Small Communities Planning Program Project Update

Community Development Committee

Merritt Clapp-Smith and MacKenzie Young-Walters

November 16, 2026

METROPOLITAN COUNCIL

Today’s Agenda



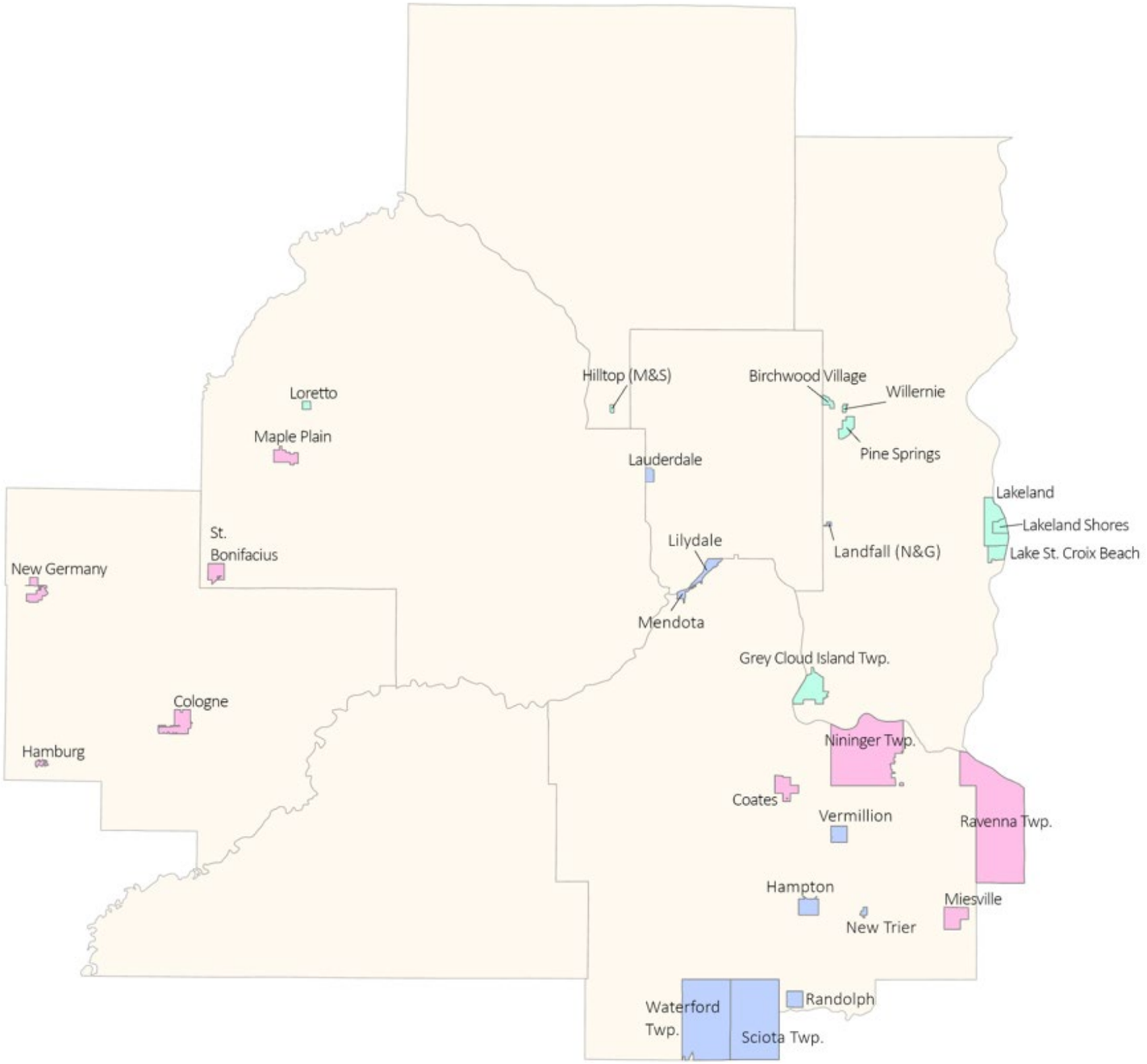
Project Updates

- Program Communities and Staff Team
- Project Schedule and Key Activities
- Community Work Groups and Engagement
- ‘Test Run’ Plans and ‘How To’ Resources

