

SMALL COMMUNITIES PLANNING PROGRAM

A 2050 Comprehensive Plan assistance program of the Metropolitan Council for eligible small communities in the Twin Cities region

PROGRAM GUIDE

April 2026



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Introduction

The purpose of this guide is to assist you in signing up for and participating in the Met Council’s new Small Communities Planning Program, to support your community in developing its 2050 Comprehensive Plan. In the pages that follow, this guide will provide information about the Program, how to join it, and how to participate.

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Small Community Planning Program Overview

Background and Purpose

The Small Communities Planning Program offers a high level of comprehensive planning assistance to support some of the smallest communities in the region with their 2050 Comprehensive Plan updates. Participating cities and townships will work collaboratively with program staff from the Met Council's Local Planning Assistance team to update their local comprehensive plan. Program staff will focus on the technical work of collecting information, data, and maps, and producing and writing the plan. Local governments with input from community members will lead the community vision, priority setting, and strategic direction to guide the community through the year 2050.

Program Eligibility

Eligible communities were identified based on selection criteria adopted by the Met Council. The criteria aimed at selecting those communities in the region which might have the most limited staff and financial capacity to fund and manage a comprehensive plan update process. Met Council has resources available to serve 29 eligible communities. Participation in the program is voluntary.

Communities eligible for the new 2050 Small Communities Planning Program meet one of the following three criteria:

- a. Current population (2024) is under 500 AND adjusted net tax capacity per capita (2024) is less than or equal to 175% of metro median net tax capacity per capita; or
- b. Current population (2024) is between 500 to 999 AND adjusted net tax capacity per capita (2024) is less than or equal to 150% of metro median net tax capacity per capita; or
- c. Current population (2024) is between 1,000 and 2,500 AND adjusted net tax capacity per capita (2024) is less than or equal to 125% of metro median net tax capacity per capita.

Communities eligible for the program are identified on this [map](#) and [list](#).

Contact

For more information about this program, please feel free to contact Merritt Clapp-Smith, Planning Analyst on Met Council's Local Planning Assistance team (merritt.clapp-smith@metc.state.mn.us or 651.602.1567).

Signing Up for the Program

Deadline for eligible communities to complete a contract agreement to participate in the Small Communities Planning Program: June 30, 2026

Steps to sign up for the Small Communities Planning Program

- Step 1 Review the Small Communities Planning Program Guide (this document), which describes the Program, the roles and responsibilities of the Met Council and the participating community in preparation of the 2050 Comprehensive Plan, and a general schedule of activities. If there are any questions about elements of the Program Guide or adjustments the community may wish to request to the project schedule or local roles and responsibilities, contact Merritt Clapp-Smith at merritt.clapp-smith@metc.state.mn.us / (651) 602-1498.
- Step 2 Sign and return the Letter of Intent indicating that your community wishes to participate in the Small Communities Planning Program. The Letter of Intent will identify the local representative who is authorized to complete the Small Communities Planning Program participation contract. This can be a local Clerk, City Administrator, elected official, or other staff or consultant that is authorized to act on behalf of the City.
- Step 3 After receiving the signed Letter of Intent from the community, Met Council will send the Program participation contract to the community for review and signature. If there are any questions or items that the community wishes to discuss about the Program participation contract, contact Merritt Clapp-Smith at merritt.clapp-smith@metc.state.mn.us / (651) 602-1498.
- Step 4 Adopt a local resolution authorizing the community to enter a contract with the Metropolitan Council to participate in the Small Communities Planning Program.
- Step 5 Complete and sign the Program participation contract, attach the local resolution, and return the signed contract and resolution to the Metropolitan Council before June 15, 2026.
- Step 6 Met Council will sign and return a completed copy of the Program participation contract to the community for its records.
- Step 7 After contract execution, project work can begin.

Program Roles and Responsibilities

Met Council Role and Responsibilities

Met Council Program staff will focus on the technical work of collecting information, data and maps, and producing and writing the plan.

Responsibilities:

1. Identify a Met Council project lead and other staff who will be the direct points of contact for the community regarding the 2050 Comprehensive Plan update. Maintain responsive, consistent communication throughout the project.
2. Develop a general work plan and schedule for preparing the 2050 Comprehensive Plan update in conjunction with identified project lead(s) from the community. The work plan and schedule will identify major activities, deliverables, and milestones for Met Council staff and the community.
3. Collect community specific data and information to address applicable minimum requirements for the 2050 Comprehensive Plan Update as contained in the [Local Planning Handbook](#).
4. Use community-specific Minimum Requirements to address the topics of land use, housing, transportation, water resources, parks and trails, climate, and natural systems. If needed, engage with identified municipal consultants, technical contacts, local experts, or others identified by the community who have specialized knowledge in one or more of the topic areas, as agreed upon by the community project lead(s).
5. Participate in three (3) joint meetings with the community's 2050 Comprehensive Plan work group and Program staff at project kick-off, mid-project, and during final plan drafting. Additional meetings can be held upon mutual agreement between the work group and Met Council staff as time and schedule allow.
6. Assist community project leads in considering the format, topics, and logistics for three locally led, community-sponsored meetings or workshops to inform and solicit input from community members on the 2050 Comprehensive Plan update.
7. Attend three public meetings in the community to provide information on the 2050 Comprehensive Plan update process. The meetings may be City Council, Town Board, Planning Commission, or work groups specific to the Comprehensive Plan update.
8. Make draft Plan materials available to the community for review consistent with the agreed upon work plan and upon request throughout the process.
9. Identify and respond to any issues of consistency with Met Council policy, conformance with regional system plans, and compatibility with plans of affected and adjacent jurisdictions towards a determination of "complete for review" by the Met Council. Make any revisions necessary to the Plan and discuss the changes with the community prior to submitting the final Plan.

10. Provide a full draft 2050 Comprehensive Plan update to the community for review by September 1, 2027. Attend a public hearing hosted by the community to solicit input on the draft plan.
11. Revise the draft Plan based on public hearing input and community feedback, with a revised draft ready for distribution to affected and adjacent jurisdictions by October 10, 2027, for the required 6-month adjacent and affected jurisdiction review.
12. Circulate the draft Plan for preliminary review by Met Council technical staff during the 6-month affected and adjacent review period.
13. Review comments and input from affected and adjacent jurisdictions and Met Council technical staff. Discuss potential updates to the Plan based on the feedback with the community's 2050 Comprehensive Plan work group.
14. Revise 2050 Comprehensive Plan for final consideration and approval by the community, in preparation for formal Plan submittal to the Met Council by May 31, 2028.
15. After authorization of the community's 2050 Comprehensive Plan by the Met Council and local plan adoption, provide two (2) printed copies and one (1) digital copy to the Plan to the community.

Community Role and Responsibilities

Local government officials and community members will identify the community vision, priority setting, and strategic direction to guide the community through the year 2050, consistent with Met Council requirements and policies. The vision, priorities, and strategies will form the basis of the 2050 Comprehensive Plan update.

Responsibilities:

1. Identify project lead(s) from the community that Program staff can communicate with, as reasonably needed, during plan development.
2. Identify a 2050 Comprehensive Plan work group to guide community conversations and engagement and to consider and review content prepared by Met Council Program staff for the Comprehensive Plan update. The work group may be composed of current elected and/or appointed officials, community staff or consultants, residents, businesspeople, organizational partners, or others the community thinks important. The work group will:
 - a. Participate in three (3) joint meetings with Met Council Program staff at project kick-off, mid-project, and during final plan drafting. Additional meetings can be held if needed and upon mutual agreement between the work group and Met Council staff if time and schedule allow.
 - b. Review and provide comments on the first draft and the final draft of the community's 2050 Comprehensive Plan update prepared by Met Council Program staff.

3. Identify key municipal consultants, technical contacts, local experts or others who have subject matter expertise that can help inform the Comprehensive Plan update. Met Council Program staff will only engage local consultants as directed by the community.
4. Provide community data or background information that may be relevant to the plan update, including history about the community, GIS data, recent records of zoning or ordinance updates, or other items.
5. Provide an editable, digital copy of the community's current Comprehensive Plan to Met Council Program staff, preferably in Microsoft Word or similar format.
6. Host at least three (3) meetings or workshops for community members to discuss the future of the community and provide ideas and input that shape priorities and strategies for the 2050 Comprehensive Plan. Met Council Program staff can assist community project leads in considering the format, topics, and logistics for the events.
7. Hold a public hearing on the draft 2050 Comprehensive Plan to solicit input from the local community. Conduct any additional community engagement, public surveying, or community meetings.
8. Send the draft 2050 Comprehensive Plan update to affected and adjacent jurisdictions for 6-month review (as required under MN Statute 473.858, subd. 2) by October 15, 2027.
9. Review the Plan and adopt a resolution authorizing submittal of the 2050 Comprehensive Plan to Met Council for review by May 31, 2028.
10. Adopt the final Plan after Met Council completes its review and authorizes local plan adoption.

Program Deliverables

Met Council Deliverables

1. Copy of completed Program application and Program Contract.
2. Data about the community based on recent Census, the American Community Survey, and other Met Council information resources. To be provided during the early research phase of the project.
3. 2050 Comprehensive Plan outline and template for review by the local Comprehensive Planning Work group. To be provided during the early plan drafting phase of the project.
4. Early draft of each 2050 Comprehensive Plan chapter for review by the local Comprehensive Planning Work group. To be provided throughout the project as each chapter is prepared.
5. Full draft of 2050 Comprehensive Plan to be reviewed by local Comprehensive Planning Work group and local elected officials. To be provided at end of Plan drafting phase and prior to release for plan draft for 6-month Adjacent and Affected jurisdictions review.

