

# 2026 Metropolitan Agencies Policy Committee Roster

| Name                 | Title                                       | Organization         |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Josh Berg            | Councilmember                               | Elko New Market      |
| Jenn Brewington      | Community and Economic Development Director | Victoria             |
| Deb Calvert          | Councilmember                               | Minnetonka           |
| Macheal Collins      | City Clerk                                  | Burnsville           |
| Marc Culver          | Public Works Director                       | Brooklyn Park        |
| Inderia Falana       | Government Relations Representative         | Minneapolis          |
| Clancy Ferris        | Legislative and Grants Analyst              | St. Louis Park       |
| Tom Fletcher         | Mayor                                       | Greenwood            |
| Mike Funk            | City Manager                                | Minnetonka           |
| *Gary Hansen         | Councilmember                               | Eagan                |
| Steven Huser         | Senior Government Relations Representative  | Minneapolis          |
| Cheryl Jacobson      | City Administrator                          | Mendota Heights      |
| **Beth Johnston      | Intergovernmental Relations Representative  | League of MN Cities  |
| Elizabeth Kautz      | Mayor                                       | Burnsville           |
| **Daniel Lightfoot   | IGR Representative                          | League of MN Cities  |
| Gregg Lindberg       | City Manager                                | Burnsville           |
| Amada Marquez Simula | Mayor                                       | Columbia Heights     |
| Jennifer Monson      | Planning and Economic Development Manager   | St. Louis Park       |
| Laurie Ann Moore     | Councilmember                               | Brooklyn Center      |
| Jennifer O'Rourke    | IGR Director                                | St. Paul             |
| Loren Olson          | Senior Government Relations Representative  | Minneapolis          |
| **Hannah Pallmeyer   | Government Affairs Liaison                  | Metropolitan Council |
| Christian Pederson   | Councilmember                               | Victoria             |
| Michael Sable        | City Manager                                | Maplewood            |
| Clark Schroeder      | Special Projects                            | Lake Elmo            |
| Jason Steffenhagen   | Councilmember                               | New Brighton         |
| Jay Stroebel         | City Manager                                | Brooklyn Park        |
| Katie Topinka        | IGR Director                                | Minneapolis          |
| **Owen Wirth         | Intergovernmental Relations Representative  | League of MN Cities  |
| Nyle Zikmund         | City Administrator                          | Mounds View          |

\*Committee Chair

\*\*Guest/Non-City Official

August 19, 2026

**TO:** Metropolitan Agencies Policy Committee Members  
**FROM:** Gary Hansen, Councilmember, City of Eagan  
**SUBJECT:** Meeting Notice and Agenda

***Wednesday, August 26, 2026***  
***9:00 am – 11:30 am***  
***Hybrid Meeting: Lake Superior***  
***Room/LMC Building***  
***or***  
***Join Zoom Meeting:***

♦ Thank you for agreeing to be a policy committee member!

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Attached are the materials for the second Metropolitan Agencies Policy Committee meeting. Please take the time to read through the policies before the meeting and come with your ideas and suggestions.

## **AGENDA**

1. Call to order. (Gary Hansen, Chair)
2. Approval of minutes for the July 29, 2026 meeting.
3. Presentation: ***Emma Dvorak, Planning Analyst, Metropolitan Council, comprehensive planning assistance for cities.***
4. Policy Committee Memo Review. (Patricia Nauman, Executive Director)
5. Discussion of policies and suggested modifications.
  - a. Policies with no recommended changes.
  - b. Policies with suggested changes from staff or committee members.
6. Discuss additional suggestions for policies, and issues for future consideration.
7. Other business.
8. Adjourn. (11:30 am.)

*Future Committee Meetings:*  
**Wednesday, September 30, 2026**

## **Metropolitan Agencies Committee Minutes for Meeting of July 29<sup>th</sup>, 2026**

Present in-person: Gary Hansen, Patricia Nauman, Mike Lund, Ania McDonnell, Jennifer Dorn, Deb Calvert, Tom Fletcher, Clark Schroeder, Hannah Pallmeyer, Steve Huser, Sam Haske (Met Council), Judy Sventek (Met Council), Jen Kostrzewski (Met Council).

Remote attendees: Christian Pederson, Kris Amundson, Jennifer O'Rourke, Nyle Zikmund, Cheryl Jacobson, Jennifer Monson, Marc Culver, Mike Funk.

Chair Hansen called the meeting to order at 9:03 am. Members made introductions.