IMAGINE 2050

Metropolitan Council

Program Communities and Staff Team



SCPP Staff Team

Natalie Brown & Gaby Olvera-Swaray





Hampton, Landfall, Lauderdale, Lilydale, Mendota, New Trier, Randolph, Sciota Township, Waterford Township, and Vermillion

Michelle Einstein & Samah Safiullah





Birchwood Village, Grey Cloud Island Township, Hilltop, Lakeland, Lakeland Shores, Lake St. Croix Beach, Loretto, Pine Springs, Willernie

Carol HeljStone & Aaryan Awasthi





Coates, Cologne, Hamburg, Maple Plain, Miesville, New Germany, Nininger Township, Ravenna Township, St. Bonifacius

- Merritt Clapp-Smith and MacKenzie Young-Walters - program leads
- Angela Torres, Local Planning Assistance Senior Manager - program coordinator
- Magdelyn Herzig, Associate Data Scientist - GIS mapping
- Consulting engineers for the Water Chapter of local plans

Water Chapter Engineering Consultants



Contracted Firms and Division of Work

Water Chapter Elements

- Surface Water
- Water Supply
- Wastewater

3 firms qualified as eligible to bid on work orders

- Bolton & Menk
- Stantec
- Young Environmental

5 work orders for firms to bid on, ideally dividing the work among them. Hope for work to begin by January 2027.

Project Schedule and Key Activities



High-Level Program Timeline



Community Work Groups and Engagement



28 Very Small Communities

Capacity Limitations

- Tiny annual budgets
- Staff to perform legal functions and no more (maybe 1 FTE and perhaps very limited legal, planning, engineering consultants)
- Very few engaged community members





Collaboration and Roles

Develop a 2050 Plan reflective of community interests and regional policy.

