

Save the Date! Metro Cities Legislative Policy Adoption Meeting

Metro Cities' 2022 legislative policies will receive final adoption by the association's membership at the Policy Adoption Meeting on Thursday, December 9, 2021 at 12 noon. The meeting will be held virtually this year. Please plan to attend and stay tuned for further meeting details! Draft legislative policies can be viewed [HERE](#). A quorum of members is required to adopt legislative policies.

Legislative Commission on Housing Affordability Hears from Greater Minnesota

Representatives from counties and cities in greater Minnesota presented at a meeting of the Legislative Commission on Housing Affordability this week, and discussed needs for housing development, preservation, solutions to blighted properties, and support for maintaining local zoning authorities.

County officials from Roseau, Hubbard, and Olmsted counties explained their struggles working with the private sector to build new single-family homes and apartment units. County officials have used TIF, property tax rebates, and public funds and still face lack of interest and high construction costs (labor, construction materials) in building more homes.

The Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities expressed a need for workforce housing, which they defined as housing that is affordable to households making wages paid in their cities. They also stated support for incentives over mandates, and policies and funding that support community-driven housing solutions over statewide policies that would impede local flexibility.

Legislators were interested in learning if tying local fee reductions to affordable housing production has decreased costs. Legislators were also interested in seeing examples of local innovation. Metro Cities and the League of Minnesota Cities have provided examples to legislators over the past several years and will continue to highlight local efforts to support housing development by private and nonprofit developers.

The final speaker was a developer who works in Minnesota and North Dakota. He compared state-level fee structures, including the building code, and showed differences between the two states. He recognized city infrastructure costs (sewer, road, parks) are fixed and focused his remarks on state-level disparities.

The Minnesota Association of Small Cities highlighted widespread blight as a housing concern and called for state solutions to reinvest in existing homes to keep them available and habitable. The association also noted public infrastructure costs impact development costs and said they support state dollars to help.

The next commission meeting will be held December 14 and an agenda will be announced prior to that meeting. Contact Charlie Vander Aarde at charlie@metrocitysmn.org or 651-215-4001 with any questions.

Metropolitan Council Discusses Next Steps of 2050 Regional Planning Process

The Metropolitan Council heard an update from staff on the next stages of the 2050 regional planning process. The Council has reviewed most 2040 comprehensive plan updates, received Census updates and is reviewing how its regional policy plans (parks, housing, transportation) have been implemented.

Staff addressed integrating planning within the Council throughout its divisions and recognizing overlaps that will help the Council in the next round of the regional development guide. Council staff briefly mentioned their review of what went well with the 2040 round and what needs to improve in the next round of regional planning. Metro Cities is working with the Metropolitan Council to form a long-term regional planning work group with city officials and staff and will provide further information in the coming weeks.

The Council will draft a 2050 vision and review what barriers are in place to achieving this vision. The Council is taking measurements of the condition of the region through its committees and data roles. These include inequities, demographic changes, affordability, stewardship, climate change, public health, resiliency and sustainability, and other regional challenges and opportunities.

As a part of the 2050 process, staff explained how more effort is being paid to ensuring that system-specific plans tie back into the broader vision for the region. The vision will impact the Council's policy plans through a coordinated effort of its authorities – parks, land use, transportation, water resources, housing, and implementation.

The broad timeline for the 2050 guide is as follows:

- Preparation (2017-2020)
- Consider Scenarios and Approaches (2021)
- Increasing Engagement (2022)
- Develop the Regional Guide (2023)
- Refine and Adopt (2024)
- Implement (2025-2028)
- Comp Plan Updates Due (end of 2028)

After describing the Metropolitan Council's early engagement efforts, staff relayed some of what they have heard so far. This included the feedback they have received from local governments after the last round of planning and emphasized the importance of working closely with local partners. Important topic areas that came out of engagement efforts so far include equity and reducing disparities, sustainability and climate change, housing and housing affordability, and the impacts of the pandemic on the region's travel patterns.

The meeting concluded with a discussion about the planning process and future issues. Council members discussed working with townships, the potential for more migration to the region from the coasts and the south because of climate change, and the way the pandemic will change where people choose to live and how they choose to travel throughout the region. It was also suggested that the Council develop an equity policy plan.

Click [HERE](#) for a recording of Wednesday's presentation to listen to the full discussion and click [HERE](#) for a copy of the slides.

Climate Resilience Planning Grants

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) is providing \$870,000 to Minnesota communities for assessing vulnerabilities and creating plans to deal with potential impacts from climate change. Applications are due no later than **Tuesday, December 21, 2021 at 4:00 PM.**

Funds can be used to plan for resilience in stormwater infrastructure, wastewater systems, and other community services and public spaces. Eligible applicants include tribal nations, cities, counties, towns/townships, soil and water conservation districts, water management organizations, water districts, regional development commissions and the Metropolitan Council. There is a 10% match requirement. Application materials can be accessed and submitted via the online [SWIFT portal](#). Click [HERE](#) for more information on this grant opportunity and details needed for RFP submittals.

Applicants who have any questions should email grants.pca@state.mn.us, using the subject line "FY 22 Planning Grants for SWC Resilience".

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