Chair Hansen moved to the policy related agenda items. Ms. Nauman reviewed the policy committee process and protocols for the committee and reviewed the legislative memo.

Chair Hansen moved to agenda item 5. Staff reviewed policies with legislative updates. Mr. Schroeder inquired about the governance policy and any recent conversations on the topic. Ms. Nauman stated a legislative task force met in fall 2023 and did not make a recommendation. Mr. Schroeder asked if the Association of MN Counties has weighed in. Ms. Nauman said to her knowledge, they have not. Mr. Schroeder noted concerns for Lake Elmo on water and sewer related issues.

Chair Hansen moved to agenda item 6. Judy Sventek and Jen Kostrzewski from the Metropolitan Council presented regarding the work of the Metropolitan Area Water Supply Advisory Committee. They discussed subregional engagement, grant opportunities, water efficiency grants, a high-water use development paper, aging infrastructure and water rates.

Ms. Calvert asked about groundwater flow, water quality and usage and partnerships with other agencies. Discussion. Mr. Fletcher asked about capacities and availability of water. Ms. Sventek stated that they are tracking source water protection. Ms. Calvert asked about the assistance program for water efficiency, is it possible for organizations that serve lower income residents to partner. Ms. Kostrzewski said they have a pilot in St. Paul to replace toilets in underserved communities. Further discussion.

Chair Hansen announced a 5-minute break. Chair Hansen reconvened the meeting at 10:49am.

Chair Hansen moved to discussion of policies, potential modifications and ideas for new policies. Mr. Fletcher would like to look at regional growth-related policies and stated that we are not growing as robustly and that policies may imply otherwise. Mr. Schroeder said this could be different for different communities and challenging from a seven-county perspective. Mr. Huser suggested the policy is about managing resources. Mr. Fletcher stated that his concern is more on the issue of density requirement minimums when we may not be a high growth region.

Chair Hansen moved to agenda item 8, new issues for future consideration, and then to future business. Ms. Calvert stated that it would be good to inform member cities as Metropolitan Council seats come open, so they can consider who they want as representatives.

Motion by Fletcher, seconded by Huser to adjourn the meeting at 11:12 am. Motion adopted.

August 19, 2026

**To: Metropolitan Agencies Policy Committee**  
**From: Patricia Nauman, Executive Director**  
**Re: August Policy Committee Meeting Memo**

The next meeting of the policy committee will be next **Wednesday, August 26<sup>th</sup>, at 9:00 am.** The committee will begin with a presentation by ***Emma Dvorak, Planning Analyst, Metropolitan Council***, to discuss comprehensive planning assistance for cities.

Below are policies that have no recommended changes that could be considered for adoption and policies with suggested modifications.

**Policies with no recommended changes at this time:**

|       |                                                              |
|-------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| MA-1  | Goals and Principles for Regional Governance                 |
| MA-2  | Regional Governance                                          |
| MA-3  | Comprehensive Analysis and Oversight of Metropolitan Council |
| MA-4  | Funding Regional Services                                    |
| MA-5  | Regional Systems                                             |
| MA-6  | Regional Water Supply Planning                               |
| MA-8  | Comprehensive Planning Process                               |
| MA-9  | Comprehensive Planning Schedule                              |
| MA-10 | Local Zoning Authority                                       |
| MA-11 | Regional Growth                                              |
| MA-12 | Natural Resource Protection                                  |
| MA-13 | Inflow and Infiltration (I/I)                                |
| MA-14 | Sewer Availability Charge (SAC)                              |
| MA-15 | Funding Regional Parks and Open Space                        |
| MA-16 | Livable Communities                                          |
| MA-18 | Comprehensive Plans and Environmental Review                 |

**Policies with suggested modifications:**

|       |                                                                           |
|-------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| MA-7  | Review of Local Comprehensive Plans ( <i>changes suggested by staff</i> ) |
| MA-17 | Density ( <i>changes suggested by staff</i> )                             |

We look forward to seeing you next week!

## **MA-1 GOALS AND PRINCIPLES FOR REGIONAL GOVERNANCE**

The Twin Cities metropolitan region is home to a majority of the state's population and is poised for significant growth in the next two decades. The region faces significant challenges and opportunities, the responses to which will determine the future success of the region and its competitiveness in the state, national and world economies.

The Metropolitan Council manages the growth of the metropolitan region, and cities are responsible for adhering to regional plans as they plan for local growth and service delivery.

