is in effect until 2008; however, the Metropolitan Council will encourage and help communities to plan in ways that are consistent with Blueprint 2030. Communities can ask to be reviewed under the new plan now. See Appendix K.
patterns described in the Blueprint will be the most fiscally responsible use of limited public resources. But success will depend even more heavily on partnerships, collaboration and shared resources among the Council, local governments and the private sector. It is important for the Council to begin to lay out all the options it intends to pursue in Blueprint 2030 while recognizing that “getting there” will require resources and energy far beyond what the Council, alone, can provide.

The approach to implementing the Blueprint focuses on the relationship between the Council and local governments in the region. Local governments hold the key to land-use decisions that make a difference “on the ground.” At the same time, the Council provides regional services and infrastructure, project-specific assistance and planning guidance to encourage local governments to pursue the strategies outlined in the Blueprint. Incentive programs, services provided by regional systems, and planning data and technical assistance are all tools the Council will use to help achieve Blueprint goals. The Council’s authority to review and comment on local comprehensive plans has proved to be a highly effective way to reconcile local and regional viewpoints. In addition, models and benchmarks can help show local governments what types of developments and strategies are working well for the region.

The tools for implementing the Blueprint fall into four major categories—(1) regional investments and incentive programs, (2) planning and regulatory authority, (3) technical assistance provided to local governments, and (4) partnerships.

REGIONAL INVESTMENTS

The Council’s responsibilities vary for the four regional systems—wastewater, transportation, parks and open space, and airports. The Council has the most direct control over the operation of the wastewater treatment and transit systems. The Council works closely with the Minnesota Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT) in planning the regional highway system. The Council plans the regional recreation open space system, approves park master plans by the 10 regional park implementing agencies, seeks funds from the Legislature to support capital and operating needs for the parks, and awards Council bond funds for regional park capital needs. The Council provides long-term planning for the regional airports system and approves major capital projects proposed by the Metropolitan Airports Commission, which owns and operates the system. The table below indicates the funding currently planned for the next 10 years for these systems (middle column) and the new funding (right-hand column) that is needed over the same period.
### Regional System Capital Investments: 10-Year Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regional Systems Development Programs</th>
<th>Current Planned 10-Year Funding</th>
<th>Additional Funding Needed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regional wastewater system</td>
<td>$1,130 M</td>
<td>Up to $ 420 M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ Rural Growth Centers</td>
<td>$100 M</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transit</td>
<td>$1,399 M</td>
<td>$1,865 M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional highways</td>
<td>$4,210 M</td>
<td>$5,150 M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parks and open space</td>
<td>$135 M</td>
<td>$215 M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Airports</td>
<td>$1,191 M</td>
<td>$300 M</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table Notes:**
- **Regional wastewater system** - Most recent Council estimates for 2003-2012 Capital Improvement Program. Up to $420 million additional capital expenditures would be needed, if infiltration/inflow (I/I) reduction efforts are not successful. The Council will be developing a program to reduce I/I, which could cost up to $40 million.
- **Highways** - 2003-2006 Transportation Improvement Program, extrapolated to 10 years. Unmet needs reflect 10-year share of Mn/DOT estimate for 2005-2025 and $50 million per year for investments in the "A" Minor Arterial system, a substantial share of which consists of county roads.
- **Parks** - Estimates based on 2003-2007 Capital Improvement Program, extrapolated to 10 years. Unmet needs based on estimates from implementing agencies.
- **Airports** - Estimates based on Metropolitan Airports Commission (preliminary) 2003-2009 Capital Improvement Program, extrapolated to 10 years. Unmet needs, primarily for air-cargo initiative, are based upon very preliminary estimates of implementing agencies.

### Investments Important for Blueprint 2030

The federal government requires that the regional transportation system plan, contained in the Council’s *Transportation Policy Plan*, be based on revenue constraints, not on regional highway needs. Thus, despite the importance of highways to transportation in the region, current plans do not adequately address existing problems. To begin addressing these needs, the region needs to double the metro highway dollars allocated to the Minnesota Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT) for highway expenditures. This would add $4.7 billion to the current plans. In addition, the "A" Minor Arterial system will require approximately $50 million annually, or $500 million over 10 years.

Expanding transit options by completing a second light rail transit (LRT) line, adding commuter rail and constructing additional busways is an important strategy for the region. Adding a second LRT line, 3 busways and 2 commuter rails over the next 10 years would cost about $1.9 billion.

In addition to capital funding, the regional transit system requires operating dollars. The Council depends on funding from the Legislature for about two-thirds of the system’s operating costs. The Council estimates that transit operating costs will total $4.6 billion over the next 10 years. Estimated available revenues of $3.6 billion leaves an operations shortfall of $1 billion. Additional operating funds from the Legislature will be needed.
Unified Capital Improvement Program

Goals such as reinvestment and affordable housing will be better supported if greater attention is focused on coordinating the timing and staging of system expansions and upgrades. To promote such coordination the Council will produce an integrated assessment of how to align regional system investments.

An Alignment Assessment would determine where in the planning process it is best to compare the impact of regional systems on natural resources, housing production (including affordable housing) and fiscal resources. A Unified Capital Improvement Program (CIP) would not have to be a detailed CIP for all systems, but a more general look at where investments are programmed across systems over the next six years. A Periodic Alignment Report would look at where investments are programmed relative to the long-term picture (20 to 25 years), including long-term goals and objectives.

Council Authority for Regional Systems

The Blueprint will be supported by the metropolitan system plans contained in chapters of the Metropolitan Development Guide. The transportation and recreation open space system plans contained in the Transportation Policy Plan and the Regional Recreation Open Space Policy Plan have recently been revised. They will be updated to incorporate new directions from Blueprint 2030. A new Environment Policy Plan (formerly the Water Resources Management Policy Plan), which includes the regional wastewater treatment system plan (except for the Capital Improvement Program), will be published in 2003. The Aviation Policy Plan, containing the airports system plan, will be completed during 2003 as well. The Council draws on its statutory authority for regional systems in implementing investments in these systems.

Water Resources

- As of July 1994, the Council is the owner of all existing interceptors and treatment works formerly the responsibility of the Metropolitan Waste Control Commission. The Council is authorized to build and maintain such facilities needed to implement the Council’s wastewater service policy plan. (Minn. Stat. sec.473.511, subd. 1)

- The Council is authorized to issue general obligation bonds and revenue bonds to finance the metropolitan wastewater (disposal) system. (Minn. Stat. sec. 473.541, subd. 3 and 4)

- The Council is required to set target pollution loads for metropolitan area watersheds. (Minn. Stat., sec. 473.157)

- The Council is assigned review and comment authority for water supply plans (Minn. Stat., sec. 473.859, subd. 3, par. (4) et seq.) and local surface water plans (Minn. Stat., sec. 473.859, subd. 2(a)) in the metropolitan area.

- The Council is required to develop a water supply plan for the region. (Minn. Stat. sec. 473.156, subd. 1)
Transportation

- The Council may require that any freeway constructed in the metropolitan area after April 12, 1974, include provisions for exclusive lanes for buses and other forms of multipassenger transit. (Minn. Stat. sec. 473.168, subd. 2)

- Any proposal of Mn/DOT to acquire land for or to build a controlled-access highway or fixed-guideway transit project must be reviewed by the Council for consistency with the Council's policy plan. (Minn. Stat. sec. 473.166)

- The Council is authorized to build and operate transit and paratransit systems and projects. (Minn. Stat. sec. 473.405, subd. 4)

- As the federally recognized Metropolitan Planning Organization for the seven-county area, the Council has approval authority over the recommendations of its Transportation Advisory Board (TAB), which assigns priorities to applications for federal transportation funding. (Minn. Stat., sec. 473.146, subd. 4; 23 U.S. C., sec. 134; 23 U.S. C., sec. 104(f); and 49 U.S. C., chap. 21)

The federal Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) is the primary federal program for funding transportation projects in this region and other metropolitan areas around the nation. Every second year, the Council allocates $100 million dollars in federal TEA-21 funds to state, regional and local transportation projects reviewed by the TAB. The regional criteria include measures to link land use and transportation, and encourage integration of modes. These criteria award higher points to applicants that increase lifecycle and affordable-housing opportunities, transportation and land use connections, and integration of modes. In addition, the TAB encourages affordable housing through a separate set-aside fund for transportation projects that support lifecycle and affordable housing. This program, the TEA-21 Affordable Housing Enhancement Demonstration (AHED), is making available $3 million in 2002 to fund transportation enhancements that support mixed-income, walkable, transit-friendly communities and include affordable housing.

Recreation Open Space

- The Council, with the advice of the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission, is authorized to make grants for capital projects for regional recreation open space in the metropolitan area in accordance with the Council's policy plan. (Minn. Stat. sec. 473.315, subd. 1)

Between 1994 and 2000, the Council awarded approximately $126 million to the 10 partnering agencies that operate the regional parks system. These agencies are Anoka County, the City of Bloomington, Carver County, Dakota County, Three Rivers Park District, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, Ramsey County, the City of Saint Paul, Scott County and Washington County. In recent years, the Legislature has provided 60% of the funding for capital projects from appropriations; the Council has provided at least 40% through revenue from general obligation bonds (see next bulleted item).

- The Council is authorized to issue general obligation bonds for the regional park system with an amount outstanding not to exceed $40 million. (Minn. Stat. sec. 473.325, subd. 1)
Airports

- Any long-term comprehensive plans adopted by the Metropolitan Airports Commission for existing airports, for acquiring and building new airports, and for the use categories of airports owned or controlled by the commission must be consistent with the Council's Metropolitan Development Guide. (Minn. Stat. sec. 473.611, subd. 5)

- All capital projects worth more than $5 million intended for Minneapolis-Saint Paul International Airport must be reviewed by the Council, and all other capital projects of the Metropolitan Airports Commission involving more than $2 million must also be submitted to the Council for review. No such project that has a significant effect on the orderly and economic development of the metropolitan area may proceed without the Council's approval. (Minn. Stat. sec. 473.621, subd. 6)

EXISTING REGIONAL INCENTIVES

The Metropolitan Council has available a number of incentive programs that are over-subscribed and should be expanded to meet local community demand. The Council, with support from local communities, will pursue strategies to secure additional funding for these programs.