6. Final 2050 Comprehensive Plan for community adoption and submission to the Metropolitan Council for review and authorization. To be provided after 6-month review and any final revisions to the Plan.
7. Revised 2050 Comprehensive Plan, if Plan revisions are requested by Met Council reviewers prior to Met Council authorization.

Community Deliverables

1. Completed contract for the Small Communities Planning Program [Program], including signed copy of local resolution authorizing participation in the Program.
2. Local information, data and ordinances, if available, related to land use and official controls, public infrastructure and amenities. Private data or information that the community deems to be sensitive does not need to be shared or provided. Met Council program staff and local leads for the 2050 Comprehensive Plan update can discuss and identify relevant information and data in the early phase of program collaboration.
3. Description of community led engagement events, meetings, surveys or other methods to solicit input on 2050 Comprehensive Plan topics and priorities, and summary of community input received.
4. Signed copy of local resolution authorizing distribution of the community's Draft 2050 Comprehensive Plan for the 6-month adjacent and affected jurisdictions review required under [MN §473.858 Subd. 2](#).
5. Signed copy of local resolution authorizing submission of the community's updated 2050 Comprehensive Plan to the Met Council for review and authorization.

Program Schedule

The preparation of 2050 Comprehensive Plans under the Small Communities Planning Program will occur between mid-2026 and mid-2028, with a goal of having completed plans ready to submit for Met Council review by end of May 2028. There is no requirement or guarantee that all work and Plans will be completed within this timeline, due to circumstances which may arise that would be beyond the control of the Met Council program team or participating community partners. However, all efforts will be made in good faith by Met Council staff and consultants and community representatives to proceed with activities as outlined in the following schedule.

Program Phases, Activities, Roles and Schedule

Small Communities Planning Program Participation Contract - April to August 2026

- Contract information provided (Met Council) – April 2026
- Review Contract forms (Community) – April/May 2026
- Identify local project leads (Community) – April/May 2026
- Local Resolution re: participation (Community) – May/June/July 2026
- Complete Letter of Intent and Contract forms (Community) - May/June/July 2026
- Issue finalized Contract (Met Council) – June/July/Aug 2026

Project Initiation and Background Information – June to October 2026

- Project kick-off meeting (Met Council & Local Workgroup) – June/July/Aug 2026
- Provide local data, i.e. plans, ordinances, GIS files (Community) – June/July/Aug 2026
- Community data and trends (Met Council) – July/Aug/Sept 2026
- Identify community engagement plan (Local Workgroup) – Aug/Sept 2026
- Project status report to local Council/Board (Local Workgroup) – Sept/Oct 2026

Community Engagement – July 2026 to February 2027

- Identify 2040 Plan priorities and issues (Met Council) – July/Aug/Sept 2026
- Prepare for community engagement (Local Workgroup) – Aug/Sept 2026
- Community engagement - 3 Meetings (Community) – Oct 2026 to Feb 2027
- Engagement - other methods (Community) – Oct 2026 to Feb 2027

Plan Elements: Land Use, Housing, Transportation, Parks & Rec, Water & Wastewater, Natural Systems & Climate – Sept 2026 to Aug 2027

- Background information and data (Met Council) – Sept/Oct/Nov 2026
- Identify opportunities & issues (Local Workgroup) – Sept/Oct/Nov 2026
- Community engagement (Community) - Oct 2026 to Feb 2027
- Refine priorities per engagement (Met Council) - Nov 2026 to Mar 2027
- Draft Plan Chapters – prepare (Met Council) – Dec 2026 to Apr 2027
- Draft Plan Chapters – review (Community) – Mar to July 2027
- Draft Plan Chapters – revisions (Met Council) – June/July/Aug 2027
- Project status report to local Council/Board (Local Workgroup) – July/Aug 2027

Plan Draft, A & A Review, Final Plan & Authorization – August 2027 to October 2028

- Final Draft 2050 Comprehensive Plan (Met Council) – Aug/Sept 2027
- 6-month Adjacent and Affected Review (Other jurisdictions) – Oct 2027 to Mar 2028
- 2050 Comprehensive Plan – revisions (Met Council) – Mar/Apr 2028
- 2050 Comprehensive Plan - local review (Community) – Mar/Apr 2028
- Local Resolution Re Plan Submittal (Community) – Apr/May 2028
- Met Council staff review Plan (Met Council) – May to Aug 2028
- Potential revisions based on comments (Community) – June to Sept 2028
- Met Council Plan Authorization (Met Council) – Sept/Oct/Nov 2028



390 Robert Street North
Saint Paul, MN 55101-1805

651-602-1000
TTY 651-291-0904
public.info@metc.state.mn.us
metro council.org

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