METROPOLITAN COUNCIL

Flexible Rural Development Standards

Imagine 2050 Update



November 19, 2026 metrocouncil.org

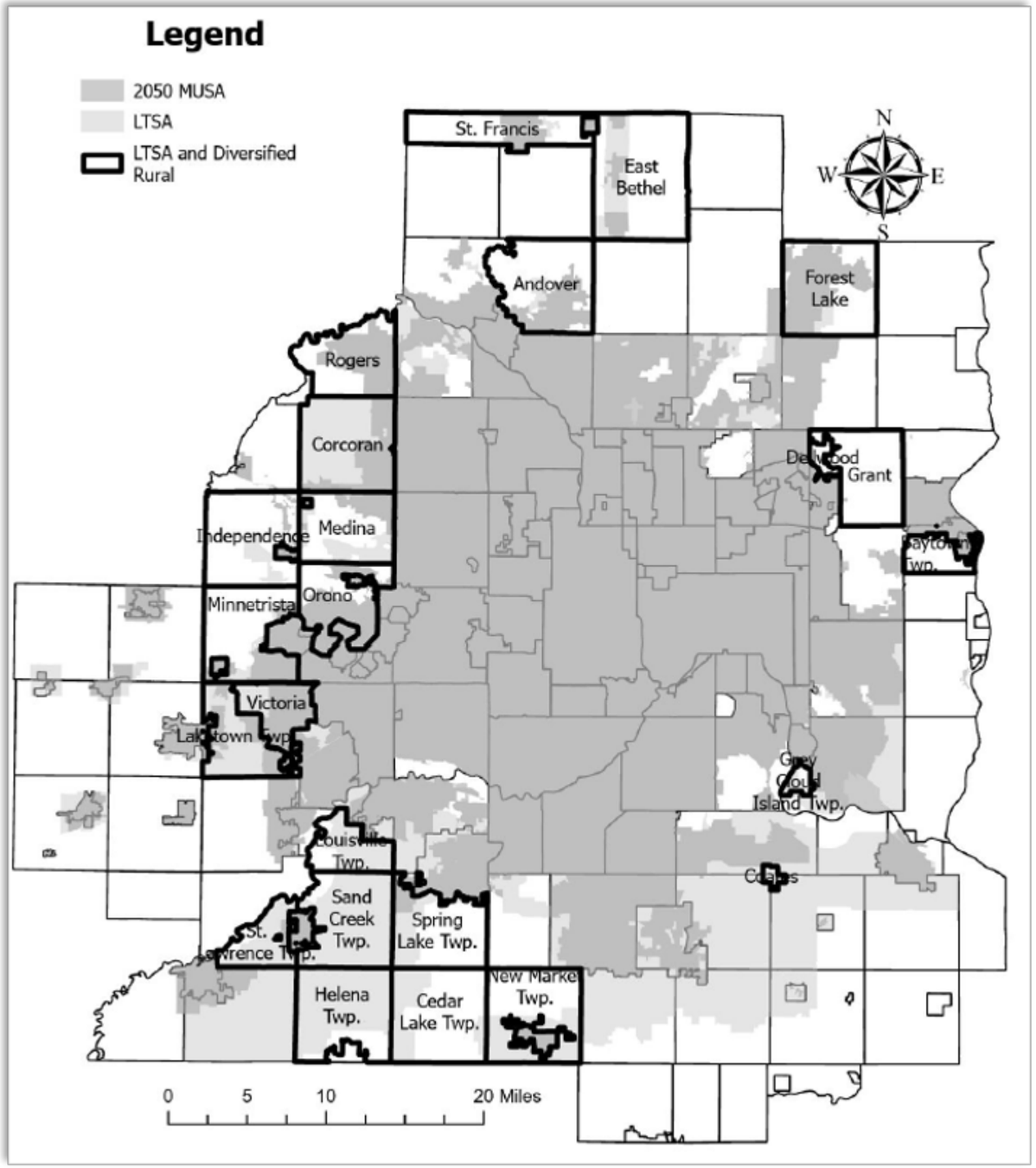
Today’s Discussion



- Background
- Engagement / What We Learned
- Flexible Rural Development Updates
- Proposed Action