Existing Regional Incentives: 10-Year Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Incentive Programs</th>
<th>Current Annual Funding</th>
<th>Proposed Annual Funding</th>
<th>Additional Funding Needed Over 10 Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Livable Community Accounts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tax Base Revitalization Acct. (9% growth)</td>
<td>$5 M</td>
<td>$12 M</td>
<td>$182 M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstration Acct. (20% growth)</td>
<td>$6.75 M</td>
<td>$11.5 M</td>
<td>$298 M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Incentive Acct.</td>
<td>$1.5 M</td>
<td>$3.75 M</td>
<td>$37.5 M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity Grants ($500,000/year)</td>
<td>$500,000</td>
<td>$600,000</td>
<td>$6 M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning Funding</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revolving Loan Fund</td>
<td>$300,000</td>
<td>$200,000</td>
<td>$2 M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical Assistance Grants</td>
<td>$250,000</td>
<td>$300,000</td>
<td>$3 M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusionary Housing Incentive Program (SAC Waiver)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>$1 M</td>
<td>$10 M</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Incentive Programs Important for Blueprint 2030

- The Tax Base Revitalization Account and the Demonstration Account created by the Livable Communities Act (LCA) have proved to be useful tools for redevelopment and development. There are substantially more well-qualified projects than funding available and the amount requested is growing. In order to achieve reinvestment goals, more funding for these proven programs will be sought.

- The LCA Local Housing Incentives Account has also been successful in providing additional funds for the Council's partnership with the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency and other organizations. Many more dollars are needed to address the provision of affordable housing. The Council is
working with partners to define the region’s requirements and to plan joint efforts to increase funding sources to help bolster the region’s housing.

**Livable Communities Programs**

These programs have been key tools in supporting efforts that work toward Blueprint 2030 goals, leveraging nearly $3 billion in private and other public investment, with Council grants totaling $89 million. Additional funding would enable the region to extend the program to even more projects, with more far-reaching results.

Working in partnership with cities, counties and municipal development authorities, the Council supports projects that promote connected development, affordable housing and cleanup of contaminated land for redevelopment.

LCA programs provide grants to communities for:
- Affordable and life-cycle housing initiatives to expand housing choices through the **Local Housing Incentives Account**.
- Connected, mixed-use and transit-oriented development and redevelopment through the **Livable Communities Demonstration Account**.
- Cleanup of polluted lands for business development and job growth through the **Tax Base Revitalization Account**.

Communities that apply for any funding through the program must first choose to participate in the Livable Communities housing incentives program and must work toward housing goals developed in cooperation with the Council. As of 2002, more than 100 metropolitan area communities are participating in the local housing incentives program. Since the program’s launch in 1996, the achievements to date include the following:

**Local Housing Incentives Account.** The Council has awarded 58 grants totaling $9.1 million to help 42 communities facilitate the construction or rehabilitation of affordable housing. The grants have leveraged $228 million in private or other public investments to develop 1,214 new rental units, including 847 affordable to households with low incomes and 157 public housing units for people with very low incomes. Other accomplishments include:

- Rehabilitation of 539 affordable rental units.
- Development of up to 344 new affordable ownership units.
- Rehabilitation of over 200 affordable ownership units.
- Home improvement loans to 1,100 homeowners.

The Local Housing Incentive Account is funded at $1.5 million per year. This is the Council’s contribution to the larger overall funding pool made available by the Metropolitan Housing Implementation Group. The Minnesota Housing Finance Agency is the primary funder. The Family Housing Fund also contributes significantly to the pool. If all the well-qualified projects were to be funded, the Council share would need to be $3.75 million per year, so that a 10-year cumulative need for the Council’s share would amount to $37.5 million (see table in this section entitled “Regional Incentives: 10-Year Plan”).
Livable Communities Demonstration Account. The Council has awarded 70 demonstration grants totaling $36.3 million to projects in 29 cities and two multi-city coalitions. The grants have leveraged more than $864 million in private investment and $275 million in other public investment. The projects have included 5,400 new and 400 rehabilitated housing units. Under the demonstration account, the Council also awards Opportunity Grants ($500,000 per year) to cities to support local capacity to develop projects that show potential for evolving into demonstration projects.

The Demonstration Account had available $6.75 million in 2002 for development projects. Funding well-qualified applications would require $11.5 million per year. The number of qualified applications is growing at 20% per year. The 10-year need would total $298 million (see table in this section entitled "Regional Incentives: 10-Year Plan").

Tax Base Revitalization Account. Since 1996, the Council has awarded 95 grants totaling $39.2 million to 25 communities from the Tax Base Revitalization Account (TBRA) to clean up and redevelop 850 acres of contaminated land. These projects leveraged an additional $1.4 billion in private investment, creating more than 10,500 new jobs at an average wage of $13.45 per hour, and a net tax capacity increase in the region of $26 million.

A total of $5 million is available annually from the Tax Base Revitalization Account for projects that meet the program's criteria. Requests for well-qualified projects totaled $12 million in 2001, and have been growing at a rate of 9% per year. That means that a 10-year funding need would amount to $182 million (see table in this section entitled "Regional Incentives: 10-Year Plan").

As noted above, the number of Livable Communities funding requests has been growing significantly. These funding programs are essential to the Blueprint's reinvestment goals and the fulfillment of its lifecycle and affordable housing goals. The Council will pursue enhanced funding for these programs with the legislature.

Redevelopment of sites that have known or suspected contamination brings on unique challenges. Minnesota has been a leader in brownfield redevelopment issues, and continues to lead by evolving the brownfield redevelopment discussion. Existing programs have a criterion that weights funding on ability to produce tax base. These programs are very successful and oversubscribed. Discussions are occurring to develop an additional funding source that will encourage redevelopment of contaminated lands for purposes based on other community desires and end land uses. A coalition of partners focused on expanding the redevelopment of brownfields to green space has defined the need, identified sites and is seeking funding sources to pilot brownfield redevelopment that supports green space, public use and housing as an element of redevelopment activities. Redevelopment that incorporates a variety of end uses will help the region achieve its reinvestment goals as well as ensure sustainable, livable communities.

Inclusionary Housing Incentive Program (SAC Waiver)

The Inclusionary Housing Incentive Program is an innovative program authorized by statute that waives the Council's wastewater service availability charge (SAC) for affordable housing units in inclusionary housing developments. The SAC is a charge imposed on all new or expanded residential, commercial, and industrial units to defray the carrying costs of capacity reserved in the regional
wastewater disposal system to accommodate future additional users of the system. In 2003, the SAC is $1,275 per residential equivalent unit.

In December 1999, the Council authorized a three-year demonstration program with the goal of reducing the cost of constructing housing for lower-income households and complementing other cost-reducing incentives offered by local governments. The program waived the SAC for developments that offered units with a variety of prices and designs, served families with a range of incomes and housing needs, and demonstrated avoided or reduced costs as a result of the SAC waiver.

The total amount waived by the demonstration program, which ended in the fall of 2002, was $1.25 million. A recent study commissioned by the Council of this demonstration program shows that it had a demonstrable positive impact on the production of inclusionary housing in the region. The study recommended continuation of the program.

In November 2002 the Council acted to implement an Inclusionary Housing Incentive Program to reduce the total development cost for low-and moderate-income affordable housing units in inclusionary housing developments, complement cost reduction incentives provided for such developments by local governments, and provide an incentive to communities to reduce extraneous flow within the wastewater system and to conserve water. One million dollars of waivers were authorized for 2003. Staff was directed to seek alternative funding for years beyond 2003.

**POTENTIAL INCENTIVE PROGRAMS**

There are a number of major strategies in Blueprint 2030 that do not have existing funding sources—primarily tools to support reinvestment activities, natural resource protection and agricultural protection. Over the next several years, the Council will pursue, with its partners, the best options and/or programs for these areas. Potential examples are indicated in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programs</th>
<th>Funding Needed Over 10 Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Redevelopment Programs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transit-Oriented Development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Planning/Design</td>
<td>$1.3 M</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Site Assembly</td>
<td>$26.5 M</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Pollution Cleanup</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Infrastructure</td>
<td>$38.0 M</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Housing Incentives</td>
<td>$32.0 M</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proposed Development Revolving Loan Program</td>
<td>$50.0 M</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brownfield to green space or public use</td>
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<tr>
<td>Natural Resource Protection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local NRI/A funding</td>
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<tr>
<td>Technical assistance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Regional resource protection funding</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agricultural Protection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural protection funding</td>
<td>$50.0 M</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Emerging Initiatives Important for Blueprint 2030

• New Tools to Increase Reinvestment. Despite the importance of reinvestment, the major tool for local government—tax-increment financing (TIF)—is not as useful as it once was. Replacement tools and/or funding programs are needed for redevelopment in general, as well as for transit-oriented development along light rail corridors, busways, and highways. The Council began analyzing this issue in its report Reinvesting in the Region’s Future. The Council’s next step will be to develop options and strategies with the help of local governments and the private sector—eventually developing legislative proposals. The programs listed in the above table suggest the types of initiatives and funding levels to consider.

• Purchase of Conservation Easements. Protection of natural resources of regional importance can be accomplished through planning tools—such as the Natural Resources Inventory and Assessment—and regulations, but it is also important to have incentive-based tools. It is estimated to cost about $10,000 per acre to purchase conservation easements. Protecting 25,000 acres of natural resources of regional importance over 10 years (one-third of a 30-year total of 73,000 acres) would cost $250 million. The efforts of private, nonprofit organizations and local governments to acquire and oversee the enforcement of conservation easements is important in protecting the natural-resource features of the region.

• Wastewater Treatment Assistance for Rural Growth Centers. The Council will be investing dollars in wastewater treatment systems to help Rural Growth Centers absorb some of the growth that might otherwise occur elsewhere in the rural area. It is estimated that as much as $100 million would be needed over the next 10 years.

• Purchase of Agricultural Preservation Easements. Enhancement of current laws is part of the Council approach, but seeking specific monies for the purchase of agricultural preservation easements is also part of the Council’s agenda. Preliminary estimates indicate that purchasing easements on 100,000 acres would cost as much as $50 million, matched by another $50 million of local funds.

• Proposed Development Revolving Loan Program. Adequate funding to support housing production is essential to strengthen the vitality of older areas in both central cities and suburbs, and to absorb a portion of the growth that would otherwise occur on the region’s urbanizing edge. If authorized by the legislature, this program would add a fourth account to the Livable Communities Fund. It would use money available from the Council’s existing investment pool to make interest-bearing loans to municipalities or development authorities for projects that support housing production that incorporates proper stormwater management practices and environmental protection, integrates and connects land uses, and links to transit/transportation. The program would assist local communities in overcoming financing difficulties that are frequently cited as impediments to development. Funded projects would be expected to result in lower housing costs in the region.

REGIONAL PLANNING AND REGULATORY AUTHORITY

Regional and Local Authority

The Twin Cities’ tradition of innovation, civic participation, protection of the natural environment, and clean, efficient government positions the region well to achieve its goals. There is an active
citizenry, strong private sector and foundation support for civic projects, and—since 1967—a uniquely balanced local-regional-state governmental structure that will help the region meet the challenges of accommodating diverse housing options, increasing mobility, and protecting the environment to ensure continued economic success and a sustainable future.