The region's cities are the Metropolitan Council's primary constituency, as regional and local growth are primarily managed through city comprehensive planning implementation and the delivery of public services. To function successfully, the Metropolitan Council must be accountable to and work collaboratively with city governments.

The role of the Metropolitan Council is to set broad regional goals and provide cities with technical assistance and incentives to achieve the goals. City governments are responsible for and best suited to provide local zoning, land use planning, development, and service delivery. Any additional roles or responsibilities for the Metropolitan Council should be limited to specific statutory assignments or authorization and should not usurp or conflict with local roles or processes unless such changes have the consent of the region's cities.

Metro Cities supports an economically strong and vibrant region, and the effective, efficient, and equitable provision of regional infrastructure, services, and planning throughout the metropolitan area.

Metro Cities supports the provision of approved regional systems and planning that are provided more effectively, efficiently, or equitably on a regional level than by individual local units of government.

The Metropolitan Council must involve cities in the delivery of regional services and planning, be responsive to local perspectives on regional issues and be required to provide opportunities for city participation on Council advisory committees and task forces.

The Metropolitan Council must involve cities at all steps of planning, review and implementation of the regional development guide, policy plans, systems statements, and local comprehensive plan requirements to ensure transparency, balance and Council adherence to its core mission and functions. These processes should allow for stakeholder input before policies and plans are released for comment and finalized. Any additional functions for the Metropolitan Council should not be undertaken unless authorized specifically by state law.

## **MA-2 REGIONAL GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE**

Metro Cities supports the appointment of Metropolitan Council members by the Governor with four-year, staggered terms for members to stabilize ideological shifts and provide for continuity of knowledge on the Council, which is appropriate for a long-range planning body. The appointment of the Metropolitan Council Chair should coincide with the term of the Governor. Metro Cities supports a nominating committee process that maximizes participation and input by local officials. Metro Cities supports expanding the nominating committee from seven to 13 members, with a majority of a 13-member committee being local elected officials. Of the local officials appointed to a nominating committee, two thirds should be elected city officials, appointed by Metro Cities.

Consideration should be given to the creation of four separate nominating committees, with committee representation from each quadrant of the region. Metro Cities supports having the names of recommended nominees or other individuals under consideration for appointment to the Council by the Governor to be made public at least 21 days prior to final selection by the Governor, and a formal public comment period before members are appointed to the Council.

Metro Cities supports the appointment of Metropolitan Council members who have demonstrated the ability to work with cities in a collaborative manner, commit to meet with local government officials regularly and who are responsive to the circumstances and concerns of cities in the district that they represent on the Council. Council members should understand the diversity and the commonalities of the region, and the long-term implications of regional decision-making. A detailed position description outlining the required skills, time commitment and understanding of regional and local issues and concerns should be clearly articulated and posted in advance of the call for nominees.

Metro Cities supports opportunities for local officials to provide input during the decennial legislative redistricting process for the Metropolitan Council and supports transparency in the redistricting process.

### **MA-3 COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS AND OVERSIGHT OF METROPOLITAN COUNCIL**

A comprehensive analysis of the Metropolitan Council's functions and structure was conducted by a Governor's Blue-Ribbon Committee in 2020. Metro Cities supports specific findings by this committee that recommended four-year staggered terms for Metropolitan Council members with members appointed by the governor, an expanded nominating committee with a majority of local officials on the committee, and the publication of nominees prior to their appointment. These findings are consistent with Metro Cities' legislative policy on regional governance. The metropolitan region will continue to expand while simultaneously facing significant challenges for the effective, efficient, and equitable provision of resources and infrastructure.

Metro Cities supports an objective study of the Metropolitan Council's activities and services as well as its geographical jurisdiction to ensure that its services are positioned to be effective and adequate in addressing the future needs of the region.

Such work must include the participation of local officials. The Metropolitan Council should also examine its scope of services to determine their benefit and efficiency and be open to alternative methods of delivery to assure that services are provided at high levels of effectiveness for the region.

Metro Cities supports appropriate legislative oversight of the Metropolitan Council to regularly review the Council's activities, and to provide transparency and accountability of its functions and operations.

### **MA-4 FUNDING REGIONAL SERVICES**

The Metropolitan Council should continue to fund regional services and activities through a combination of user fees, property taxes, and state and federal grants and should set user fees through an open process that includes public notices and hearings. User fees should be uniform and set at a level that supports effective and efficient public services based on commonly accepted industry standards and allows for sufficient reserves to ensure long-term service and fee stability. Fee proceeds

should be used to fund regional services or programs for which they are collected. Metro Cities supports the use of property taxes and user fees to fund regional projects so long as the benefit conferred on the region is proportional to the fee or tax, and the fee or tax is comparable to the benefit cities receive in return.