Metropolitan Council

Diversified Rural Communities and Long-Term Service Area



Analysis

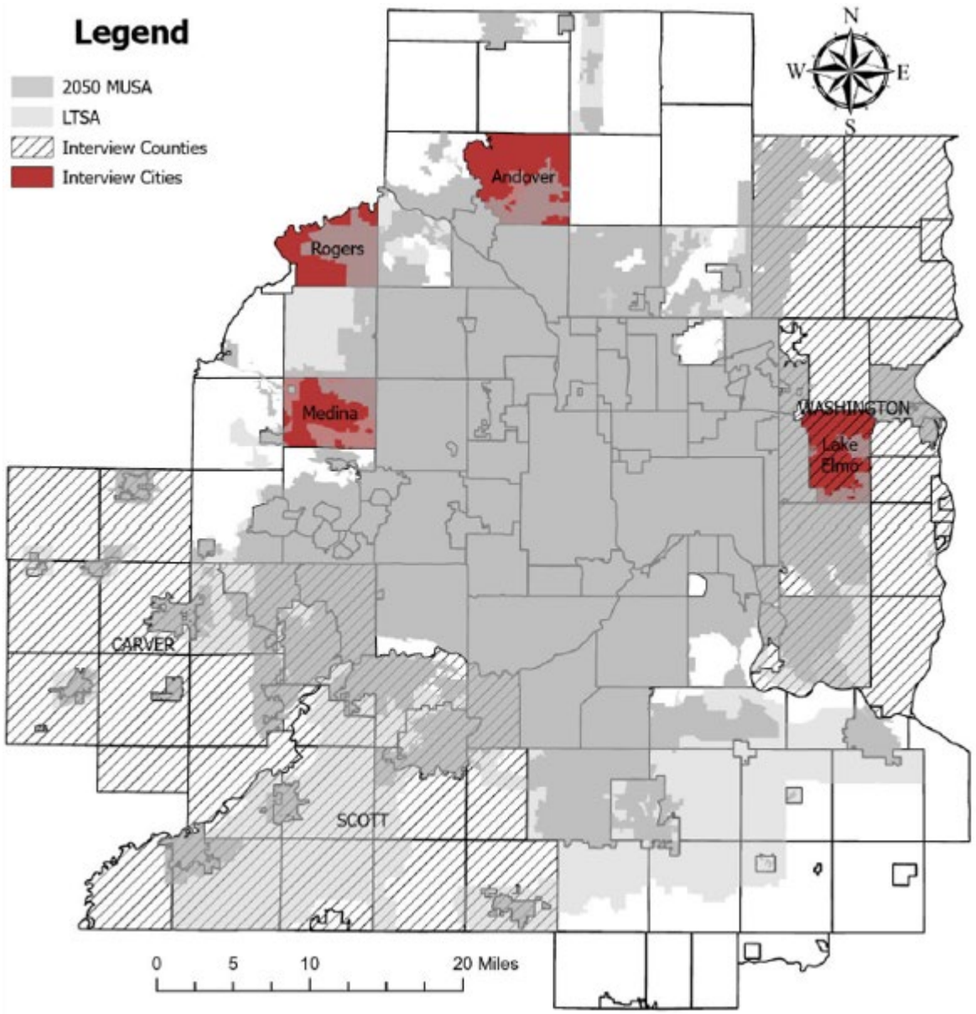
Background Research

- Background Info Review
- 2040 Comprehensive Plans
- GIS Analysis

Findings

- Originally adopted to address rampant development in rural areas.
- Seeing some proliferation of “rural residential” style development.
- Many plans reference flexibility and the guidelines, but few provide details on implementation.
- Difficult to determine what is happening in rural service area.
  - ❖ Needed Engagement with communities to understand what was happening and how guidelines were being used.