In 1967 a forward-thinking Minnesota Legislature established the Metropolitan Council to "coordinate the planning and development, public and private, of the metropolitan area" and the planning of metropolitan area cities and townships, and to ensure the provision of cost-effective and efficient infrastructure to meet current and future needs. This progressive approach recognized that the multitude of local governments in the metropolitan area needed an effective way to address the interests of the region as a whole and to coordinate the development of regional infrastructure—wastewater treatment, parks and open space, highways, transit, and airports—while respecting the land use decisions and economic development plans of local communities.

Regional Authority. Minnesota Statutes section 473.145 directs the Metropolitan Council to:

...prepare and adopt...a comprehensive development guide for the metropolitan area. It shall consist of a compilation of policy statements, goals, standards, programs and maps prescribing guides for the orderly and economical development, public and private, of the metropolitan area. The comprehensive development guide shall recognize and encompass physical, social or economic needs of the metropolitan area and those future developments which will have an impact on the entire area, including but not limited to such matters as land use, parks and open space land needs, the necessity for and location of airports, highways, transit facilities, public hospitals, libraries, schools, and other public buildings.

Section 473.146 requires that the Council...adopt a long-range comprehensive policy plan for transportation, airports, and wastewater treatment. Section 473.147 requires a similar long-range policy plan for the regional recreation open space system. These policy plans, along with other policy plans adopted on the Council's initiative, are the "chapters" of the Metropolitan Development Guide.

Blueprint 2030 is the "keystone" chapter of the Metropolitan Development Guide. It contains the goals, policy statements, strategies, programs and maps that inform and direct the Council's growth management and system investments for the region. It provides the organizing principles for new growth to be addressed in local governments' updated comprehensive plans that are due before the end of this decade. Council policy plans and chapters, including the regional system plans for regional recreation open space, transportation, airports, and wastewater treatment, offer more specific guidance about how regional infrastructure system incentives, investments and assistance will implement those land use plans. The policy plans and guide chapters also address additional areas of authority of and study by the Council. Together, Blueprint 2030 and the policy plans and chapters are the Metropolitan Development Guide for the region.

Local Authority. Counties, cities and townships have the authority to plan for local land use and infrastructure. The Metropolitan Land Planning Act balances local control with a regional perspective by assigning the Council review and comment authority over local plans regarding their compatibility with the plans of other communities, consistency with adopted Council policy plans and conformity with metropolitan system plans.

However, when the Council finds that local plans may have a substantial impact on or contain a significant departure from the regional system plans, the Council can require local communities to
change their plans. This shared local and regional responsibility for the development of the metropolitan area has served the region well for several decades. The collaborative relationship guided by Blueprint 2030 principles is a key to future regional success.

**Plans for Metropolitan Systems**

These plans consist of airports and transportation portions of the metropolitan development guide, and the policy plans and capital budgets for metropolitan wastewater service, transportation and regional recreation open space. (Minn. Stat., sec. 473.852, subd. 8) The system plans incorporate strategies to promote the Blueprint goals in the design and development of the regional systems.

The *Transportation Policy Plan*—the Council's regional plan for transit, highways, and freight movement—envisions a more effective transportation system that emphasizes highway improvements, a greater reliance on expanding transit options, and the coordination of transportation investments with land use decisions to support and encourage attractive, higher-density neighborhoods along major transportation corridors and at key centers.

The Twin Cities area's system of regional parks, developed under the planning and funding framework of the *Regional Recreation Open Space Policy Plan*, provides a balanced system of recreation for public use by the region's residents and visitors while helping protect important natural resources for current and future generations. Preserving green space for wildlife habitat, natural filtration of stormwater and scenic views enhances the region's livability and thus its economic competitiveness. These are additional benefits of the regional recreation open space system.

The Council's *Water Resources Management Policy Plan* includes policies and action steps related to providing wastewater services to the region as well as to protecting the quality of the region's water resources. (This water resources plan will be incorporated into an *Environment Policy Plan* that the Council is developing.) Specific legislative mandates exist for plan development in water supply and for recommending target pollution loads. The Metropolitan Wastewater Disposal System provides services to 90% of the region's population and most of its commerce and industry. An essential ingredient for urban development, wastewater service will be needed in future urban areas envisioned in the Blueprint. The Council generally extends wastewater service only to unserved areas designated for urban development by cities and townships in their local comprehensive land use plans that the Council has reviewed.

The *Aviation Policy Plan* is intended to ensure that the regional system of airports—Minneapolis-Saint Paul International (MSP) and six "reliever" airports—maintains the region's connections with the world and keeps the region economically competitive. MSP, along with the reliever airports, is a major economic engine for the region.

This plan encourages compatible land use around the region's aviation facilities through the *Land Use Compatibility Guidelines for Aircraft Noise* which describes preventive and corrective measures that can be taken regarding residential and other land uses near airports. The plan also supports the mitigation of significant environmental impacts of airport operations on surrounding neighborhoods, such as noise abatement investments, surface water management and groundwater protection plans, and the extension of metropolitan sanitary sewer service to reliever airports, where available. To improve air quality and relieve traffic congestion at MSP, the plan calls for the
Metropolitan Airports Commission to reduce single-occupancy vehicle trips to the airport through a travel demand management program. The Council makes transportation investments that enhance ground access to MSP and the smaller airports, including light rail transit, buses and adequate roads.

**Comprehensive Planning Process**

**Metropolitan Land Planning Act**

In Minnesota, land-use planning and regulatory authority is vested primarily in local (municipal) jurisdictions. The Metropolitan Land Planning Act requires local governments in the seven-county metropolitan area to develop comprehensive plans consistent with the act. (Minn. Stat. sec. 473.858) These jurisdictions include all cities and those townships that elect to do so, as well as the counties of Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Scott and Washington.

Through its review authority under the Land Planning Act, the Council determines to what extent the comprehensive plans prepared by local governments:

- Conform with metropolitan system plans for four regional systems—transportation, wastewater, aviation, and regional recreation open space;
- Are consistent with other adopted plans of the Council, including the Blueprint; and
- Are compatible with the local comprehensive plans of other jurisdictions.

If the Council finds that a local comprehensive plan "may have a substantial impact on or contain a substantial departure from" regional system plans, it has the authority to require a change in the plan. The Council also has the authority to comment on the consistency of a local comprehensive plan with the Council’s adopted plans.

**Plan Updates.** The Metropolitan Land Planning Act was amended in 1995 to include a requirement for decennial review of local plans to ensure that local fiscal devices and local controls are consistent with the plan, and to respond to recent changes in the regional system plans. (Minn. Stat., sec. 473.864, subd. 2) The Metropolitan Council may grant time extensions to local governments, provided there is an agreed-upon timetable and plan for completing the required plan review and amendment.

Communities must review their plans for conformity with all regional system plans, and for consistency between the plan and the community’s own ordinances, fiscal devices and other local implementation programs.

No zoning ordinance, fiscal device or other official control can be passed by a local unit of government that is in conflict with the local comprehensive plan or that will permit an activity in conflict with metropolitan system plans. If a local zoning ordinance or other local control conflicts with the local comprehensive plan or metropolitan system plans, the ordinance or other control device must be brought into conformance with the plan within nine months following the amendment to the plan.

**A Streamlined Process.** The Council intends to streamline its review process for local comprehensive plans. That effort will involve tailoring requirements to the size and development...
stage of individual communities, and reducing or simplifying the number of steps that cities,
townships and counties must follow in the process. These revisions will be incorporated into the
Council's revised Local Planning Handbook.

Other State and Federal Regulations

In addition to the review requirements under the Land Planning Act, other state and federal
designations require local units of government to incorporate specific elements in their
comprehensive plans—particularly in the areas of water resource protection and aggregate
preservation—for review by the Metropolitan Council.

Mississippi River Corridor. The Metropolitan Council has a state and federally defined role in
working with communities adjacent to and near the Mississippi River to develop and implement local
Mississippi River corridor plans. The Mississippi River and its adjacent corridor was designated a
state Critical Area in 1976 and made permanent as a state Critical Area (Executive Order 79-19) by
action of the Metropolitan Council in 1979. In 1998, the National Park Service established the
Mississippi National River and Recreation Area (MNRRA) as a unit of the national park system
(Public Law 100-696). A federal Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP) for the MNRRA was
approved in 1995. The CMP applies to the same boundaries as the state Critical Area designation.
The CMP incorporates, by reference, the state Critical Area program and other state requirements
pertaining to the river corridor, which local communities are required to adopt and update on a
regular basis.

Communities adjacent to the Mississippi River have adopted river corridor plans and ordinances
based on regional policy, state standards and guidelines, and voluntary federal policies. These
communities updated their river corridor plans during the 1998 comprehensive plan update period.
In partnership with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and the National Park Service
MNRRA, the Council works with communities to incorporate policies in their river corridor plans,
ordinances and development activities for protection and use of the river.

Metropolitan Significance Review Process

Established by state statute, the Metropolitan Significance Review process is intended to analyze
the regional impacts of development proposals and promote the orderly and economic development
of the metropolitan area. (Minn. Stat. sec. 473.173)

The process can be initiated by a request to the Council from a local unit of government, state
agency, regional commission, or a citizen petition. The Council itself can decide to initiate a review.

To be reviewed for Metropolitan Significance, the proposed project must arguably have a
substantial impact on regional wastewater, transportation, parks or airport systems—for example,
wastewater flows above a certain volume or a minimum number of vehicle trips per day or per hour.
A proposed project also may be reviewed if it has a substantial physical effect on an existing or
planned land use of another local government.

Once a Metropolitan Significance review is commenced, the Council must conduct its review within
90 days, during which time the project cannot proceed. Meanwhile, the parties to the review must
submit reports on the issue and suggest possible solutions. The Council staff then issues a report
that includes suggested modifications either to the project, to regional system plans to accommodate the project, or to both.

The report is then the subject of a quasi-judicial public hearing, with subsequent findings, conclusions and remedies recommended to the full Council for action. Council action can include any of the following: (1) determine that the project is of metropolitan significance and amend regional system plans to accommodate the project, (2) determine that the project is of metropolitan significance but take no further action, (3) determine that the project is of metropolitan significance and suspend the project for up to one year or until certain modifications are made in the project during the period, or (4) determine that the project is not of metropolitan significance.

The Council has also used the Metropolitan Significance process as a vehicle to mediate differences among parties to an issue, especially local governments.

**TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**

**Model Ordinances**

Local ordinances are a primary means by which local governments implement their plans. Ordinances are being amended and new ordinances are being developed continuously throughout the region, state and country. Often an ordinance developed by or for one city can serve as a model for ordinances in other cities dealing with a similar issue. As Council staff work with communities throughout the region to implement their plans, they can offer those communities information about successful ordinances in other places.

For example, Adequate Public Facilities Ordinances (APFOs) are widely used by cities across the nation to better coordinate the provision of municipal services with new development. A model APFO could assist metropolitan area communities in managing their growth. An APFO conditions the approval of development projects on the availability and adequacy of public facilities necessary to support that development. “Public facilities” include roads, wastewater systems, schools, water supply and distribution, and fire-protection services that meet adopted level of service standards.