## **MA-5 REGIONAL SYSTEMS**

Regional systems are statutorily defined as transportation, aviation, wastewater treatment and recreational open space. The purpose of the regional systems and the Metropolitan Council's authority over the systems is outlined in state law. The Metropolitan Council must seek a statutory change to alter the focus or expand the reach of any of these systems.

Systems plans prepared by the Metropolitan Council should be specific in terms of size, location, and timing of regional investments to allow for consideration in local comprehensive planning. Systems plans should also clearly state the criteria by which local plans will be judged for consistency with regional systems.

Additional regional systems should be established only if there is a compelling metropolitan problem or concern best addressed through the designation. Common characteristics of the existing regional systems include public ownership of the system and its components and established regional or state funding sources. These characteristics should be present in any new regional system that might be established. Water supply and housing do not meet necessary established criteria for regional systems. Any proposed additional system must have an established regional or state funding source.

## **MA-6 REGIONAL WATER SUPPLY PLANNING**

The Metropolitan Council is statutorily authorized to carry out planning activities to address water supply needs of the metropolitan area. A Metropolitan Area Water Supply Advisory Committee (MAWSAC) that includes state agency representatives and local officials was established to assist the Council in developing a master water supply plan that includes recommendations for clarifying the roles of local, regional, and state governments, streamlining, and consolidating approval processes and recommending future planning and capital investments. The Master Water Supply Plan serves as a framework to assist communities in water supply planning, without usurping local decision-making. Many cities also conduct their own analyses for use in

water supply planning.

As the Metropolitan Council continues to assess the region's water supply and water sustainability, it must work cooperatively with local policymakers and local professional staff to ensure an on-going base of information that is sound, credible, and verifiable, and considers local information, data, cost-benefit analyses, and projections before any policy recommendations are issued. Metro Cities encourages the Metropolitan Council to consider the inter-relationships of wastewater treatment, storm water management and water supply. Any state and regional regulations and processes should be clearly stated in the Master Water Supply Plan. Further, regional monitoring and data collection benefits should be shared expenses between the regional and local units of government.

Metro Cities supports Metropolitan Council planning activities to address regional water supply needs and water planning activities as prescribed in statute. Metro Cities opposes the insertion of the Metropolitan Council as another regulator in the water supply arena.

Further, while Metro Cities supports regionally coordinated efforts to address water supply issues in the metropolitan area, Metro Cities opposes the elevation of water supply to "Regional System" status, or the assumption of Metropolitan Council control and management of municipal water supply infrastructure.

Metro Cities supports the technical advisory committee to the MAWSAC that maximizes participation by municipal officials and helps to ensure sound scientific analyses and models are developed with local expertise and input before legislative solutions are considered.

Metro Cities supports efforts to identify capital funding sources to assist with municipal water supply projects. Any fees or taxes for regional water supply planning activities must be consistent with activities prescribed in Minn. Stat. § 473. 1565, and support activities specifically within the metropolitan region.

## **MA-7 REVIEW OF LOCAL COMPREHENSIVE PLANS**

Local officials identified concerns with the submission and review processes for 2018 local plans including requests for information beyond what should be necessary for the Metropolitan Council to review local plans for consistency with regional systems,

191 regional requirements that evolved as local plans were prepared and finalized and  
192 finding plans to be incomplete or requiring detailed information on items of a local  
193 rather than regional nature, among others.

194  
195 As the new regional development guide Imagine 2050 is implemented, the  
196 Metropolitan Council must work with Metro Cities and local officials to address any  
197 necessary improvements to the comprehensive planning review processes in advance  
198 of the next comprehensive planning cycle. This work should be conducted with  
199 ongoing opportunities for input and consultation with local officials as any  
200 modifications to comprehensive planning review processes are considered. This work  
201 shall include reviewing processes for comprehensive plan amendments and  
202 identifying areas for improvement. These include ensuring that requirements are  
203 communicated adequately, consistently and in a timely manner, that review letters are  
204 coordinated at the Council prior to dissemination to avoid duplicative requests for  
205 information, and that review letters and information requests are clarified as to whether the  
206 request is actually needed to meet a plan requirement. (suggested by staff)

207  
208 In reviewing local comprehensive plans and plan amendments, the Metropolitan  
209 Council should:

- 210  
211 • Recognize that its role is to review and comment, unless it is found that the local  
212 plan is more likely than not to have a substantial impact on or contain a substantial  
213 departure from one of the four system plans;
- 214  
215 • Be aware of statutory time constraints imposed by the Legislature on plan  
216 amendments and development applications;
- 217  
218 • Provide for immediate effectuation of plan amendments that have no potential for  
219 substantial impact on systems plans;
- 220  
221 • Require the information needed for the Metropolitan Council to complete its review,  
222 but not prescribe additional content or format beyond that which is required by the  
223 Metropolitan Land Use Planning Act (LUPA);
- 224  
225 • Work in a cooperative and timely manner toward the resolution of outstanding  
226 issues. When a city's local comprehensive plan is deemed incompatible with the  
227 Metropolitan Council's systems plans, Metro Cities supports a formal appeal  
228 process that includes a peer review. Metro Cities opposes the imposition of

sanctions or monetary penalties when a city's local comprehensive plan is deemed incompatible with the Metropolitan Council's systems plans or the plan fails to meet a statutory deadline when the city has made legitimate, good faith efforts to meet Metropolitan Council requirements;

- Work with affected cities and other organizations such as the Pollution Control Agency, Department of Natural Resources, Department of Health, and other stakeholders to identify common ground and resolve conflicts between respective goals for flexible residential development and achieving consistency with the Council's system plans and policies; and

- Require entities, such as private businesses, nonprofits, or local units of government, among others, whose actions could adversely affect a comprehensive plan, to be subject to the same qualifications and/or regulations as the city.

Metro Cities opposes legislation that would obstruct or compromise existing statutes as well as requirements set regionally with local input, that ensure a coordinated and productive framework to manage the orderly and economic growth of the region. (change suggested by staff)

## **MA-8 COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING PROCESS**

Metro Cities supports examining the comprehensive planning process to make sure that the process is streamlined and avoids excessive cost burdens or duplicative or unnecessary planning requirements by municipalities in the planning process. Metro Cities supports resources to assist cities in meeting regional goals as part of the comprehensive planning process, including planning grants and technical assistance.

Metro Cities supports funding and other resources from the Metropolitan Council for the preparation of comprehensive plan updates, including grant funding. Grants and other resources should be provided to all eligible communities through a formula that is equitable and recognizes varying city needs and capacities.

## **MA-9 COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING SCHEDULE**

Cities are required to submit comprehensive plan updates to the Metropolitan Council every 10 years. A city's comprehensive plan represents a community's

vision of how the city should grow and develop or redevelop, ensure adequate housing, provide essential public infrastructure and services, protect natural areas, and meet other community objectives.

Metro Cities recognizes the merit of aligning comprehensive plan timelines with the release of census data. However, the comprehensive plan process is expensive, time consuming and labor intensive for cities, and the timing for the submission of comprehensive plans should not be altered solely to better align with census data. If sufficient valid reasons exist for the schedule for the next round of comprehensive plans to be changed or expedited, cities should be provided with financial resources to assist them in preparing the next round of plans.

Metro Cities opposes cities being forced into a state of perpetual planning because of regional and legislative actions. Should changes be made to the comprehensive planning schedule, Metro Cities supports financial and other resources to assist cities in preparing and incorporating policy changes in local planning efforts. Metro Cities supports a 10- year time frame for comprehensive plan update submissions.

Metro Cities supports the Metropolitan Council's consideration to reduce requirements for 10-year Comprehensive Plan updates for cities under 2,500 residents.

#### **MA-10 LOCAL ZONING AUTHORITY**

Local governments are responsible for zoning and local officials should have full authority to approve variances to remain flexible in response to the unique land use needs of their own community. Local zoning decisions, and the implementation of cities' comprehensive plans, should not be conditioned upon the approval of the Metropolitan Council or any other governmental agency.

Metro Cities supports local authority over land use and zoning decisions and opposes the creation of non-local appeals boards with the authority to supersede city zoning decisions, and statutory modifications that would diminish the ability of cities to set and implement local zoning ordinances and policies.

#### **MA-11 REGIONAL GROWTH**

The most recent regional population forecast prepared by the Metropolitan Council

projects a population of 3,555,000 people by 2040 and 3,820,000 by 2050.

Metro Cities recognizes cities' responsibility to plan for sustainable growth patterns and the integration of transportation, housing, parks, open space, and economic development that will result in a region better equipped to manage population growth, provide a high quality of life for a growing and increasingly diverse metropolitan area population, and improved environmental health.