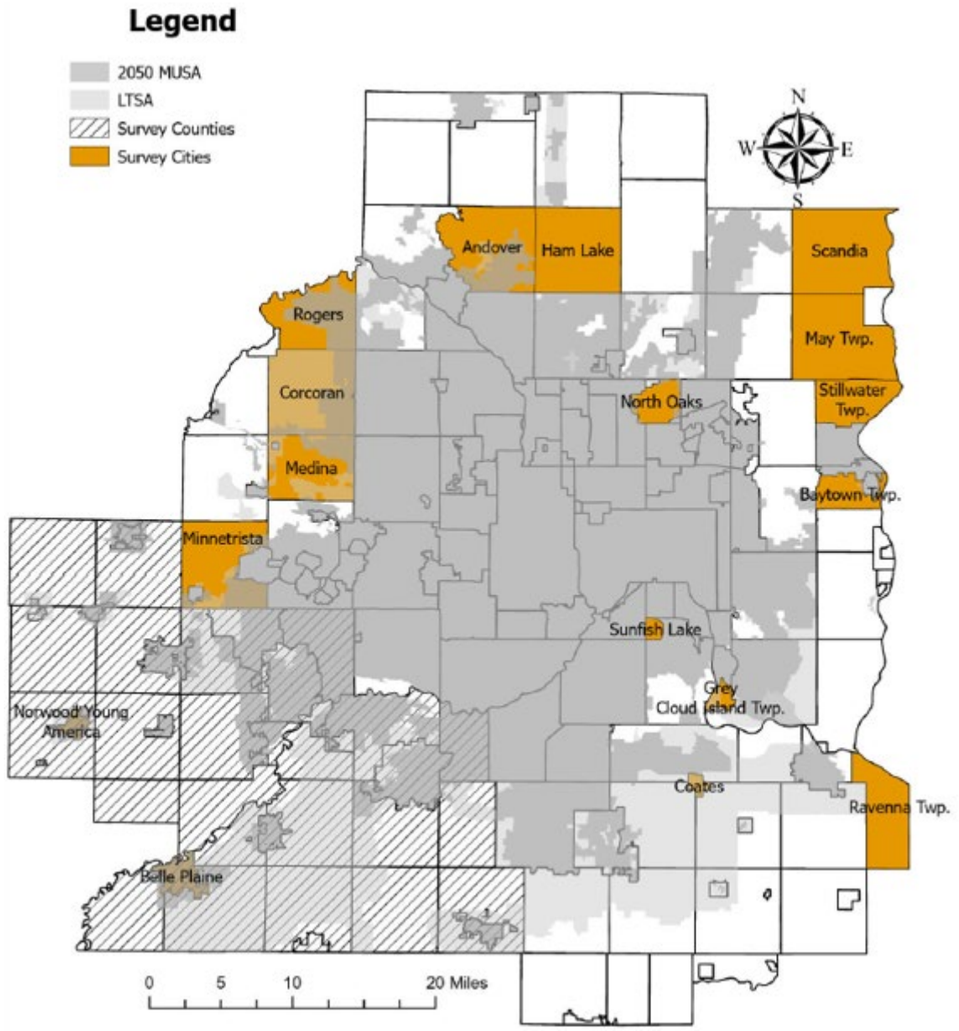
Engagement: Stakeholder Interviews



Key Take-Aways

- Guidelines not being used for intended purpose
- Guidelines interpreted to offer more flexibility than intended
- Difficult to make financially viable with large % preserved
- Communal septic maintenance concerns