The Council prepared a model stormwater management ordinance several years ago. This model ordinance, or the model ordinance prepared by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, can be used to meet one of the requirements of the new National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Phase II Requirements for stormwater management.

The Council partnered with Washington County several years ago to prepare a model ordinance governing the clustering of housing development in rural areas. In light of past experience with the ordinance, it may be timely to evaluate its provisions and implementation to strengthen protection of open space in the rural areas.
Handbooks and Informational Materials

Handbooks and similar materials support communities and other organizations as they carry out their responsibilities under the Metropolitan Land Planning Act and work to achieve Blueprint goals.

- The Council’s Local Planning Handbook is a guide for local governments to help local governments comply with their statutory planning responsibilities under the Metropolitan Land Planning Act and guide them through the Council’s comprehensive plan-review process. It will be updated following the adoption of Blueprint 2030.

- The Council’s Transit-Oriented Development Guidebook (the “Green Book”) provides design models and other information that local governments can use in integrating transit service into development and redevelopment projects.

- Minnesota Urban Small Sites Best Management Practices Manual, funded by the Council, provides guidance on controlling the flow of contaminated runoff into the region’s lakes and streams.

- The Builders Guide includes a model noise attenuation ordinance, provides a technical methodology for incorporating acoustic control for new single-family residences, information on noise reduction characteristics of wall, roof, window and door assemblies and identification of best building practices. This document is used in conjunction with the Compatibility Guidelines defined in the Aviation Policy Plan.

- Possible additional handbooks that could be prepared for local governments include: a regional natural resource inventory and assessment atlas; aggregate best-management practices; alternative wastewater treatment systems; and design and planning primers on “micro-level” parks and open space for neighborhoods, housing, transportation facilities and redevelopment.

- The Smart Growth Twin Cities Project produced a wealth of planning and design information about the Opportunity Sites that are being developed/redeveloped as part of the project. This information is available to cities that want to pursue similar projects in the future.

- The Mississippi River Initiative, as part of Smart Growth Twin Cities, provides a model for multiple jurisdictions, working at a sub-regional level, to prioritize projects and leverage funding. The materials provide guidance on how to use the assessment of natural resources as a foundation for decision-making for redevelopment, development and park and recreation activities.

Data from the Natural Resources Inventory and Assessment

To prepare for the challenges of future growth, the Metropolitan Council and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) worked together to compile and assess information about natural resources of regional importance in the seven-county area. The DNR developed a method for assessing terrestrial resources, including remaining forests, grasslands, and wetlands, while the Council developed a method for assessing aquatic resources such as lakes and streams. In addition, information was compiled on selected natural resources related to human use, including recreation open space, scenic views, aggregate resources, and historic and archeological sites. All of this information was compiled into maps using geographic information system (GIS) technology. Natural resource inventories and assessments such as this are useful tools that the Council and local governments can use to preserve natural resources while accommodating growth.
The Council will provide financial and technical assistance to local units of government to help implement the Council's natural resources policies. Financial assistance is available for local units of government experiencing the highest growth pressures to help them identify resource priorities at a local scale. Technical assistance will be provided through a partner-developed education program that will help communities interpret resource features and further understand the impact of development on them.

**Natural Resource Inventory and Assessment Task Force**

The Council will establish a task force of local governments, state agencies, nonprofit organizations, and other partners to help implement the Council's natural resources policy. The task force will use the information provided in the map of natural resources of regional importance as a starting point to decide how to proceed to protect high-priority natural resources of regional importance.

**Geographic Information System Data**

The Geographic Information System (GIS) department of the Metropolitan Council supports the Council's planning, transit and environmental services activities through the use of GIS technology and facilitates the sharing of GIS data among government agencies within the region.

GIS is a computerized system for creating and analyzing maps using digital data. It creates "smart maps"—meaning that it is possible to answer questions such as, "Is there any vacant land within two miles of an Interstate highway in Saint Paul?" using various data overlays. The GIS department focuses on four areas:

- **Products**: Produce maps, graphs, tables, images and applications using GIS data to support Council planning and operational functions.
- **Support**: Support the use of GIS throughout the Council and develop access to GIS through software and web-based GIS products.
- **Data**: Create and process GIS data for use by Council GIS users and for use in Council maps and products.
- **MetroGIS**: Provide staff support for the MetroGIS initiative. MetroGIS promotes GIS data sharing among government organizations in the region.

**Urban Index**

New tools are being developed to help the Council and its partners determine the likely effects of specific development patterns on land use and transportation. Used in combination with models and information previously available to the Council, these new tools will enable communities to make better-informed decisions about how they want to grow.

The region’s Travel Demand Model, maintained and operated by the Council, is a tool that has been available for years. It is a classic four-step model including steps for trip generation, trip distribution, mode choice and assignment. The model is used to forecast travel demand in future years, assess roadway needs, and evaluate impacts of development patterns on the region’s roadway system. It was last calibrated against the 1990 Travel Behavior Inventory, the 1990 Census and 1990 traffic counts. In 2000-2001, the Council conducted another Travel Behavior Inventory, with the recalibration of the model to be completed in 2003.
The Smart Growth Twin Cities initiative developed an additional new tool that allows a more finely grained consideration of variables affecting the vehicle trips (VT) and vehicle-miles traveled (VMT). It can compare the Travel Demand Model VT and VMT resulting from the region’s current land use patterns with the reductions in VT and VMT that would result from increases in population and employment densities, diversification of land uses through mixed use developments, improvements in walkability through design elements and street connectivity, and destination location. That information can help local communities and the Council determine the most efficient and cost effective land use patterns in which to invest public resources.

The federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) also recently completed a computer modeling software program, the Smart Growth Index (SGI), designed to support community planning processes. The SGI uses a set of indicators that can benchmark existing conditions, evaluate alternative planning scenarios, and monitor change over time. SGI models key community characteristics such as population and employment density, land use mix, proximity to transit, recreation, and services, jobs/workers balance, street connectivity, regional accessibility and air quality. These key characteristics—many of them similar to the variables in the Smart Growth Twin Cities modeling—can be rated and weighed to provide an overall score for current and proposed planning efforts.

The Council is working with the EPA to assess the value of the SGI as a tool for planning in the Twin Cities region and considering how it could be combined with the Council’s Travel Demand Model to provide a Twin Cities Urban Index. The Council and local communities could use an urban index to evaluate the transportation and land use impacts of development choices.

**Sector Representative Program**

The Sector Representative Program is an outreach program to local communities to provide planning and technical assistance, and foster cooperative relationships with governmental units and other organizations in the seven-county metropolitan area to achieve local and regional goals. Administered through the Planning and Technical Assistance unit of the Metropolitan Council, the Sector Representative Program is staffed by experienced and knowledgeable planners, familiar with the Council and its various programs.

**Relationship of Energy Supplies and Sources to Growth**

The region’s reliance on sources of energy provided by a global marketplace and the impact of fossil fuels on air quality have significant implications for both the future of the region’s economy and its quality of life. The Council will ensure that its facilities and operations model sound energy-consumption strategies that emphasize fuel-efficiency and clean alternative fuels in fleet vehicles and the use of cost-competitive “green power” at Council facilities. However, energy is clearly an issue that will require much more than the Council’s attention to its own internal practices. The Council will also explore this complex issue using its role as a convenor to bring communities, utilities, businesses, environmental groups and others together to develop regional strategies that will contribute to a healthy and sustainable region.
PARTNERSHIPS

State and Regional Agencies

**Minnesota Housing Finance Agency**

The Minnesota Housing Finance Agency (MHFA) provides funding for a variety of housing options throughout the state, including low-interest home mortgages for first-time home buyers, home improvement loans, and financing of construction and rehabilitation of affordable rental housing for low- and moderate-income renters. MHFA programs are delivered throughout the state by banks and other lenders, community organizations, local housing or economic development authorities, cities, counties, and for-profit and nonprofit developers.

The MHFA is a direct partner with the Council and other organizations in administering the housing funds available under the Livable Communities Program through the Metropolitan Housing Implementation Group (MHIG). MHIG coordinates and streamlines the complex system of delivering housing resources in the metropolitan area. Besides the Council and MHFA, members of MHIG include the Family Housing Fund, the Minneapolis Public Housing Authority, the Corporation for Supportive Housing, the Greater Metropolitan Housing Corporation of the Twin Cities, the Local Initiative Support Corporation, the Federal National Mortgage Association ("Fannie Mae") and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. MHFA is also a partner with the Council in a current effort to assess housing options in the metropolitan area.

**Minnesota Department of Natural Resources**

The development of the Regional Natural Resources Inventory and Assessment (NRI/A) has been a productive partnership between the Council, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and others. The DNR completed the assessment of the terrestrial habitat patches and corridors. With input from numerous teams, Council staff completed the assessment of water resources (lakes and streams) and identified related cultural features that were used to map the natural resources of regional importance.

Council team members included staff personnel from Soil and Water Conservation Districts, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, the U.S. Geological Survey, the Minnesota Geological Survey and watershed organizations; representatives of nonprofit organizations, the Builders Association of the Twin Cities, the Association of Metropolitan Municipalities, and planning staff of metropolitan area counties and cities. As the DNR, Metropolitan Council and other partners generate more detailed natural-resource data in future years to enhance the NRI/A, this "data partnership" will continue to assist local communities in their development decisions and the Council in refining regional growth policy.

The Department of Natural Resources has been a partner in other efforts as well, notably in the review of comprehensive and river corridor plans, plan amendments, site plans and zoning changes for lands that impact the Mississippi River Corridor as a Critical Area. The Council works closely with the DNR to help coordinate and streamline comments to benefit local communities in the review and approval process. In addition, the Council will work with the DNR to help ensure that the region has access to adequate sources of aggregate material—sand, gravel and crushed rock—for the area's construction industry.
**Minnesota Department of Transportation**

The planning and funding of metropolitan area highway projects has been a close partnership between the Council and Mn/DOT for decades. The Council's regional highway system plan contained in its *Transportation Policy Plan*, serves as the metropolitan area portion of Mn/DOT's state highway system plan.

In addition, Mn/DOT collaborates with the Council on important transit projects. Most notable is the Hiawatha Corridor Light Rail Transit Line, which will connect downtown Minneapolis, the airport and the Mall of America. Mn/DOT serves as the general contractor for the project, and the Council will operate the line.

For nearly a decade, the Metropolitan Council, Mn/DOT and several cities and counties have jointly developed transit advantages on the roadway system, such as bus-only shoulders, ramp meter bypasses, signal priority for buses and direct highway access for buses from park-and-ride lots. These projects have provided transit advantages that have been key to increased ridership levels in recent years.