In developing local comprehensive plans to fit within a regional framework, adequate state and regional financial resources and incentives and maximum flexibility for local planning decisions are imperative. The regional framework should assist cities in managing growth while being responsive to the individual qualities, characteristics and needs of metropolitan cities, and should encourage sub-regional cooperation and coordination.

In order to accommodate growth in a manner that preserves the region's high quality of life:

- Natural resource protection will have to be balanced with growth, development, and reinvestment;

- Significant new resources will have to be provided for transportation and transit;

And

- New households will have to be incorporated into the core cities, first and second ring suburbs, and developing cities through both development and redevelopment. In order for regional and local planning to result in the successful implementation of regional policies;

- The State of Minnesota must contribute additional financial resources, particularly in the areas of transportation and transit, community reinvestment, affordable housing development, and the preservation of parks and open space. If funding for regional infrastructure is not adequate, cities should not be responsible for meeting the growth forecast set forth by the Metropolitan Council;

- The Metropolitan Council and Legislature must work to pursue levels of state and federal transportation funding that are adequate to meet identified transportation

and transit needs in the metropolitan area;

- The Metropolitan Council must recognize the limitations of its authority and continue to work with cities in a collaborative, incentives-based manner;

- The Metropolitan Council must recognize the various needs and capacities of its many partners, including but not limited to cities, counties, economic development authorities and nonprofit organizations, and its policies must be balanced and flexible in their approach;

- Metropolitan counties, adjacent counties and school districts must be brought more thoroughly into the discussion due to the critical importance of facilities and services such as county roads and public schools in accommodating forecasted growth; and

- Greater recognition must be given to the fact that the “true” metropolitan region extends beyond the traditional seven-county area and the need to work collaboratively with adjacent counties in Minnesota and Wisconsin, and the cities within those counties. The region faces environmental, transportation, and land use issues that cannot be solved by the seven-county metro area alone. Metro Cities supports an analysis to determine the impacts of Metropolitan Council’s growth management policies and infrastructure investments on the growth and development of the collar counties, and the impacts of growth in the collar counties on the metropolitan area. Metro Cities opposes statutory or other regulatory changes that interfere with established regional and local processes to manage growth in the metropolitan region, including regional systems plans, systems statements, and local comprehensive plans. Such changes erode local planning authority as well as the efficient provision of regional infrastructure, disregard established public processes and create different guidelines for communities that may result in financial, environmental, and other impacts on surrounding communities.

## **MA-12 NATURAL RESOURCE PROTECTION**

Metro Cities recognizes the Metropolitan Council’s efforts to compile and maintain an inventory and assessment of regionally significant natural resources for providing local communities with additional information and technical assistance. The state and region play significant roles in the protection of natural resources. Any steps taken by

the state or Metropolitan Council regarding the protection of natural resources must recognize that:

- The protection of natural resources is significant to a multi-county area that is home to more than 50 percent of the state's population and a travel destination for many more. Given the limited availability of resources and the artificial nature of the metropolitan area's borders, and the numerous entities that are involved in protecting the natural resources of the region and state, neither the region nor individual metropolitan communities would be well served by assuming primary responsibility for financing and protecting these resources;
- The completion of local Natural Resource Inventories and Assessments (NRI/A) is not a regional system nor is it a required component of local comprehensive plans under the Metropolitan Land Use Planning Act;
- The protection of natural resources should be balanced with the need to accommodate growth and development, reinvest in established communities, encourage more affordable housing and provide transportation and transit connections; and
- Decisions about the zoning or land use designations, either within or outside a public park, nature preserve, or other protected area are, and should remain, the responsibility of local units of government. The Metropolitan Council's role with respect to climate change should be focused on the stewardship of its internal operations (wastewater, transit) and working collaboratively with local governments to provide information, best practices, technical assistance and incentives around responses to climate change.

Metro Cities urges the Legislature and the Metropolitan Council to provide financial assistance for the preservation of regionally significant natural resources.

#### **MA-13 INFLOW AND INFILTRATION (I/I)**

The Metropolitan Council has identified a majority of sewerred communities in the metropolitan region to be contributing excessive inflow and infiltration (I/I) into the regional wastewater system or to be on the threshold of contributing excessive inflow and infiltration. Inflow and infiltration are terms for the ways that clear water (ground and storm) makes its way into sanitary sewer pipes and gets treated, unnecessarily, at

regional wastewater plants. The number of identified communities is subject to change, depending on rain events, and any city in the metropolitan area can be affected.

