

Business Item

Community Development Committee



Committee Meeting Date: June 15, 2026

For the Metropolitan Council: June 24, 2026

Business Item: 2026-104

City of Columbia Heights 4300 Central Avenue NE Comprehensive Plan Amendment, Review File 21956-3

District, Member: District 2, Reva Chamblis
Policy/Legal Reference: Metropolitan Land Planning Act (Minn. Stat. § 473.175)
Staff Prepared/Presented: Amber Turnquest, Planning Analyst (651-602-1576)
Angela R. Torres, Senior Manager (651-602-1566)
Division/Department: Community Development / Regional Planning

Proposed Action

That the Metropolitan Council adopt the attached Advisory Comments and Review Record and take the following actions:

1. Authorize the City of Columbia Heights to place its comprehensive plan amendment into effect.
2. Find that the amendment does not change the City's forecasts.
3. Advise the City to implement the advisory comment in the Review Record for Transportation.

Background

The City of Columbia Heights submitted the 4300 Central Avenue NE comprehensive plan amendment on April 30, 2026. The amendment proposes to reguide 13.03 acres from Commercial and Park to Transit Oriented Development (TOD) land use resulting in a change in development capacity greater than 250 units thereby exceeding administrative review guidelines. The subject site could allow 275 – 500 housing units in the allowed density range. The purpose of the amendment is to provide flexibility for future redevelopment. The site is located at 4300 Central Avenue NE. This is the City's second amendment to its 2040 Comprehensive Plan.

Rationale

The proposed amendment conforms to regional system plans, is consistent with Council policies, and is compatible with the plans of other local communities and school districts.

Regional Development Guide Analysis

On February 12, 2025, the Council adopted Imagine 2050, which builds on policy direction in *Thrive MSP 2040*. Consistent with the procedures adopted in [Business Item 2025-113](#), the Council is reviewing this item under both Thrive MSP 2040 and Imagine 2050. The regional development guide defines the Land Use Policy for the region and includes strategies for local governments and the Council to implement. These policies and strategies are interrelated and taken together.

Funding
None.



REVIEW RECORD

City of Columbia Heights

4300 Central Avenue NE Comprehensive Plan Amendment

Review File No. 21956-3, Business Item No. 2026-104

BACKGROUND

The City of Columbia Heights is located in southern Anoka County, surrounded by the communities of Fridley to the north and west, New Brighton and Saint Anthony to the east, and Minneapolis to the south. The entire city of Hilltop is enclosed within the boundaries of Columbia Heights.

Thrive MSP 2040 (Thrive) and *Imagine 2050* designate Columbia Heights with an “Urban” community designation. The Council forecasts from 2020 to 2050 that the City will grow from 21,973 to 24,500 population and 8,777 to 10,300 households. The Council also forecasts that between 2020 and 2050, the City’s employment will increase from 3,790 to 4,800 jobs.

The Metropolitan Council reviewed the City of Columbia Heights 2040 Comprehensive Plan (Joint Business Item No. 2019-236 JT, Review File No. 21956-1) on September 25, 2019. This is the second comprehensive plan amendment since the 2040 Plan was reviewed.

The Council adopted *Imagine 2050* in February 2025. Consistent with the procedures adopted in [Business Item 2025-113](#), the Council is reviewing this item under both Thrive and *Imagine 2050*.

REQUEST SUMMARY

The amendment proposes to reguide 13.03 acres from Commercial and Park to Transit Oriented Development resulting in a change in development capacity greater than 250 units thereby exceeding administrative review guidelines. The subject site could allow 275 – 500 housing units in the allowed density range. The purpose of the amendment is to provide flexibility for future redevelopment. The site is located at 4300 Central Avenue NE.

OVERVIEW

Conformance with Regional Systems

The amendment conforms to the Regional System Plans for Parks, Transportation (including Aviation), and Wastewater, with no substantial impact on, or departure from, these plans.

Consistency with Council Policies

The amendment is consistent with *Thrive MSP 2040*, *Imagine 2050*, with the *Housing Policy Plan*, with water resources management, and is consistent with Council forecasts. The amendment is consistent with *Imagine 2050* Land Use policy.

Compatibility with Plans of Adjacent Jurisdictions

The amendment will not have an impact on adjacent communities, school districts, or watershed districts, and is compatible with the plans of those districts.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL ACTIONS

- The Council acted on the 2040 Plan on September 25, 2019 (Business Item 2019-236 JT, Review File No. 21956-1).
- The Council authorized the Medtronic Site and TOD Text amendment on August 5, 2024 (Business Item 2024-199, Review File No. 21956-2). The amendment reguided 11.74 acres from Commercial to Transit Oriented Development (TOD) land use. The amendment also increased the density range maximum for the TOD land use from 25-50 units per acre to



25-65 units per acre, including a change in the percentage use from 70% residential/30% commercial to 85% residential/15% commercial. The amendment also includes a forecast increase.