The Council also is involved with Mn/DOT's Office of Aeronautics in coordination of the state and regional airport system plans, participation in planning projects such as the current air-service and air-cargo initiatives, review of implementation funding and input on state aviation rules and regulations.

The Council will be looking to Mn/DOT to help ensure that the region has access to adequate sources of aggregate material—sand, gravel and crushed rock—for the area's construction industry, including building, upgrading and maintaining of highways and airport facilities. Mn/DOT can play an important role in protecting and promoting all modes of bulk transportation for aggregate resources.

The Council will also be looking to Mn/DOT to provide guidance on managing access to the regional transportation system. Mn/DOT has recently adopted guidelines for spacing and allowance of public and private access to the trunk highway system. These guidelines are also intended to advise city and county agencies as they plan and develop local street networks and manage the access to adjacent properties.

**Minnesota Department of Agriculture**

The Council and the Minnesota Department of Agriculture cooperated in past years in assessing current tools for farmland preservation and developing proposals for new measures. In the future, the Council anticipates a closer working relationship with the agriculture department in working on legislation and funding for farmland preservation programs.

The Department of Agriculture also works with farmers throughout Minnesota to help them share in the economic growth of the Twin Cities region and the state. It offers a variety of programs and services to assist in developing new domestic markets for existing agricultural products, partners with other state agencies to stimulate international exports of Minnesota-grown agricultural...
products, and assists farmers with the development of value-added activities to increase farm income.

**Minnesota Department of Trade and Economic Development**

Since 1989, the Public Facilities Authority (PFA), administered by the Minnesota Department of Trade and Economic Development (DTED), and the Council have collaborated to provide low cost funding for regional infrastructure needs. PFA administers three revolving loan funds that are critical to infrastructure financing in the region and the state. The loan funds are the Water Pollution Control (wastewater), the Drinking Water, and the Transportation Revolving Loan Funds. The PFA does an exceptional job of leveraging grant monies (mostly federal dollars) through tax exempt borrowing to provide funds to the Council and other borrowers at interest rates well below market rates. The Council's financial strength is an integral component of the AAA rating of PFA bonds, which in turn lowers interest costs for the Council and other borrowers in the state.

The Council has received loans of $545 million for wastewater infrastructure and $21 million for Transit through 2002. Capital Improvement Program cost estimates for the future are significantly higher than the past (see "Regional Investments," page 65). Clearly, infrastructure financing at inexpensive rates will be increasingly important to the competitiveness of the region.

**Metropolitan Airports Commission**

The Metropolitan Airports Commission and the Council have worked for decades on establishing a regional aviation system that contributes to the economic vitality of the region. The Council establishes broad aviation policy and MAC responds with specific plans for airport improvements. The Council also approves MAC plans and budgets. Many airports were built in undeveloped areas, but continuing development pressures have led to new issues. Ongoing issues to be discussed in the future are safety and land use compatibility guidelines between local communities and airports to assure a balance that allows the system airports to continue to operate while being as good a neighbor as possible.

**Adjacent Counties**

Partnerships with adjacent communities and counties will be crucial to the region's success because the Twin Cities are part of a larger regional economy that extends beyond the seven-county metropolitan area. While the seven-county share of households within the larger 19-county region (the seven metropolitan counties plus the twelve adjacent counties) has remained around 85% since 1970, there have been some notable changes. Much of the growth of the adjacent counties can be attributed to their proximity to the Twin Cities area. For example, 39% of respondents to a recent Council survey of residents in Chisago, Isanti, Sherburne and Wright Counties reported that they worked near or inside the I-494/I-694 beltway. Most of the growth in adjacent counties has occurred in areas just outside the seven counties' borders, offering further evidence of the importance of metro area jobs to adjacent county residents. For example, Elk River, St. Michael and Hudson are three of the fastest growing cities in adjacent counties. In 2000, the Twin Cities had 0.90 jobs per person of work-force age (18-64), compared to a ratio of 0.69 jobs per person in counties to the south of the seven-county area and 0.52 jobs per person in counties to the north.
However, movement between the seven counties and the adjacent 12 has been in both directions. Some metropolitan area residents have chosen to move to an adjacent county and commute to a metropolitan area job and others have moved to the 12 adjacent counties from outside the 19-county region to fill some of the new jobs located there. Consequently, there has been a steep and steady upward trend in the adjacent counties’ share of residential building permits.

Another factor contributing to residential growth in counties near the seven metropolitan counties has been lower land costs, which has contributed to lower housing costs. Although not part of the seven-county metropolitan area, cities such as Elk River, St. Michael and Hudson are actually closer to the region’s freeway beltway than metropolitan area communities located in southern Dakota, southern Scott and western Carver Counties. Residential building permits in adjacent counties during the 1980s represented about 13% of the 19-county total. By 2001, their share had increased to 30%. Building permits taken out in 2001 for the construction of new single-family homes showed a construction value average of $180,400 in the seven-county region compared to an average $133,300 in the adjacent counties. This substantial difference in the cost of housing (excluding land costs) points to continued growth pressure on communities in adjacent counties.

Since the seven counties share highway corridors, watersheds and natural resources with the surrounding counties and their communities, cooperation and coordination among these jurisdictions will be essential to the success of the larger economy and the maintenance of the region’s quality of life. Coordination will lead to smarter growth throughout the economic region. Without it, inefficient investment patterns, competition for limited public dollars, conflicts over natural resource conservation and usage, and incompatible or conflicting land use patterns and growth strategies likely will occur. The Council’s regional growth strategy needs to be connected with a larger, statewide growth strategy.

The Council works with communities in adjacent counties on such issues as transportation and water quality. For example, the Council, adjacent counties and their individual communities, state agencies and others are working together on transportation planning for the I-94 Corridor and on water quality and wastewater issues in the Crow River Basin.

The Council will strengthen current collaborative efforts with adjacent counties, such as the work with the Crow River Organization of Waters; look for opportunities to share the outcomes of demonstration projects in the metropolitan area that may offer solutions to challenging land use issues in neighboring communities outside the Council’s jurisdiction; and undertake additional joint initiatives to address issues of mutual concern, such as transportation and land use in the I-94 corridor. Collaboration between the Council and the region’s adjacent communities and counties will become even more important in the future.

**National Park Service**

The National Park Service Mississippi National River and Recreation Area (MNRRRA) has been an important partner in Mississippi River related activities.

In partnership with the Council and the Department of Natural Resources, the National Park Service (NPS) has worked with communities and supported the Council to help incorporate regional policies and state and federal guidelines into local planning, zoning and site development activities in
the Mississippi River corridor. Communities that have incorporated state and federal guidelines have been eligible for NPS grants to help implement their plans.

In addition to local planning assistance, the NPS has facilitated the Trails and Open Space Partnership that benefits communities through an interconnected trail and open space system adjacent to rivers. Along with other activities, the NPS has participated in and provided guidance to the American Heritage Rivers Initiative facilitated by the Council; supported the Council-led development of the Surface Water Use Management Plan; and participated in the Mississippi Riverfront Initiative coordinated by the Council.

Other Potential Partners

Among other agencies, organizations, and private and nonprofit partners that could help implement Blueprint 2030 are the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Center for Transportation Studies at the University of Minnesota, the Design Center for the American Urban Landscape (also at the U of M), watershed management organizations, the Minnesota Environmental Initiative, Twin Cities Habitat for Humanity, the Minnesota Historical Society, MetroGIS, Minnesota Planning, 1000 Friends of Minnesota, the Trust for Public Land, Transit for Livable Communities, and AHANA∗ multi-ethnic community organizations.

IMPLEMENTATION MILESTONES

Regional investments, incentives and statutory authority are necessary to achieve Blueprint goals, but indicators are also important to determine whether the goals are achieved and what progress is occurring along the way. Reflecting the Blueprint’s principle of accountability, these indicators can help in aligning efforts of various partners and in identifying issues that need to be resolved before further progress is possible. The more specific the indicators, the more effectively we can assess our efforts. As a starting point, the Blueprint incorporates a number of such indicators, some for measuring regional outcomes and others as examples of benchmarks for local communities. While the Council’s statutory authority to review local comprehensive plans makes local governments key partners in achieving regional goals, the efforts of other public agencies, the state legislature, the private sector, and non-profit organizations will also be essential. Additional appropriate measures can be developed as part of discussions with all the Council’s partners.

Performance-Based Standards

The Blueprint’s approach to assessment emphasizes performance-based standards, which highlight the outcome of an activity rather than the means of accomplishing the result. The Blueprint seeks to provide flexibility in achieving such outcomes, which may vary from area to area within communities or from community to community. At the same time, there are a number of priorities that apply more uniformly throughout the region—for example, the need to protect the natural environment and increase transportation choices and connections. The Council will measure progress toward these standards and will present results as part of the annual State of the Region report.

∗African-American, Hispanic, Asian and Native American.
The performance-based standards for Blueprint outcomes are:

Transportation

- Transportation Impact Modeling (Urban Index): Use the Regional Travel Demand and EPA Smart Growth Index models to compare and evaluate transportation and land use implications of development patterns using such measures as job intensity, housing density, availability of sidewalks and trails, street connectivity, land use mix, and Blueprint 2030 land-use and transportation objectives.
- Highway Usage: Slow the per capita growth in vehicle-miles traveled, through more compact and better-connected land use patterns, so per capita daily travel does not exceed 24 miles by 2025.
- Highway Congestion: Slow the growth in the number of additional congested miles of principal arterials during peak hours to no more than 5 additional miles per year.
- Adequacy of Transit Funding: Increase per capita funding for transit operations by 40% by 2012.
- Adequacy of Highway Funding: Increase funding for regional highways, A-minor arterials and associated bike and pedestrian facilities by $515 per year.
- Transit Operations: Increase regular route transit system capacity by 3.5% per year and provide for the additional paratransit capacity to meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act for this increase.
- Additional miles of dedicated transit corridors (bus-only shoulders, busways, LRT and commuter rail, and HOV lanes) constructed since 2002.
- Double transit ridership by 2025.
- Increased street connectivity in new development and redevelopment as measured by the number of intersections per square mile.
- Additional miles of bike and pedestrian facilities built since 2002.

Housing

- Housing Production: 15,000 to 18,000 housing units per year region-wide.
  Intermediate Measures: Plat monitoring; densities and amount of land for single-family and multifamily in a community's local comprehensive plans; location of housing development; and growth trend in housing units.
- Affordable and Workforce Housing: Goals and indicators to be set through the Livable Communities Program and the Land Planning Act process.