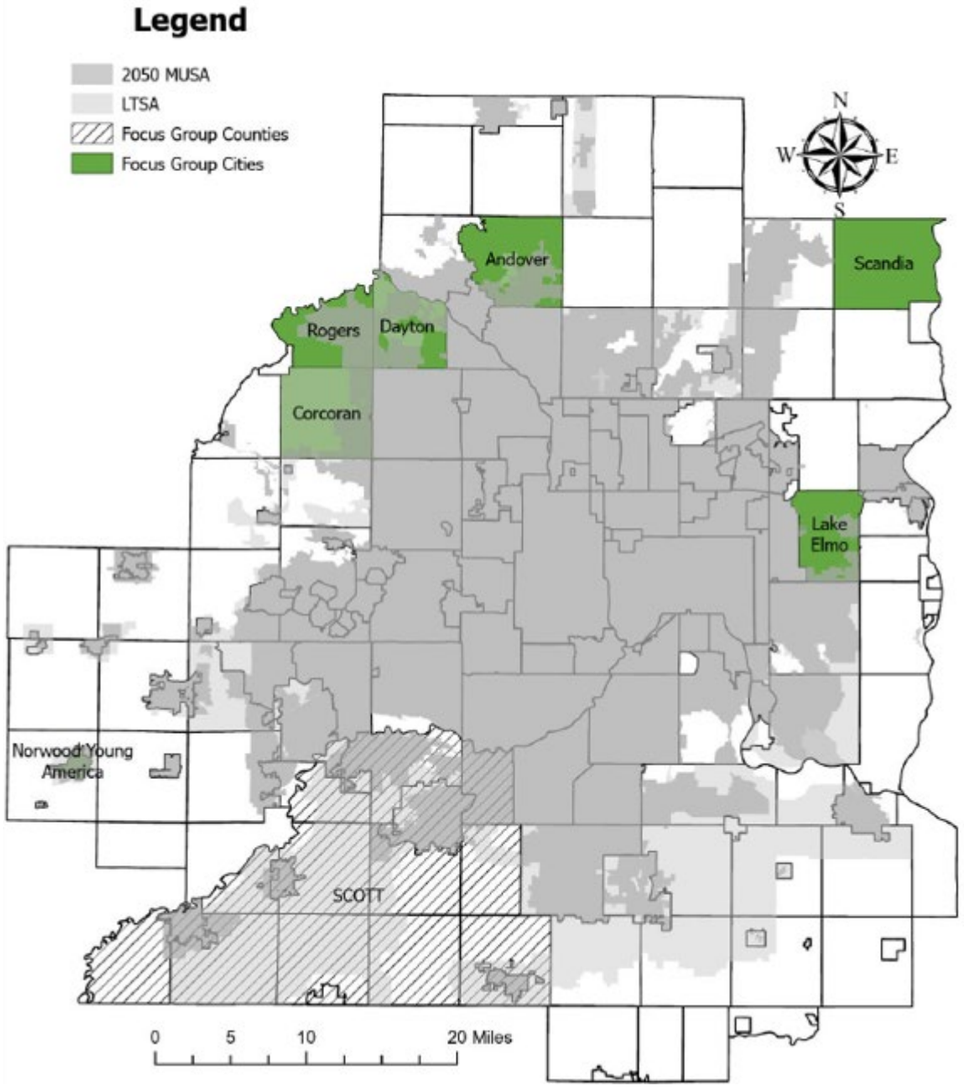
Engagement: Survey



Key Take-Aways

- Few cluster developments, often low # units/ high-end
- Not interested in flexibility for preservation of future urbanization
- Interest in protection of natural systems
- Communal systems concerns: maintenance/ high failure rates

Engagement: Focus Group



Key Take-Aways

- No major concerns.
- Asked about % preserved
- Improved clarity/language
- Requested resources

Proposed Updates



- **Eligibility/Local Responsibilities**
  - Diversified Rural and LTSA, or special agreement
  - Comprehensive Plan consistency requirements

- **New Program Requirements for Comp Plans**
  - Comp Plan mapping and implementation requirements
  - Submit copy of updated ordinances
  - Rural development monitoring program

- **Minor Updates to 2008 Ordinance Guidelines**
  - Guidelines to Standards
  - Update guidance on communal systems

Community/Committee Feedback

Local Engagement

- Over ½ Eligible Communities
- Review/Comment on Draft Updates

- Rural Development Pattern
- Now/Historically
- Informed Changes
- Recommended Improvements

LUAC and CDC

- LUAC Info Item: May 2026
- LUAC Info Item: September 2026
- CDC Info Item: October 2026

- Guidance and Direction
- Policy Considerations/
- Percentages Review

Review/Feedback



Percent Evaluation

- Theoretical quantitative analysis: What would be required to meet Council's policy of 3.5 units/acre. Staff assumed 2.5-acre lots for the rural portion.

- To achieve Council policy of 3.5 units/acre:
  - **25/75** split would need **4.5 units/acre**
  - **33/67** split would need to **5.1 units/acre**
  - **50/50** split would need to **6.6 units/acre**

CDC

- Importance of protecting long-term service area/ ensure future sewer extensions are cost effective in the LTSA.
- Hesitation to consider a change from the original 25% developed and 75% reserved for future development.
- Concern about communal septic systems and need for best practices for maintenance.

Goal / Recommendation

Goal

The Standards provide interim flexibility in density while also retaining the ability to provide future regional wastewater services based on regional system plans and long-term needs.