ISSUES

- I. Does the amendment conform to the regional system plans?
- II. Is the amendment consistent with Thrive MSP 2040, Imagine 2050, and other Council policies?
- III. Does the amendment change the City's forecasts?
- IV. Is the amendment compatible with the plans of adjacent local governmental units and affected jurisdictions?

ISSUES ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Conformance with Regional Systems

The amendment conforms to the regional system plan for Regional Parks, Transportation, and Wastewater, with no substantial impact on, or departure from, these system plans. Additional review comments are included below.

Regional Parks

Reviewer: Colin Kelly, Community Development (CD) – Regional Parks (651-602-1361)

The proposed amendment conforms to the Regional Parks and Trails System and is consistent with Council policy. There are no existing or planned units of the Regional Parks and Trails System in the vicinity of the proposal to re-guide 13.03 acres from Commercial and Park to Transit Oriented Development. The nearest unit – Silverwood Special Feature – is approximately 1.1-mile east of the proposed change, on the opposite side of Highway 65, in St. Anthony. The proposed land use change will not impact Silverwood Special Feature or the Regional Parks and Trails system more broadly.

Wastewater Service

Reviewer: Roger Janzig, Environmental Services (ES) – Wastewater Planning and Community Programs (651-602-1119)

The proposed amendment conforms to the 2040 Water Policy Plan (WRPP) and the 2050 Water Policy Plan. The amendment is being driven by the re-guiding of 13.03 acres from Commercial and Park to Transit Oriented Development for a proposed multi-family residential development of 275 to 500 households, that may not occur until the next decade. The regional system has adequate capacity to serve the proposed development associated with this amendment.

Transportation

Reviewer: Joseph Widing, Metropolitan Transportation Services (MTS) (651-602-1822)

The proposed amendment conforms to the 2040 Transportation Policy Plan and the 2050 Transportation Policy Plan. The amendment proposes to re-guide a 13.03-acre site along Central Avenue (TH-65) from commercial to mixed use to facilitate redevelopment which will better support the future F Line Transitway. The amendment will greatly support future transit investments along the corridor and will help to transform this corridor to be more mixed use and walkable. There are no expected regional roadway impacts from the amendment. Any access onto TH-65 will need to be approved by MnDOT before being implemented.

Council staff encourage the City to look to reestablish the street grid through the amendment site to distribute future traffic impacts, limit the need for direct vehicle access onto Central Avenue, and reestablish street network connectivity. There are limited pedestrian or bicycle facilities near the amendment site, but it is expected a change to mixed use and future redevelopment will help to address this need in the immediate area. The City should ensure improved pedestrian connectivity

from the amendment site to future F Line stations planned for 41st Avenue and 45th Avenue. There are no freight or aviation considerations for this amendment.

Advisory Comments

When the amendment site is redeveloped or prior, the City should consider measures to reestablish the street grid through the site, including both pedestrian and bicycling access. This would improve site circulation, pedestrian and bicycle mobility, general site access and to limit direct access onto Trunk Highway 65.

Transit

Reviewer: Ben Picone, Metro Transit (MT) (612-349-7679)

The site is located along the future METRO F Line, which will provide 10-minute frequency between Northtown Transit Center and Downtown Minneapolis. The parcels are also adjacent to east/west service on Route 801 and future local transit service along 44th Street. Because of this site’s location at the intersection multiple transit routes, Metro Transit encourages the City to keep transit in mind when considering this development. Mixed use developments such as this complement transitway investments and provide new residents in the area with immediate access to the region’s transit network.

Consistency with Council Policy

The amendment is consistent with Council policies for forecasts, land use, housing, sub-surface sewage treatment systems, and water supply. Additional review comments are detailed below.

Forecasts

Reviewer: Todd Graham, CD – Research (651-602-1322)

The City offers that the amendment does not affect the communitywide forecast. Council staff agree: the subject site could allow 275 – 500 housing units in the allowed density range; an interested developer is exploring a concept with outcomes in that range. Met Council’s Imagine 2050 forecast allows for households growth of over 1,400 in Columbia Heights between now and 2050.