Environment

- Water Resources: No adverse impact of development on water quality over time.
- On-Site Septic Systems: Systems are maintained and installed properly.
- Groundwater: Groundwater is available to provide adequate water supply for the region.
- Natural Resource Preservation: Valued natural resources are preserved.
- Groundwater Quality: Well testing at strategic locations.
- Air Quality: Meets federal and state standards.
**Development Patterns**

- Development Patterns in Developing Communities: 3 to 5 housing units per residential acre and 8 to 30 units per acre in centers along regional transitways and in infill or redevelopment areas.
- Development Patterns in Diversified Rural Communities: 1 house per 10 acres (overall gross density) calculated on the basis of 64 houses per 640-acre section.
- Zoning in Agricultural Preservation Area: Agricultural density standard of no more than 1 housing unit per 40 acres.
- Emphasis on Reinvestment: 30% of new housing units and about half of new jobs in the region are located on redeveloped land or land previously passed over for development.
- Nominal Growth in Rural Area: 5% to 8% of new growth in Rural Growth Centers, Diversified Rural Communities, Rural Residential Area, and Agricultural Preservation Area.
- Development in Mixed-Use Centers: Appropriate clustering of significant job centers, retail development, and medium to higher-density housing (see Appendix C).
- Sufficient Land Supply: Undeveloped urban land sufficient for 20 years of forecasted growth.

A number of these measures identify residential density standards. Density itself is not the goal of the Blueprint; the goal, instead, is achieving a sense of place and community character by paying attention to the “connectedness” of development.

**Benchmarks**

In addition to performance-based measures, the Blueprint underscores the importance of indicators that show whether activities are contributing to an outcome. Blueprint benchmarks suggest a direction for efforts to achieve a result, and represent resources that local governments and others can utilize in their decision making and actions. Council staff will work with local communities to refine and expand the following lists of benchmarks for inclusion in a revised Local Planning Handbook. The Council will also work with other regional partners such as public agencies, the state legislature, the private sector, and non-profit organizations to develop appropriate benchmarks to measure progress toward regional goals.

Examples of Blueprint benchmarks include:

**Transportation**

- Ordinances and plans to reduce off-street surface parking or to create more environmentally sustainable off-street parking areas, where appropriate.
- Use of model codes and appropriate demonstration models by communities to implement shared-parking arrangements and transit-oriented design guidelines.
- Steps by communities to concentrate critical services near homes, jobs and transit.
- Local government requirements for building design of commercial areas that incorporate pedestrian and transit connections.
- Adoption of standards for streets that ensure safety and mobility for pedestrian and nonmotorized modes of transportation.
• Use of traffic-calming techniques where traffic speeds through residential and urban neighborhoods are excessive.

• Efforts by local communities to establish land uses and mixed-use centers within transportation corridors that fully utilize regional investments for transit facilities and services.

• Local government plans for road networks of neighborhood-scale streets with high levels of connectivity and short blocks.

• Local government plans and zoning ordinances for concentrated-activity centers near transit service and adoption of transit-oriented development guidelines.

• Collaboration with employers and provision of information and incentives to minimize or decrease peak-period congestion impacts.

• Identification of the operation and the programming of infrastructure investment needs of key freight corridors that are the critical links for moving goods between the Twin Cities, greater Minnesota and national and international markets.

• Consistency of local plans and ordinances with Mn/DOT’s access management guidelines.

Housing

• Local government plans and zoning ordinances for increased multifamily dwelling uses.

• Plans and zoning ordinances for smaller lots and compact densities with preserved common open space, where appropriate.

• Use of the Council’s Inclusionary Housing Incentive Program and similar programs to encourage affordable and workforce housing development.

• Local zoning ordinances that reduce minimum lot widths, and front and interior side setback requirements.

Environment

• Development and maintenance of an inventory of local natural resources by local government.

• Integration of natural resource protection into local government land-use decisions.

• Development and use of transferable development rights or conservation easements as a way of protecting local or regional natural resources.

• Adoption and use by local governments of conservation subdivision regulations and cluster development ordinances as well as environmental preservation requirements and other best management practices.

Development Patterns

• Adoption and use of innovative zoning tools to encourage development with a blend of housing, retail, open space and, where applicable, transit connections.

• Appropriate tools to facilitate financing of properties that integrate various land uses.

• Flexible zoning mechanisms to allow developers to respond easily to market demands.

• Conversion of declining shopping malls and commercial strips into developments that combine shops, services, housing and open space.

• Retrofitting of single-use commercial and retail developments into walkable, attractive centers with a mix of land uses.

• Use of Smart Growth Opportunity Sites and other models of development to shape new projects at an appropriate scale.
• Steps taken by a community to achieve a greater locational balance between jobs and housing.
• Establishing and using density bonuses that encourage an increased floor-to-area ratio.
• Zoning regulations and design standards that set clear implementation guidelines.
• Adoption and use of a point-based evaluation system to encourage redevelopment projects.
## 5. Definitions

**access**
Generally, the ease with which an area can be reached. Technically, it is the distance between origin and destination expressed in terms of time.

**adaptive reuse**
Rehabilitation or renovation of existing building(s) or structures for any use(s) other than the present use(s).

**adequate public facilities ordinance**
An ordinance that ties conditions of development approvals to the availability and adequacy of public facilities. Also known as a concurrency management system. Adequate public facilities are those facilities relating to roads, sewer systems, schools, water supply and distribution systems, and fire protection that meet adopted level of service standards.

**adjacent counties**
Counties that border the jurisdiction of the Metropolitan Council and share a common interest in the growth of the metropolitan region: Chisago, Isanti, Sherburne, Wright, McLeod, Sibley, Le Sueur, Rice, Goodhue, Polk, St. Croix and Pierce.

**affordable housing**
Housing that a low- or moderate-income household can occupy without spending more than 30% of household income. In addition to cost, affordable housing incorporates the idea of quality (safe and decent dwelling), choice of location, and an adequate supply.

**Ag Preserves**
(See *Metropolitan Agricultural Preserves Program*.)

**aggregate**
Hard inert materials (such as sand, gravel, or crushed rock) used for mixing with cement to form concrete plaster.

**Agricultural Preservation Area**
Agricultural Preservation Areas are large, contiguous land areas planned and zoned to maintain agriculture as the primary long-term land use. Communities containing large Agricultural Preservation Areas are located on the region’s best soils. This soils resource supports agriculture as the most important element of the local economy, and a community’s choice of this land use designation signals its intent to ensure that the agricultural economy remains strong. To support these local aspirations, the Council forecasts nominal growth for this planning area, indicating the Council’s expectation that no nonfarm related housing development should occur in these areas.

**agricultural preservation easement**
(See *conservation easement*.)

**alignment**
Coordination of regional investments, incentives, and regulations with local governments and other agencies to reflect and facilitate implementation of *Blueprint 2030* goals.
aquifer  A saturated geologic formation that will yield a sufficient quantity of water to serve as a private or public water supply.

assessment  An appraisal, judgement or evaluation based on information provided by inventories and informed by specified criteria.


benchmark  An indicator that shows steps toward achieving Blueprint 2030 goals. (Compare with performance-based standard.)

best management practices  A set of recommendations pertaining to the development and maintenance of varied land uses aimed at limiting the effects of development, such as soil erosion and stormwater runoff, on the natural environment. See the Council's Urban Small Sites Best Management Practices Manual for specific examples of Best Management Practices.

brownfield  Abandoned, idled, or underused industrial and commercial facilities where expansion of redevelopment is complicated by real or perceived environmental contamination.

busways  A two-lane facility (one lane per direction) on exclusive right-of-way dedicated for buses only. Grade separation at high-volume cross streets and gate-crossing arms at low-volume crossings are assumed.

Calthorpe Associates  Urban design firm whose philosophy focuses on creating communities that are diverse, feature a blend of compatible land uses, and are pedestrian friendly. Hired by the Council to facilitate the Smart Growth Twin Cities project. (See Smart Growth Twin Cities.)

center  A place of sufficient scale, density and mix of uses, where one has access to housing, jobs, daily services, shopping and recreation. (See transit-oriented development, walkable.)

chapter (of Metropolitan Development Guide)  Any one of the four regional systems policy plans (transportation, water quality, recreation open space, and aviation) or the regional Blueprint.

clustering  A technique to allow a reasonable amount of land development while conserving the valuable aspects of rural character, such as farmland, natural resources/areas, and open views. Local governments should assess a site's resources before choosing locations for preservation and development.

community drainfields  (See on-site septic system)
commuter rail

A mode of public transportation that uses passenger-type trains operating on railroad right-of-way. Commuter rail uses rail infrastructure (e.g., tracks and signal systems) and equipment similar to those used by mainline freight and intercity passenger railroads. Generally, commuter rail systems are integrated with other regional transit providers to permit transfers throughout the metropolitan region.

comprehensive plan

A plan for the development of an area, which recognizes the physical, economic, social, political, aesthetic, and related factors of the community involved. (Compare with local comprehensive plan.)

congestion costs

Expenditures resulting from traffic congestion (e.g., amount of time delayed in a car, number of tons per day of pollution produced, loss of productivity).

congestion, highway

Traffic volumes that exceed the capacity of a highway.

conservation

The management of natural resources to prevent waste, destruction or degradation.

conservation easement

A legally binding land use agreement between a private landowner and a government agency or qualifying non-profit conservation organization. This recorded deed conveys real property interests in the form of development rights to an accepting agency. The accepting agency is then responsible to enforce the terms of the easement, ensuring that the scenic, natural, historic, and/or open space characteristics that make the land significant are protected from harm or destruction. Conservation easements are flexible and can be used to protect a wide variety of conservation interests. (Federal Law of Conservation Easements, Steven J. Small)

contaminated sites

(See brownfields.)

corridor

A broad geographical band that follows a general directional flow connecting major sources of trips that may contain a number of streets, highways, and transit route alignments. “Green” corridors are the natural-resource counterpart (e.g., river valleys, trails), which can connect landscape and water features to sustain wildlife and plant habitat.

density

The number of dwelling units per net residential acre of land.

developable land

Land that is suitable as a location for structures and that can be developed free of hazards to, and without disruption of, or significant impact on, natural resource areas.
Developed Communities

Developed Communities comprise the cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul plus the first- and second-ring suburbs like Golden Valley, Roseville and Burnsville. These are the communities where infrastructure is well established and efforts must go toward keeping it in good repair. These are also the communities with the greatest opportunities to adapt or replace obsolete buildings, improve community amenities and remodel or replace infrastructure to increase their economic competitiveness and enhance their quality of life. There are also regional benefits to having new development occur on redeveloped land or land previously passed over for development. For example, making more effective use of lands within the urban service area will reduce the need to expand services to currently unserved lands.

Developing Communities

Developing Communities include the cities whose boundaries form the edge of the urban area—places like Lakeville, Woodbury, Maple Grove and Hastings. These are the communities where the largest amount of vacant serviceable and developable land is located and, therefore, where the most substantial amount of new growth will occur. Growth forecasts for this area indicate that approximately 67% of the total regional growth will occur in the communities it contains.

