MUSA Implementation Guidelines

Imagine 2050 Update

METROPOLITAN COUNCIL

February 2, 2026

metrocouncil.org

MUSA Implementation Guidelines

Today's Discussion

- Background
- Proposed changes
- What we have heard
- Proposed Motion

Metropolitan Council

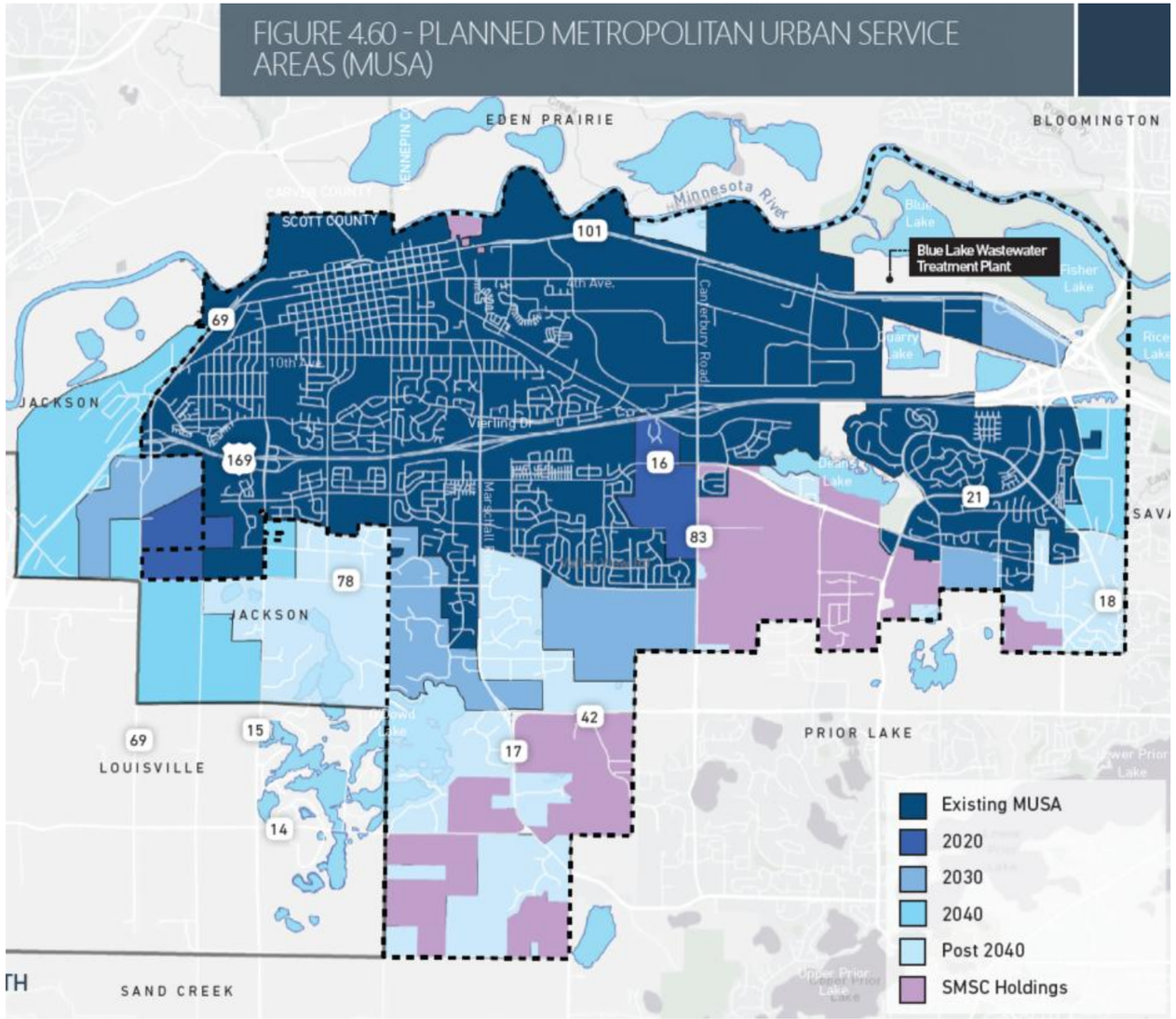
Metropolitan Urban Service Area (MUSA)

What is the MUSA?

Metropolitan Urban Service Area (MUSA)

Application

- Staging identified by local government
- Implementation guidelines for proposed changes to *local* staging and expansions
- Council reviews for system impacts (density/flows), timing, and forecast consistency



MUSA Implementation Guidelines

History

- First established in 2004
- Collaboration with Metro Cities
- Last Major updated in 2017 with adoption of *Thrive MSP 2040*
- Minor Update in 2023

Purpose

- Ensure transparent, clear, and consistent process for evaluating MUSA expansion request.
- Ensure orderly and efficient operation of regional system.

Major Proposed Updates

- Consolidates many existing polices into a single documents.
- New proposed exclusions from density calculations.
- Use preliminary plats to review multi-phase projects.
- Need to demonstrate need for MUSA expansions.
- Land Use Inefficiency Surcharge.

Feedback

Environmental Committee Summary (January 13, 2026)

- Supportive of the proposed changes.
- Asked why this was being proposed now.
- Emphasized that it was important that the surcharge be flexible and based on each cases unique circumstances.
- Highlighted the need for studies/determinations relating to the surcharge to be timely so as not to unnecessarily delay connections with environmental implications.

Feedback

LUAC Summary (January 15, 2026 and Nov 20, 2025)

- Voted to recommend adoption of the proposed guidelines.
- Noted instances where cities have to step in and maintain privately owned stormwater ponds.
- Requested clarification on Land Use Inefficiency Surcharge (when it would be charged and who would pay).
- Asked if there were concerns about subsequent phases of a multi-phase development not developing as initially proposed.
- Asked for clarification what cities were requesting for density averaging and why the Council was not supportive.

Feedback

Community Development Committee Summary (Nov 11, 2025)

- The CDC asked staff if there were areas that cities have requested be excluded from density calculations which staff is not proposing to exclude.

- The CDC requests clarification on what would happen if a city wanted to expand their MUSA but the Council did not agree that it needed to be expanded.

- The CDC requested that the Environmental Committee be given a chance to provide input on the proposed guidelines, especially the proposed land use inefficiency surcharge. This occurred on January 13.

Feedback

Focus Group Discussion Summary (Nov 12 and Dec 19, 2025)

- Participants felt strongly that public versus private ownership of stormwater ponds was not related to their impact on density. (i.e. They are required infrastructure taking up the same acreage of land regardless of ownership).

- Believe that Metropolitan Council should allow density to be averaged within a development. Note that developments often use PUDs to created mixed neighborhoods that do not neatly align with Land Use Map. Feel this policy creates excessive number of comprehensive plan amendments.

- Extensive discussion on how road right of way is treated. Noted that if created as a separate lot, already not included in calculations because not part of development plat.

Feedback

Regional Planning Advisory Group Summary (Dec 2, 2025)

- Generally supportive.
- Asked clarifying questions on density calculations, specially relating to roadway right of way and easements.
- Asked clarifying questions as to why the Council does not permit density to be averaged between land uses.

Next Steps

- Feb 11th Metropolitan Council
- Continue to respond to questions and feedback.

Proposed Action

Motion:

That the Metropolitan Council adopt the 2026 MUSA Implementation Guidelines as shown in Attachment 1, replacing the current Metropolitan Urban Service Area (MUSA) Implementation Guidelines.

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