Table 1. Metropolitan Council City of Columbia Heights Forecasts

Category	Census 2020	Current Approved Forecast		
		2030	2040	2050
Population	21,973	23,300	23,600	24,500
Households	8,777	9,600	9,900	10,300
Employment	3,790	4,400	4,500	4,800

Land Use

Reviewer: Amber Turnquest, CD – Local Planning Assistance (651-602-1576)

The amendment is consistent with regional policy for land use. The Met Council adopted Imagine 2050 on February 12, 2025, and has designated Columbia Heights as “Urban” community designation.

The amendment proposed re-guiding 13.03 acres from Commercial and Park to Transit Oriented Development. The subject site could allow 275 – 500 housing units in the allowed density range. The proposed changes are generally located in the center of the city, west of Central Avenue (TH-65) (see Figure 1). The purpose of the amendment is to provide flexibility for future redevelopment.

Using the midpoint of the allowable density range the proposed built form amendment would increase the development capacity by 342 units. As shown in Table 2, the City’s net residential density remains consistent with the Thrive expectation for the City, which is 20 units per acre.



Table 2. Planned Residential Density, Columbia Heights

Category	2018-2040 Change				
	Min	Density Max	Net Acres	Min Units	Max Units
Low Density Residential	3	7.5	-	-	-
Medium Density Residential	8	14.5	-	-	-
High Density Residential	15	35	12.73	190	445
Transit Oriented Development*	25	65	<u>31.59</u>	<u>789</u>	<u>2053</u>
Transitional**	25	50	9.33	233	466
TOTALS			53.64	1,212	2,964
Overall Density				<u>22.59</u>	<u>55.26</u>

*85% residential
**50% residential

Advisory Comments

This amendment increases the City’s overall net residential density from 22.11 to 22.59, which is consistent with Thrive 2040 Land Use policy. Please note that in Imagine 2050, the City’s community designation is Urban which requires a minimum net residential density of 25 units per acre. Council staff encourage the City to continue planning to increase density and evaluate areas for higher density residential uses that move toward the City’s Imagine 2050 community designation’s net residential density requirement. While the City’s 2040 Plan is still in effect, planning for the 2050 Comprehensive Plan requirements now will help the City maintain consistency with regional policy moving forward.

Housing

Reviewer: Olivia Boerschinger, CD – Housing (651-602-1327)

The amendment is consistent with the Council’s Housing Policy Plan. The Plan currently provides sufficient land to address the City’s share of the region’s 2021-2030 need for affordable housing, which is 186 units. The proposed amendment increases the City’s inventory of land guided to support the development of low- and moderate-income housing. As of this amendment, the Plan will be guiding approximately 34 acres of higher density residential land such that at least 696 units could be built, and has already built 62 units of affordable housing so far this decade.

The proposed amendment will reguide approximately 13.03-acres to Transit Oriented Development land use to provide flexibility for future redevelopment. At this time no formal plans have been submitted. This amendment continues to allow the City to implement the housing element of their 2040 Plan and directly contributes to their efforts to address its share of the region’s need for affordable housing in the 2021-2030 decade. The City is a current participant in Livable Communities Act (LCA) programs, and most recently (in 2025) was awarded \$750,000 in Local Housing Incentive Account (LHIA) funds.

Compatibility with Plans of Adjacent Governmental Units and Plans of Affected Special Districts and School Districts