Diversified Rural Communities

Sparsely developed parts of the region outside of Rural Communities, Rural Residential Areas and the Agricultural Preservation Area that contain the widest variety of farm and nonfarm land uses in patterns often referred to as "rural character." These are the parts of the region designated as appropriate locations for a mix of large-lot residential and clustered housing with agriculture and other uses including facilities and services of value to the metropolitan area but requiring a rural location (nurseries, campgrounds, etc.).

easements (see also agricultural preservation easement and conservation easement)

A grant by a property owner to the use of land by the public, a corporation, or persons for specific purposes such as the construction of utilities, drainage ways and roadways.

employment concentration

A number of jobs clustered within a specified location.

express bus service

(See busways.)

Family Affordable Housing Program

A program, launched by the Council in 2000 and run by a professional management company, that weaves family rental housing into the fabric of 10 metropolitan area suburbs. It will provide 150 homes—single-family, townhouses, duplexes—scattered throughout those 10 cities in suburban Anoka, Ramsey and Hennepin Counties.
first-ring suburbs  
(See Developed Communities.)

forecast  
In the Blueprint, a calculation of growth in population, households and jobs based on data about current conditions (e.g., the 2000 Census) that is extrapolated into the future.

freeway transitway  
(See transitway.)

geographic information system (GIS)  
A computerized system for creating and analyzing maps using digital data. It creates "smart maps"—meaning that it is possible to answer questions such as, "Is there any vacant land within two miles of an Interstate highway in St. Paul?", using various data overlays.

green corridor  
(See greenway.)

green space  
(See open space.)

greenway  
A generic term for a wide variety of linear open spaces established along either a natural corridor such as a riverfront, stream valley or ridgeline, or overland along a converted railroad, canal, scenic road or other route. It can be an open space connector linking parks, natural areas, cultural features, historic, or scenic sites with each other and/or with populated areas. It can be a natural or landscaped course for pedestrians or bicyclists. (Greenways for America, Charles Little)

groundwater  
The supply of freshwater under the surface in an aquifer or soil that forms a natural reservoir. (Compare with surface water.)

growth strategy  
The Council's selection of an urban growth and development pattern for the region and the measures to implement it.

hamlet  
A community, often at a crossroads, primarily residential in character, but with a small compact core offering limited convenience goods and/or community activities, such as a school, church, tavern or restaurant, general store or similar land uses.

household  
All the people who occupy a housing unit.

incentives  
Available funds and tools that encourage local governments to incorporate "smart growth" techniques and Metropolitan Council policies into their development decisions.

individual on-site septic system  
(See on-site septic treatment system.)

individual sewage treatment system (ISTS)  
(See on-site septic treatment system.)
infill
Development or redevelopment of land that has been bypassed, remained vacant, and/or is underused as a result of the continuing urban-development process.

infrastructure
Fixed facilities, such as sewer lines and roadways; permanent structures.

integration
The incorporation of all planning aspects (e.g., land use, transportation, natural resources) into decisions about development.

interconnections
Connections that link one land use to another or link parts of a system to other parts, such as a network of local, interconnected streets.

interregional highway, Interregional Corridor (IRC)
A road system designated by Mn/DOT that connects the most important regional centers in the state and adjacent states to each other and to the metropolitan area.

inventory
An itemized list or survey that represents the best available information at the time. An inventory is not evaluative.

investments, regional investments
Investments made by the Metropolitan Council into regional infrastructure.

Land Planning Act
(See Metropolitan Land Planning Act.)

land supply
Available amount of developable land.

lifecycle housing
Varied housing options that meet people's preferences and circumstances at all of life's stages, and, in particular, options other than the predominant larger-lot, detached, single-family home. For example, smaller homes, apartments, townhomes, condominiums senior housing for independent living or with a range of assisted-living services.

light rail transit (LRT)
An electrically propelled vehicle operated singly or in trains on predominantly reserved, but not necessarily grade-separated, rights-of-way.

Livable Communities Act
Through the Livable Communities Act (LCA), the Council awards grants to eligible cities to:

- Clean up polluted land for redevelopment and new jobs.
- Create model development or redevelopment that incorporates efficient use of land, a range of housing types and costs, commercial and community uses, walkable neighborhoods, and easy access to transit and open space.
- Create affordable housing opportunities.
- Develop innovative and inclusionary housing that
includes a variety of housing types and prices, and demonstrates cost reduction or avoidance through local regulatory incentives.

LCA funds help communities throughout the region make smart choices about how to develop and redevelop, and leverage billions of additional dollars in private and other public investment while providing jobs and business growth.

To be eligible, a city choosing to participate must negotiate affordable and lifecycle housing goals with the Metropolitan Council and complete an action plan to achieve the goals.

**Livable Communities Demonstration Account**

The Livable Communities Demonstration Account (LCDA) provides funding to cities for development that incorporates efficient use of land, a range of housing types and costs, commercial and community uses, walkable neighborhoods, and easy access to transit and open space. (See also Livable Communities Act)

**local comprehensive plan**

Plans for local land use and infrastructure. Counties, cities and townships are required to have their local comprehensive plans reviewed by the Metropolitan Council to ensure that they are consistent with metropolitan system plans. (Compare with comprehensive plan.)

**local government**

Municipal units of government, such as counties, cities and townships.

**Local Housing Incentive Account Program**

Program aimed to help expand affordable rental and ownership housing opportunities for low- and moderate-income households. (see also Livable Communities Act)

**low income**

Household income that is 50% ($38,350 for 2002) or less of the area median income, as defined by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development.

**Mayors' Regional Housing Task Force**

The first Mayors' Regional Housing Task Force was convened in May of 2000 at the request of the Metropolitan Council. It was composed of mayors from 16 cities, representing the spectrum of development stages found in the metropolitan area: central cities, first-ring suburbs, developing cities, cities on the MUSA edge, former freestanding growth centers, and urban reserve communities. The charge to the task force was to determine what must change to achieve regional and local affordable housing goals and to develop proposals for policies, programs and legislative recommendations to achieve the goals. The task force issues its findings and recommendations in the November 2000 report Affordable Housing for the Region: Strategies for Building Strong Communities. An implementation plan was developed by a second Mayors' Regional Housing Task Force, with commitments by the
mayors to expand housing opportunities region-wide for people at all income levels and stages of life.

**median income (area median income)** Statistic provided by the Department of Housing and Urban Development. The 2002 area median income for the Twin Cities metropolitan region is $76,700.

**Metropolitan Agricultural Preservation Program** A voluntary agricultural preservation program where enrolled land is assessed according to its agricultural value rather than its market value. There is an additional property tax credit ("conservation credit") of at least $1.50 per acre per year. Other benefits include exemption from special assessments and protection from annexation. Enrollees are required to complete the "Metropolitan Agricultural Preserves Restrictive Covenant" enrollment form specifying that the land will be kept in agricultural use as defined by state statutes. The restrictive covenant remains in effect indefinitely, or until the date an expiration notice is signed. The restrictive covenant and its benefits terminate 8 years from the date the expiration notice is filed.

**metropolitan area, metro area** (See region.)

**Metropolitan Development Guide** The collection of regional plans that includes the Blueprint and the policy plans for the four regional systems: transportation, water quality, airports, and parks and open space.

**metropolitan highway system** The system of major highways identified in the Transportation Policy Plan intended to serve the region. Only principal arterials, which include Interstate freeways, are on the metropolitan highway system.

**Metropolitan Land Planning Act** Minnesota Statute 473 directing the Council to adopt long-range, comprehensive policy plans for transportation, airports, wastewater services, and parks and open space, and authorizing the Council to review the comprehensive plans of local governments.

**Metropolitan Urban Service Area (MUSA)** The area, in which the Metropolitan Council ensures that regional services and facilities under its jurisdiction are provided.

**"A" minor arterials** Roadways within the metropolitan area supplement the major highways in the region. (See the Transportation Policy Plan for further description of these roadways.)

**mixed-income** Development that includes and integrates units available for people with a range of incomes.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mixed-use, mix of uses</td>
<td>A single building containing more than one type of land use or a single development of more than one building and use, where the different types of land uses are in close proximity, planned as a unified complementary whole, and functionally integrated to the use of shared vehicular and pedestrian access and parking areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mobility</td>
<td>The ability of a person, or people, to travel from one place to another.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>moderate income</td>
<td>Household income that is 80% ($61,360 for 2002) of the area median income, as defined by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>multifamily housing</td>
<td>Residential structure with two or more separate dwelling units.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>natural areas</td>
<td>Sites that are largely undisturbed by humans. Native vegetation is distributed in naturally occurring patterns across the landscape. These patterns change over time primarily due to natural processes such as drought, flooding, fires and the interactions between plants and wildlife.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>natural resource</td>
<td>A feature of the natural environment that may consist of plant and wildlife habitat, a source of naturally occurring raw material with economic value, such as agricultural soils, regional recreation open spaces, or major water bodies in the region.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Resources Inventory and Assessment (NRI/A)</td>
<td>A tool that the Metropolitan Council and local governments can use to accommodate growth while protecting the environment, by cataloguing and prioritizing natural resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Resources of Local Importance</td>
<td>Resources that have met a specified set of criteria, have been identified by a natural resource inventory and assessment, and have been determined to perform an ecological function or enhance a related social experience in the jurisdiction of local governments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Resources of Regional Importance</td>
<td>Resources that have met a specified set of criteria, have been identified by a natural resource inventory and assessment and have been determined to perform a significant ecological function or enhance a related social experience in the region.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>natural-resource corridors</td>
<td>(See corridor, greenway.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nonurban land uses</td>
<td>Residential, commercial or industrial land uses that are not found in the urban area, and where urban services are unavailable. (Compare with urban land uses)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
on-site septic system  On-site system for disposing and treating human and
domestic waste, such as a septic tank and soil absorption
system or other system, allowed by state and city when
access to the municipal sewer system is not required or
feasible.

open space  Public and private land that is generally natural in character.
It may support agricultural production, or provide outdoor
recreational opportunities, or protect cultural and natural
resources. It contains relatively few buildings or other
human-made structures. Depending on the location and
surrounding land use, open space can range in size from a
small city plaza or neighborhood park of several hundred
square feet, corridors linking neighborhoods of several
acres to pasture, croplands or natural areas and parks
covering thousands of acres. (See also green space.)

ordinance  A law or regulation set forth and adopted by a governmental
authority, usually a city or county.

ordinance, model  An example of an ordinance that can be adopted and used by
a governmental unit as a template to establish its own,
locally specific ordinance.

paratransit services  Transit service that provides generally more flexible and
personalized service than regular-route transit, using a
variety of vehicles, such as large and small buses, vans, cars
and taxis. Paratransit can serve a particular population, such
as people with disabilities, or can be assigned to serve the
general population. Paratransit is frequently provided in less
densely populated areas, and used at times and in areas
where trip demands are less concentrated, such as during
weekends and evenings in urban settings.