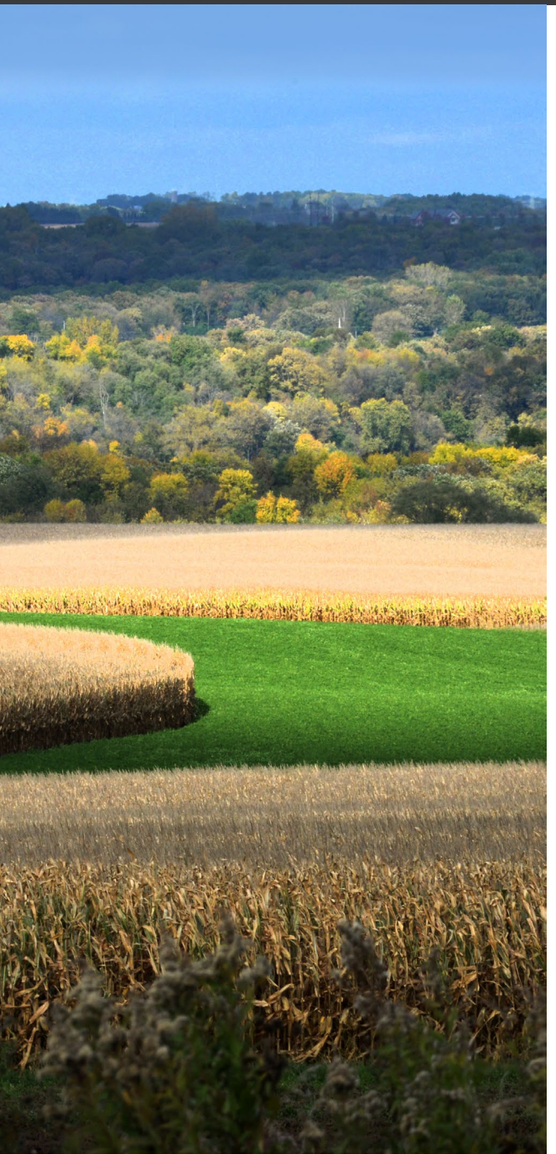
Met Council Role

- Collect technical information, data, and maps.
- Produce and write the plan.
- Interact regularly with the community project leads and Work Group.
- Provide modest support for community engagement.

Community Role

- Gather input from community members.
- Lead community visioning, priority setting, and strategic direction to guide the community through the year 2050.
- Review and provide input on Plan drafts.

Work Group Structure and Schedule



Structure

- Ideally 4-8 participants.
- May be composed of current elected and/or appointed officials, community staff or consultants, residents, businesspeople, organizational partners, or others the community thinks important.
- Identify key municipal consultants or others who have subject matter expertise that can help inform the Plan.

Schedule

- Meeting format and Frequency to be determined by work group.
- Met Council staff will, at minimum, participate in 3 joint meetings with the Work Group at project kick-off, mid-project, and during final plan drafting.

‘Test Run’ Plans and ‘How To’ Resources



‘Test Run’ Plans



Staff Prepared and Reviewed Two Theoretical 2050 Plans

Drafted plans for two SCPP communities

- Prepared a 2050 Plan template addressing all requirements for all chapters
- Consulted cross-divisional staff on requirement expectations
- Prepared draft plans internally and sent to reviewers

What we learned

- Where and how to improve content to be complete
- Identified additional data and resources
- General tips on plan organization and design

Contextualizing Minimum Requirements



Right-sizing plans to reflect potential and limits of very small communities

- The uniform nature of Imagine 2050 minimum requirements are oversized for very small communities.
- Some topics and implementation objectives are beyond local capacity, purview or finances
- Met Council staff across divisions are actively identifying approaches and solutions to prepare complete and realistic plans.

Met Council Imagine 2050 Resources

LOCAL PLANNING HANDBOOK

One-Stop Shop for Plan Guidance and Resources

Future Land Use Plan	10.2	Acknowledge Council-approved long-range plan boundaries of regional parks, park reserves, and special features by guiding the properties with a land use of "Park" (or your equivalent) on your Future Land Use Map.	
Future Land Use Plan	10.3	Identify areas enrolled or eligible for enrollment within the Metropolitan Agricultural Preserves program on the Future Land Use Map using an agricultural land use designation with a maximum density of 1 unit per 40 acres, as required for program eligibility in state law.	Agricultural Preserves Fact Sheet
Future Land Use Plan	11.0	Provide a Future Land Use table which includes:	Template: Net Residential Density Table (for 2050 Comprehensive Plans)
Future Land Use Plan	11.1	All land use categories, consistent with the Future Land Use table and map.	
Future Land Use Plan	11.2	Total net acres of all future land uses. Exclude wetlands and natural water bodies, public parks and open space, arterial road rights-of-way, and areas protected from development by local plans and ordinances (i.e. steep slopes, wetland buffers) from area calculations.	2026 MUSA Implementation Guidelines

- + 60%

Microsoft Power BI

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For more Land Use resources, visit the Resource Library!