The Metropolitan Council establishes a surcharge on cities determined to be contributing unacceptable amounts of I/I into the wastewater system. The charge is waived when cities meet certain parameters through local mitigation efforts.

Metro Cities recognizes the importance of controlling I/I because of its potential environmental and public health impacts, because it affects the size, and therefore the cost, of wastewater treatment systems and because excessive I/I in one city can affect development capacity of another. However, there is the potential for cities to incur increasingly exorbitant costs in their ongoing efforts to mitigate excessive I/I. Therefore, managing I/I at a regional as well as local level, is critical to effective mitigation and cost management.

Metro Cities continues to monitor the surcharge program and supports continued reviews of the methodology used to measure excess I/I to ensure that the methodology appropriately normalizes for precipitation variability and the Council's work with cities on community specific issues around I/I.

Metro Cities supports state financial assistance for metro area I/I mitigation through future Clean Water Legacy Act appropriations or similar legislation and encourages the Metropolitan Council to partner in support of such appropriations. Metro Cities also supports resources, including identified best practices, information on model ordinances, public education and outreach, and other tools, to local governments to address inflow/ infiltration mitigation for private properties.

A 2023 task force recommended parameters for a private property inflow-infiltration program that will be funded through a portion of the regional wastewater charge. As a program gets underway, Metro Cities will monitor program criteria for transparency and accessibility for eligible cities.

Metro Cities supports continued state capital assistance to provide grants to metropolitan cities for mitigating inflow and infiltration problems into municipal wastewater collection systems. Grant funding should continue to be structured so that all eligible cities have access to this funding assistance.

**MA-14 SEWER AVAILABILITY CHARGE (SAC)**

Metro Cities supports a SAC program that emphasizes equity, transparency, simplification, and lower rates.

Metro Cities supports principles for SAC that include program transparency and simplicity, equity for all served communities and between current and future users, support for cities' sewer fee capacities, administrative reasonableness, and weighing any program uses for specific goals against impacts to program equity, transparency, and simplicity. As such, Metro Cities opposes the use of the SAC mechanism to subsidize or incent specific Metropolitan Council goals and objectives. Input from local officials should be sought if the SAC reserve is proposed to be used for any purpose other than debt service, including pay-as-you-go (PAYGO). Metro Cities opposes increases to the SAC rate while the reserve is projected to exceed the Metropolitan Council's minimum reserve balance, without the express engagement of city officials in the metropolitan area.

Metro Cities supports current SAC program criteria that use gross square feet in making SAC determinations, and do not require a new SAC determination for business remodels that do not change the use of the property. These changes were the result of a 2018 task force that made recommendations to simplify the SAC program for users, and to reduce incidents of "surprise" SAC charges.

Metro Cities supports current SAC policy that enhances flexibility in the SAC credit structure for redevelopment purposes and supports continued evaluation of SAC fees to determine if they hinder redevelopment.

Metro Cities supports the Metropolitan Council providing details on how any proposed changes to the SAC rate are determined. Metro Cities supports a periodic review of MCES' customer service policies, to ensure that its processes are responsive and transparent to cities, businesses, and residents. Metro Cities supports continued outreach by MCES to users of the SAC program to promote knowledge and understanding of SAC charges and policies. Any modifications to the SAC program or structure should be considered only with the participation and input of local officials in the metropolitan region.

Metro Cities supports a "growth pays for growth" approach to SAC. If state statutes are modified to establish a "growth pays for growth" method for SAC, the Metropolitan

Council should convene a group of local officials to identify any technical changes necessary for implementing the new structure.

Metro Cities supports allowing the Council to utilize a SAC ‘transfer’ mechanism when the SAC reserve fund is inadequate to meet debt service obligations. Any use of the transfer mechanism must be done so within parameters prescribed by state law and with appropriate notification and processes to allow local official input and should include a timely ‘shift back’ of any funds that were transferred from the wastewater fund to the SAC reserve fund. Efforts should be made to avoid increasing the municipal wastewater charge in use of the transfer mechanism.

#### **MA-15 FUNDING REGIONAL PARKS & OPEN SPACE**

In the seven-county metropolitan area, regional parks essentially serve as state parks, and the state should continue to provide capital funding for the acquisition, development, and improvement of these parks in a manner that is equitable with funding for state parks. State funding apart from Legacy funds should equal 40 percent of the operating budget for regional parks. Legacy funds for parks and trails should be balanced between the metropolitan region and greater Minnesota. Metro Cities supports state funding for regional parks and trails that is fair, creates a balance of investment across the state and meets the needs of the region.