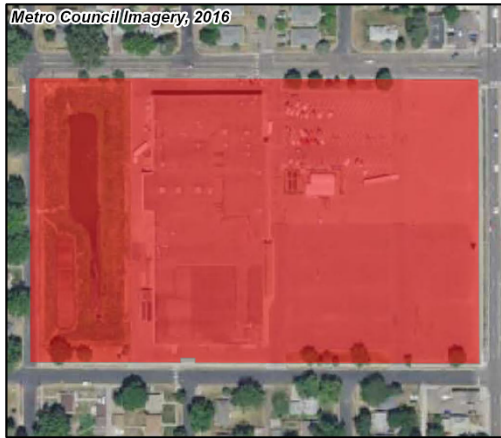
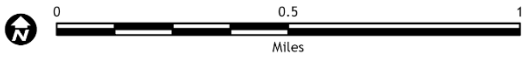
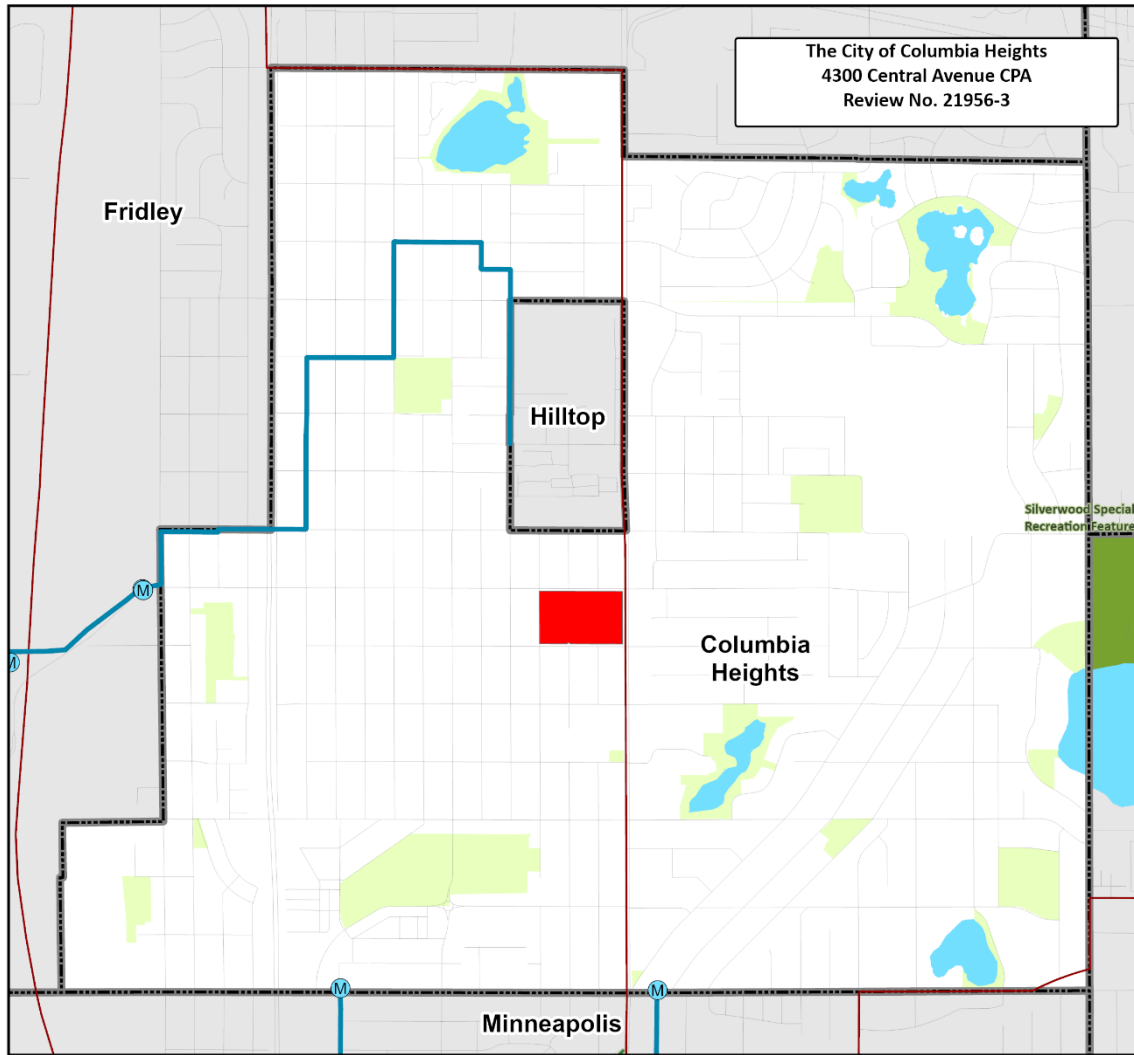
The proposed amendment is compatible with the plans of adjacent jurisdictions. No compatibility issues with plans of adjacent governmental units and plans of affected special districts and school districts were identified.

ATTACHMENTS

- Figure 1: Location Map Showing Regional Systems
- Figure 2: Location Map Showing Community Designations
- Figure 3: Current Land Use Guiding
- Figure 4: Proposed Land Use Guiding
- Figure 5: Land Guided for Affordable Housing