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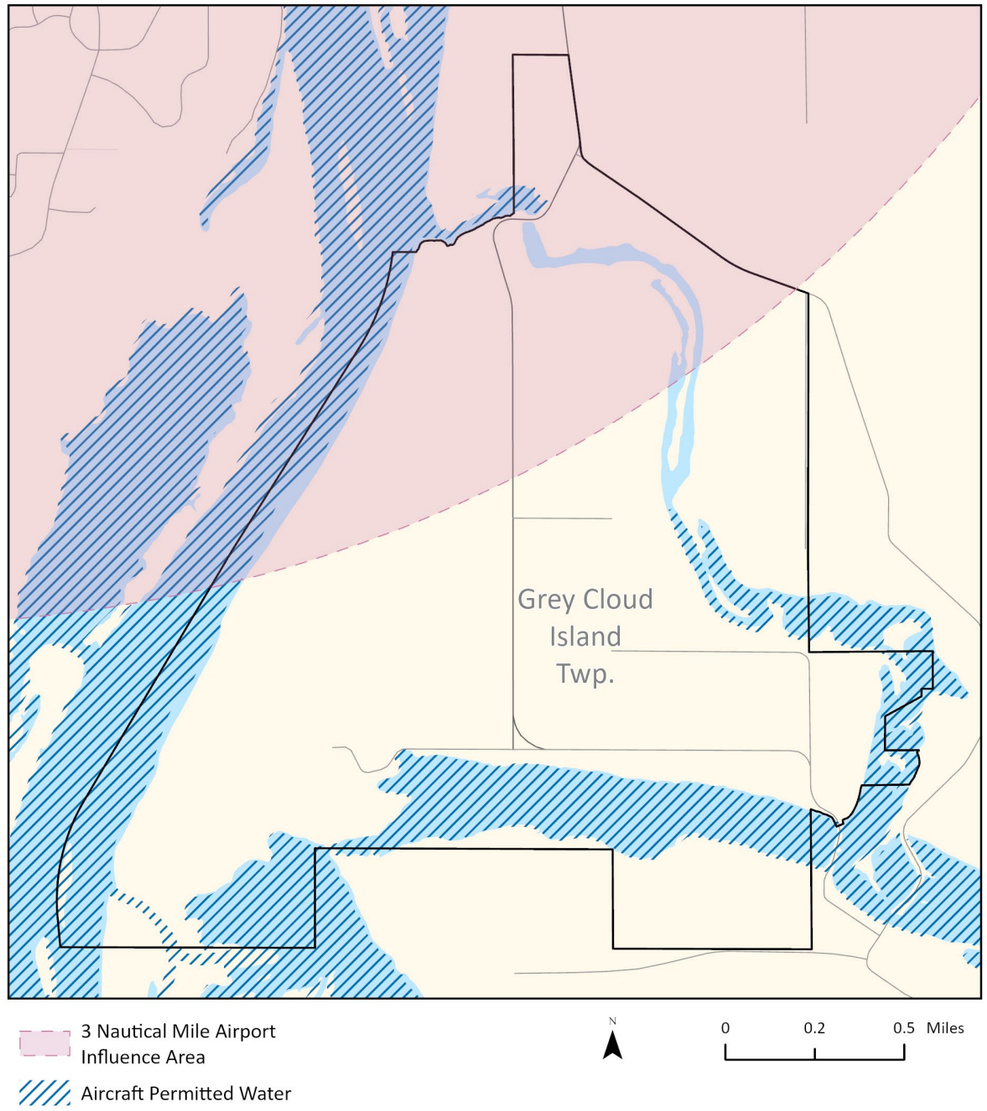
Design of SCPP Plans



Design, Styles and Standardization

- Communications staff will help design an attractive and accessible plan template.
- Customized plans to include local branding, community-specific photos, and organizational preferences.
- All maps will be created in GIS by our SCPP team and Research colleagues using a standardized design.