Recommend maintaining 25/75 split

Concerns of change from 25/75, could cause

- impacts to developable land; not all developable land is equally developable; risk of site constraints preventing reserved area from being developed as intended.
- make it more difficult to provide future regional wastewater services based on regional system plans and long-term needs.
- Impact the ability for the Council to efficiently provide future regional wastewater services

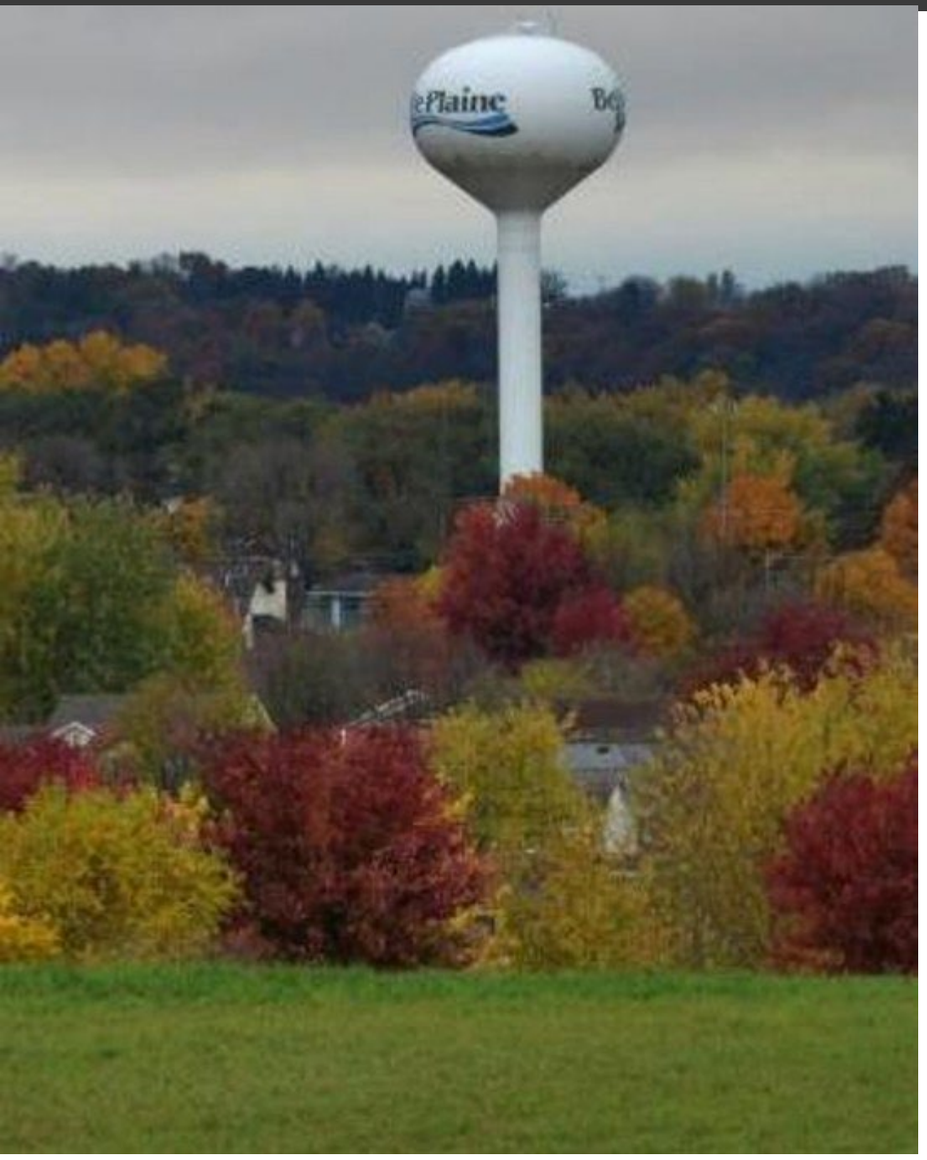
Proposed Action

Motion

- That the Metropolitan Council adopt the Flexible Rural Development Standards as shown in Attachment 1, replacing the current Flexible Residential Development Ordinance Guidelines.



Next Steps



Schedule

- LUAC Business Item: November 19
- CDC Business Item: December 7
- Metropolitan Council Action: December 16



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