

Information Item

Committee of the Whole



Meeting date: August 19, 2026

Topic

Housing Forward Cities Update

District(s), member(s):	All
Policy/legal reference:	Federal Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2024; Federal Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023; and Title I of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 (42 U.S.C. 5301 et seq.)
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Division/department:	Community Development/Regional Planning

Background

In 2024 and 2025, the Met Council received two awards from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in the FY2023 and FY2024 rounds of the “Pathways to Removing Obstacles to Housing” (PRO Housing) program, totaling \$9,000,000. Grant agreements and [action plans for both grants have since been approved by HUD, and work is now underway](#). This information item provides an update for council members on this grant-funded work, highlighting its connections to ongoing housing policy and the Livable Communities program, and its relevance to housing policy debates in the region.

Housing Forward Cities

The Met Council worked with cities and counties in the region to design the original grant proposals that have now become the “Housing Forward Cities” program. This program is designed to respond to and prepare for several key opportunities in this decade:

- **Imagine 2050** and the 2050 cycle of updates to local comprehensive plans that communities are now undertaking for 2028. The Housing Policy Plan and other policies in Imagine 2050 provide guidance for going beyond the minimum in planning to address affordable housing needs, especially at lower income levels, for each community in the region. Housing Forward Cities provides funding and planning assistance for implementation.
- **Unprecedented local revenue for housing**, via the \$0.25 local sales tax that funds Local Affordable Housing Assistance (LAHA) for cities and counties. This year, LAHA totals nearly \$44M for cities over 10,000 in population and more than \$87M for the seven counties in the metro region. Housing Forward Cities supports planning and program development for communities to use these funds.
- **Momentum for housing and land use policy**. Cities throughout the region – across multiple community designations—have already implemented missing middle policies, upzoning, and new affordable housing policies and programs in the wake of the 2040 planning cycle. Housing Forward Cities provides support for collaboration and reducing the costs of policy development.

The Housing Forward Cities program, funded in succession by both grants, is being delivered via several interrelated and complementary efforts:

1. Policy & Program Development grants

- Met Council awarded \$600,000 directly to 8 cities in 2025 and 2026; 18 or more additional grants will be available from 2026-2027
- Funding is made available within Livable Communities Policy & Program Development grant opportunities

2. Regional collaboration for housing & land use policies

- The Housing Forward Cities Missing Middle Project will launch in late 2026 and continue through 2028, delivered by consultants and co-designed with participating cities. The initiative will target the local policy and market context for the development, preservation, and adaptive reuse of "Missing Middle" housing—ranging from Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) to neighborhood-scaled multi-family buildings, up to 25 units in size. Goals are to better align local regulations and boost the identification and adoption of best practices by providing cities with shared learning and the opportunity to co-develop standardized, high-quality and practical technical tools.
- Additional peer learning, planning assistance, toolkit development, and model ordinance projects are in the planning stage, and will continue through 2029. Projects will be a mix of staff-led and consultant-led.

3. Support for building/preserving deeply affordable homes

- A sub-grant from the FY2023 award will be awarded this year to Ramsey County to support development or preservation of deeply affordable homes for households earning less than 30% AMI (approximately \$40,000 annually).

Maximizing the moment for housing

Housing Forward Cities is intended to boost local planning and policy development at a critical moment in the comprehensive planning cycle.

Working together on common policy and development challenges as Housing Forward Cities will move communities more quickly to implement their 2050 housing policies and comprehensive plans, encouraging communities to learn from each other to speed the adoption of best practices across the region.

The local direct sub-grants available via the Housing Forward Cities budget are aligned with and delivered with the Livable Communities program, helping to set the conditions for future affordable housing development for which participating communities can later seek additional Livable Communities grants.

With increasing attention to housing affordability and land use policy throughout the state and region, there is significant potential for building on local communities' momentum and align leading practices across more communities in the region.

Discussion

1. Where do you see opportunities for communities in your district to lead the way on housing policy innovation?
2. What are you hearing from communities about their housing challenges, going into the current planning cycle?