park-and-pool  (See paratransit services)

park-and-ride  An arrangement whereby people can drive an automobile to
a transit hub, transfer station or terminal, park in the
designated lot, and use a transit vehicle for their ultimate
destinations.

pedestrian pathway  A right-of-way for pedestrians, free from vehicular traffic
and including access ramps, stairs, and mechanical lifts and
routes through buildings that are available for public use.

performance-based standard  Criterion established to control and limit the impacts
generated by, or inherent in, uses of land or buildings.
(Compare with benchmark)

planning area  An area distinguished by its land use patterns, community
needs and other factors, with its own set of specified
policies and implementation strategies.
policy  
A specific statement of guiding actions that expresses the general direction that the Metropolitan Council intends to follow in order to meet its goals.

policy plan  
(See system plans.)

prime agricultural soils  
As agreed-upon by local governments and soil and water conservation districts, one of the main factors to be considered when identifying the boundaries of the Agricultural Preservation Area. (See also soils, high-quality.)

principal arterial  
The high-capacity highways, including freeways and expressways, that make up the metropolitan highway system. (See Appendix F of the Transportation Policy Plan for functional classification criteria and characteristics.)

public engagement  
Process that encourages and collects a broad range of input from public groups, such as local governments, civic organizations, private and nonprofit groups, and citizens.

redevelopment  
Any proposed expansion, addition, or major façade change of an existing building, structure, or parking facility, or a strategy to rebuild an area, including a number of buildings or blocks, to adapt to changing community demographics, market preferences and/or needs.

region  
Area pertaining to the Metropolitan Council’s jurisdiction, including the seven counties of Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, Scott and Washington.

Regional Environmental Partnership  
A group sponsored by the Metropolitan Council made up of public officials and representatives from the private and nonprofit sectors, with the charge of discussing environmental issues and reporting back to the Council. Played an integral role in developing criteria for the Natural Resource Inventory and Assessment.

Regional Growth Center  
A larger rural community that has evolved into a full-service city yet is separated from the Urban Area. It has its own “core” and “suburbs,” and serves a larger surrounding land area.

regional infrastructure  
Infrastructure pertaining to any of the Council’s four systems: wastewater services, transportation, parks and open space and airports (See also regional systems.)

regional park system  
The regional parks system includes 43 parks and park reserves, 18 trails and four special recreation areas. Parks are operated by 10 partnering cities and counties. They work with the Metropolitan Council to acquire and develop parks and trails to protect natural resources and to provide outdoor recreation for public enjoyment.
regional recreation open space

According to Minn. Stat. 473.121, Subd. 14, land and water areas, or interests therein, and facilities determined by the Metropolitan Council to be of regional importance in providing for a balanced system of public outdoor recreation for the metropolitan area including but not limited to park reserves, major linear parks and trails, large recreation parks, and conservatories, zoos, and other special use facilities.

regional systems

Systems for which the Metropolitan Council is the responsible planning and operating authority. They include wastewater services, transportation, parks and open space and airports. (See also regional infrastructure.)

regional transit

Transit service options operated by, or in partnership with, the Metropolitan Council. They include Metro Transit, Metro Commuter Services, Metro Mobility, Dial-A-Ride Services and other transit operators.

reinvestment

An investment, through either redevelopment, infill or adaptive reuse, intended to improve upon, remodel or replace existing infrastructure that has become out-dated and obsolete.

residential acres

Areas of residential land use that includes local streets, alleys, parks and locally protected natural resources. It excludes major transportation rights-of-way, major parks and open space, NWI wetlands and steep slopes over 18%.

runoff

The rainfall, snowmelt, or irrigation water flowing that has not evaporated or infiltrated into the soil, but flows over the ground surface.

Rural Center

Rural Centers (one of the types of rural communities defined in the Policy and Implementation Proposal for the Rural Area) are the small towns, like Belle Plaine and St. Francis, located throughout the Diversified Rural and Agricultural Preservation Areas. They include one of more residential neighborhoods surrounding a center that provides basic consumer services and community activities to residents or nearby residents. (Compare with Rural Growth Center.)

Rural Community

The hamlets, towns and cities scattered throughout the rural parts of the region. These population concentrations are defined as a hierarchy of places, based on their size, development patterns and infrastructure. Basically, they are concentrations of residential neighborhoods surrounding a core area that provides some commercial services and/or civic facilities. Rural communities will be encouraged to take an appropriate share of the growth forecast for the rural area.
Rural Growth Center: Rural Centers interested in growing, and with high growth potential, are designated Rural Growth Centers. They offer a small-town lifestyle choice attractive to many of the region’s residents and are the locations in the rural area where growth is particularly encouraged. (Compare with Rural Center.)

Rural Issues Work Group: A workgroup of Met Council members that was convened to address specific issues affecting the metropolitan rural area. Findings from the workgroup can be found in Policy and Implementation Proposal for the Rural Area.

Rural level of service: The quality and quantity of existing and planned public facilities appropriate to the rural area.

Rural Planning Areas, Rural Area: Occupies approximately 50% of the region’s land. Four planning areas represent the diversity of land uses found here: Rural Centers, Diversified Rural, Rural Residential and Agricultural Preservation.

Rural Residential Area: Rural Residential Areas are those places, generally within Diversified Rural Communities or at the edge of the Developing Communities, that are currently developed at near urban densities (that is, one unit per 2 to 2 ½ acres or less), but served by rural infrastructure and with no plans to provide urban infrastructure such as centralized wastewater treatment. From a regional perspective these areas cause concerns such as the likelihood of eventual groundwater contamination caused by large numbers of individual sewage treatment systems in close proximity. Where such development has already occurred, strategies focus on protecting natural resources, ensuring sufficient public infrastructure and limiting additional development of this type of land use pattern to infill and limited expansion within the community’s boundaries.

second-ring suburbs: (See Developed Communities.)

septic system: (See on-site septic treatment system.)

seven-county area: (See region.)

Smart Growth: Sustains economic growth and positions the region to compete in the world economy; promotes more efficient, integrated public investments in transportation, housing, schools and utilities, to maximize existing resources and investments and avoid wasting taxpayer dollars; encourages wise stewardship of natural resources and conservation of agricultural land and open space; accommodates growth and change in ways that maintain or enhance community livability.
and quality of life, and promote lifestyle choices; balances
the diverse interests and objectives of the region’s various
communities, informing and engaging citizens in decisions
affecting the future of their community and region;
provides incentives to influence growth patterns that
contribute to a world-class region.

Smart Growth Twin Cities
An innovative initiative that encouraged Twin Cities
residents to assist in planning for the future of their
communities and the region as a whole. At the community
level, six opportunity sites throughout the metro area
received expert planning assistance from national
consultants to plan model 'smart growth' communities
designed specifically to meet each community’s unique
needs. At the regional level, planners worked with various
regional stakeholders, including citizens, community leaders,
landowners, business, elected officials, and local planners, to
develop alternative scenarios for how to best accommodate
future growth in efficient, cost-effective ways that
protect and enhance the region’s quality of life.

soils, high-quality
(See prime soils.)

stormwater
Surplus surface water generated by rainfall and snow melt
that does not seep into the earth but flows overland to
flowing or stagnant bodies of water. (See also runoff.)

surface water
Water on the earth’s surface exposed to the atmosphere
such as rivers, lakes and creeks. (Compare with
groundwater.)

sustainable development
Development that maintains or enhances economic
opportunity and community well-being while protecting and
restoring the natural environment upon which people and
economies depend. Sustainable development meets the
needs of the present without compromising the ability of
future generations to meet their own needs.

system plans
Long-range comprehensive policy plans for transportation,
airports, wastewater services, and parks and open space.
(Compare with chapters of the Metropolitan Development
Guide.)

Tax Base Revitalization Account
Metropolitan Council program that provides funds to clean
up contaminated land in areas that have lost
commercial/industrial activity to make it available for
economic redevelopment, job retention and job growth. (See
also Livable Communities Program.)

technical assistance
Aid provided by Council staff to local governments to
implement Blueprint 2030.
third-ring suburbs  (See Developing Communities.)

transit corridors  (See corridor, transitway.)

transit options  Available means of transportation, including driving a car, riding public transportation (e.g., buses, LRT), biking and walking.

transit-oriented development  The concentration of jobs and housing around transit and daily conveniences. By developing land use patterns that support transit, people will use their cars less and will walk and ride transit more. (Additional information about transit-oriented development can be found in the Transit-Oriented Development Handbook published by the Metropolitan Council.)

transitway  Corridors or lanes dedicated exclusively for transit use such as bus-only shoulders, high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes, exclusive busways, LRT or commuter rail.

Twin Cities Area Survey  Starting in 1982, the Metropolitan Council has regularly asked residents of the seven-county metropolitan area to rate the region's quality of life and to identify the major problems facing the metro area. As part of the Twin Cities survey conducted by the University of Minnesota, the general attitudinal measures provided in this survey serve as a regional barometer.

Twin Cities metropolitan area  (See region.)

urban development  (See urban land uses.)

Urban Index  A comparative measure of the likelihood that local trips will be made by transportation modes other than the automobile. It combines several measurable factors, such as job intensity, housing density, availability of sidewalks and trails, street connectivity, and land use mix, into a composite value for different sites, neighborhoods, or areas.

urban land uses  Residential, commercial or industrial land use in areas where urban services are available. (Compare with nonurban land uses.)

urban level of service  The quality and quantity of existing and planned public facilities appropriate to the urban area.

Urban Planning Areas, Urban Area  Occupies approximately 50% of the region’s land. Two planning areas are applicable here: Developing Communities and Developed Communities.

Urban Reserve  The urban reserve is a rural-to-urban transition area between the current MUSA line and the urban reserve.
boundary line. It is being held in a rural condition until such time as it is included in the urban area. It is considered a reservoir of land outside the region’s urban area needed to accommodate forecast growth to at least the year 2040.

**Urban Service Area** (See Metropolitan Urban Service Area)

**vacancy rate**
The proportion of the housing inventory (both owned and rental units) that are vacant and for sale or for rent. This applies to units that are unoccupied, held for seasonal or occasional use, sold or rented but not yet occupied, or available for sale or rent.

**vehicle miles traveled (VMT)**
Number of miles traveled in a vehicle.

**very low income**
Household income that is 30% ($23,010 for 2002) or less of the area median income, as defined by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development.

**walkable**
Where housing, jobs, daily services, shopping and recreational opportunities are available within a pedestrian-friendly area. (Compare with center, transit-oriented development.)

**wastewater**
Water carrying waste from domestic, commercial, or industrial facilities together with other waters that may inadvertently enter the sewer system through infiltration and inflow.

**wastewater treatment plant**
A facility designed for the collection, removal, treatment, and disposal of wastewater generated within a given service area.
Source Notes

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