#### **MA-16 LIVABLE COMMUNITIES**

The Livable Communities Act (LCA) under Minn. Stat. 473.25 is administered by the Metropolitan Council and provides a voluntary, incentive-based approach to affordable housing development, tax base revitalization, job growth and preservation, brownfield clean up, mixed-use, transit-friendly development, and redevelopment. Metro Cities supports this approach that is widely accepted and utilized by cities. Since its inception in 1995 the LCA program has generated billions of dollars of private and public investment, created thousands of jobs and added thousands of affordable housing units in the region.

Metro Cities monitors the LCA programs on an ongoing basis and supports any necessary program modifications to ensure that the LCA program criteria are flexible and promote the participation of all participating communities, and to ensure all metropolitan area cities are eligible to participate in the Livable Communities

531 Demonstration Account (LCDA).

532

533 Metro Cities supports statutory goals and criteria established for the Livable  
534 Communities Act and opposes any changes to LCA programs that constrain flexibility  
535 provided for in statutory goals, program requirements and criteria. Metro Cities monitors  
536 any potential modifications to the LCA program to ensure that program criteria are  
537 responsive to local needs within the context of overall LCA objectives.

538

539 Metro Cities supports increased funding and flexible eligibility requirements in the  
540 LCDA to assist cities with development that may not be exclusively market driven or  
541 market proven in the location, in order to support important local development and  
542 redevelopment goals. Metro Cities supports ongoing outreach by the Council on the  
543 LCA programs and continued efforts to ensure that LCA criteria are sufficiently flexible  
544 to meet the range of identified program objectives.

545

546 Metro Cities opposes reductions in funding for Livable Communities Act programs and  
547 the transfer or use of LCA funds for purposes outside of the LCA program.

548

549 Metro Cities supports statutory modifications in the LCDA to reflect linkages among  
550 goals, municipal objectives, and Metropolitan Council system objectives.

551

552 Metro Cities supports the use of LCA funds for projects in transit improvement areas,  
553 as defined in statute, if funding levels for general LCA programs are adequate to meet  
554 program goals and the program remains accessible to participating communities.

555

556 Any proposed program modifications should be considered with input by local officials  
557 before changes to are enacted or implemented. Use of interest earnings from LCA  
558 funds should be limited to administrative program costs. Remaining interest earnings  
559 should be considered to be part of LCA funds and used to fund grants from  
560 established LCA accounts using funding criteria.

561

## 562 **MA-17 DENSITY**

563

564 Metro Cities recognizes the need for a regional density policy, including minimum density  
565 requirements, that allows the Metropolitan Council to effectively plan for and deliver cost  
566 efficient regional infrastructure and services. Regional density requirements must  
567 recognize that local needs and priorities vary, and requirements must be sufficiently  
568 flexible to accommodate local circumstances as well as the effect of market trends on

local development and redevelopment activity.

The Metropolitan Council asks cities to plan for achieving minimum average net densities across all areas identified for new growth, development, or redevelopment. Because each community is different, how and where density is guided is determined by the local unit of government, regional density requirements should use minimum average net densities and provide flexibility to accommodate individual city circumstances.

Metro Cities opposes parcel-specific density requirements as such requirements are contrary to the need for local flexibility in a regional policy.

Any regional density policy must use local data and local development patterns and must accommodate local physical and land use constraints such as, but not limited to, wetlands, public open space, trees, water bodies and rights-of-way, and any corresponding federal and state regulations imposed on local governments when computing net densities. The Metropolitan Council must coordinate with local governments in establishing or revising regional density requirements and should ensure that regional density and plat monitoring reports comprehensively reflect local densities and land uses.

Metro Cities opposes density requirements at the state level. Doing so negates the ability of metropolitan cities and the Metropolitan Council to manage density across the metropolitan region, which is necessary to adequately address regional and local infrastructure needs and costs. (change suggested by staff)

## **MA-18 COMPREHENSIVE PLANS AND ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

Comprehensive plans are essential guiding documents for cities and lay out a range of future land use scenarios, which are intended to allow for the orderly and economic development of the metropolitan region. To allow for local flexibility and functionality, as well as to best align local goals with regional requirements, it is essential that local comprehensive plans remain as high-level visioning documents that guide future development as well as other city policies.

Metro Cities supports any further statutory changes, if necessary, to clarify that cities' comprehensive plans are exempt from review under the Minnesota Environmental Rights Act (MERA).