Next Steps



Work Group

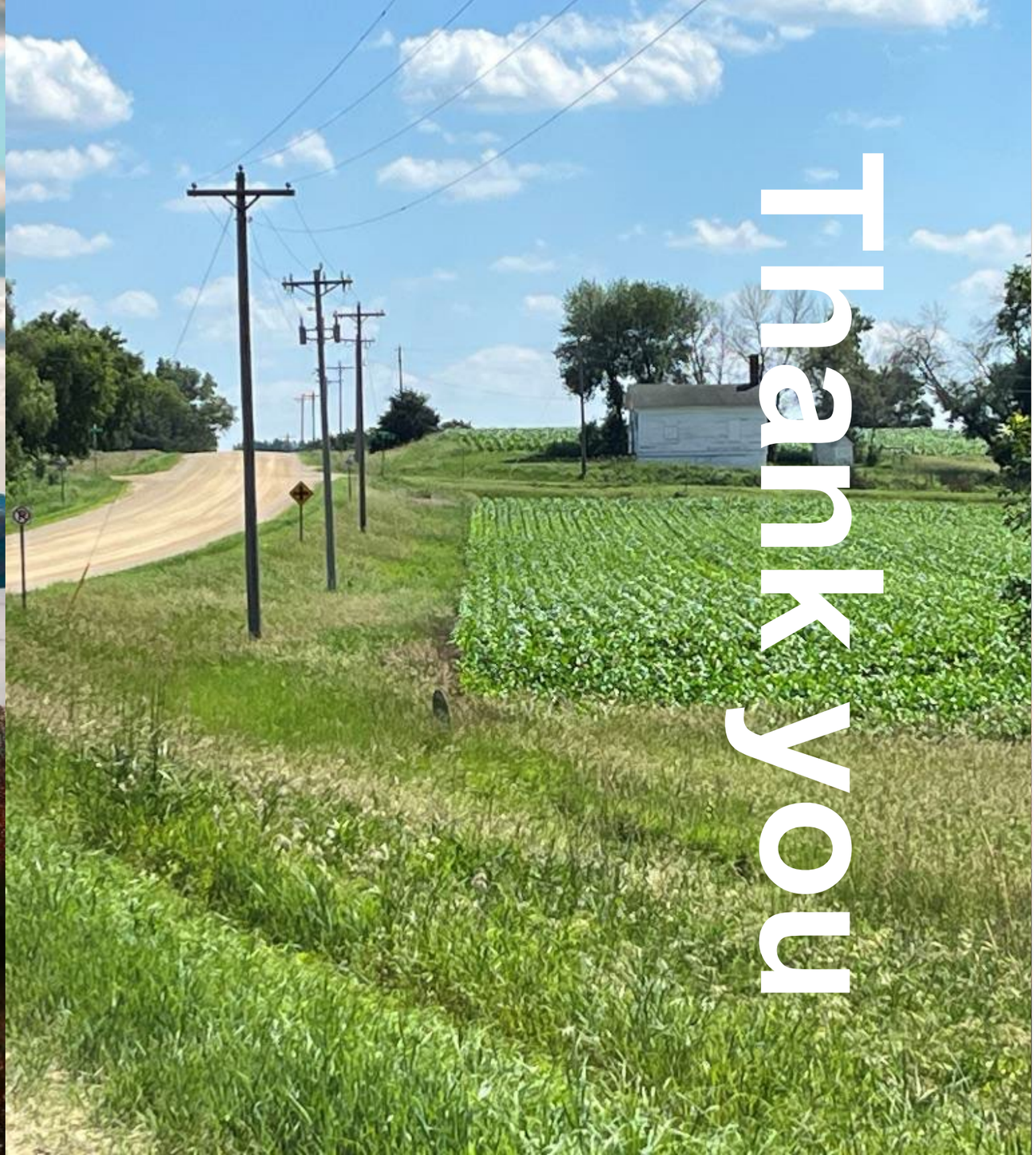
- Begin meetings to discuss local vision, issues and opportunities and priorities for 2050 Comp Plan
- Identify key updates needed from 2040 Plan
- Begin engaging community and documenting input

City staff/consultants

- Compile and send any background information to Met Council staff
- Act as point of contact for Work Group and Met Council staff

Met Council Staff

- Continue to assemble background information and data
- Assist with planning and preparing materials for community engagement, as needed
- Begin drafting background and contextual comp plan elements



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