Figure 1. Location Map Showing Regional Systems

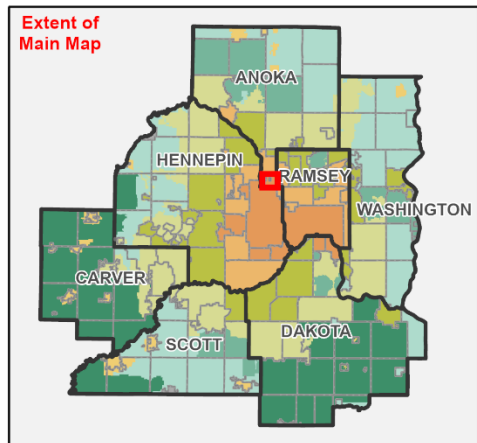
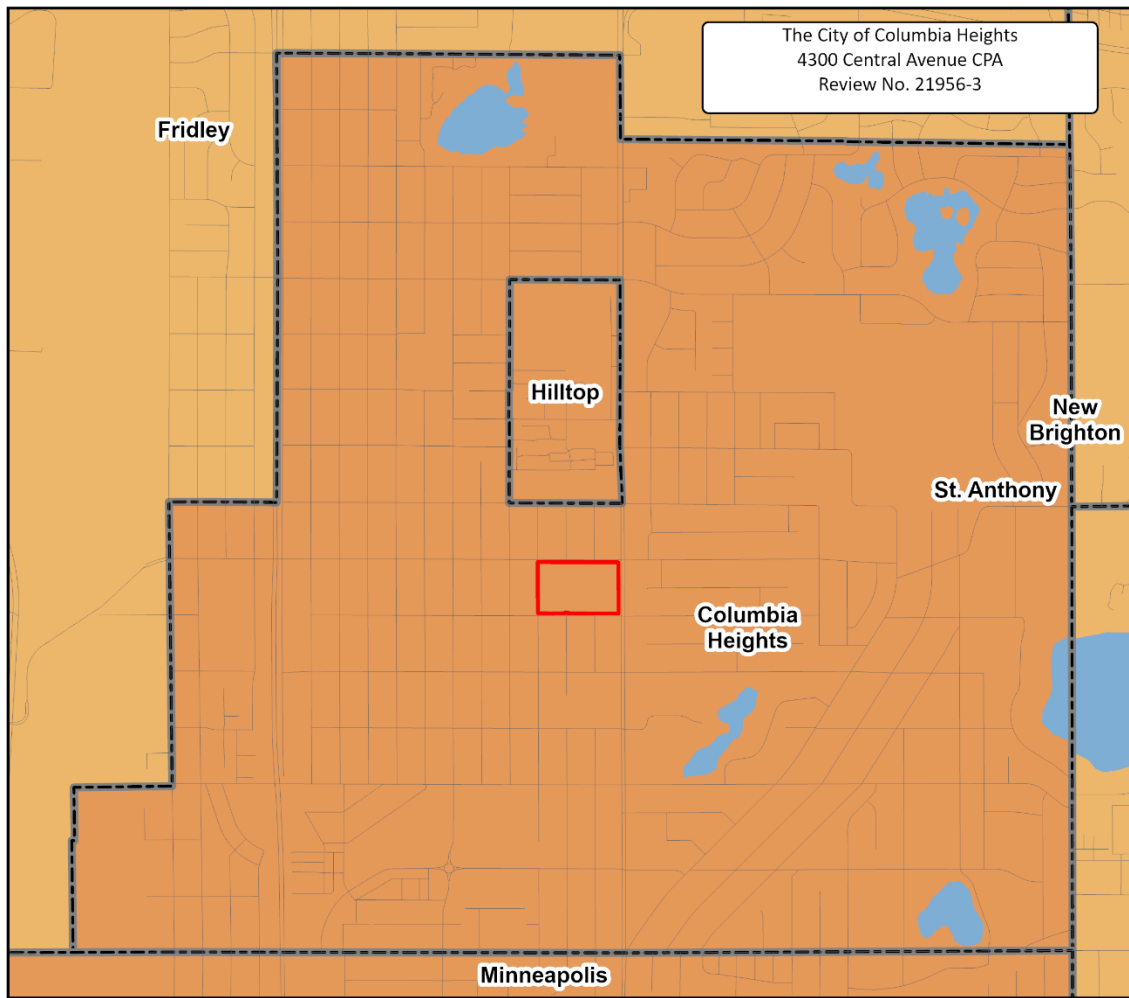


- Regional Systems**
- Regional Transitways**
 - Existing
 - Planned Current Revenue Scenario
 - Potential Increased Revenue Scenario
 - Wastewater Treatment**
 - Meters
 - MCES Interceptors
 - Lift Stations
 - MCES Treatment Plants
 - Regional Highway System**
 - Interstates
 - US Highways
 - State Highways
 - County Roads
 - Road Centerlines
 - Regional Parks**
 - Existing (Open to Public)
 - In Master Plan (Not Open to Public)
 - Planned Units
 - Other Parks, Preserves, Refuges and Natural Areas
 - Regional Trails**
 - Existing (Open to Public)
 - Existing (Not Open to Public)
 - Planned Regional Trails
 - Regional Trail Search Corridors



Metropolitan Council

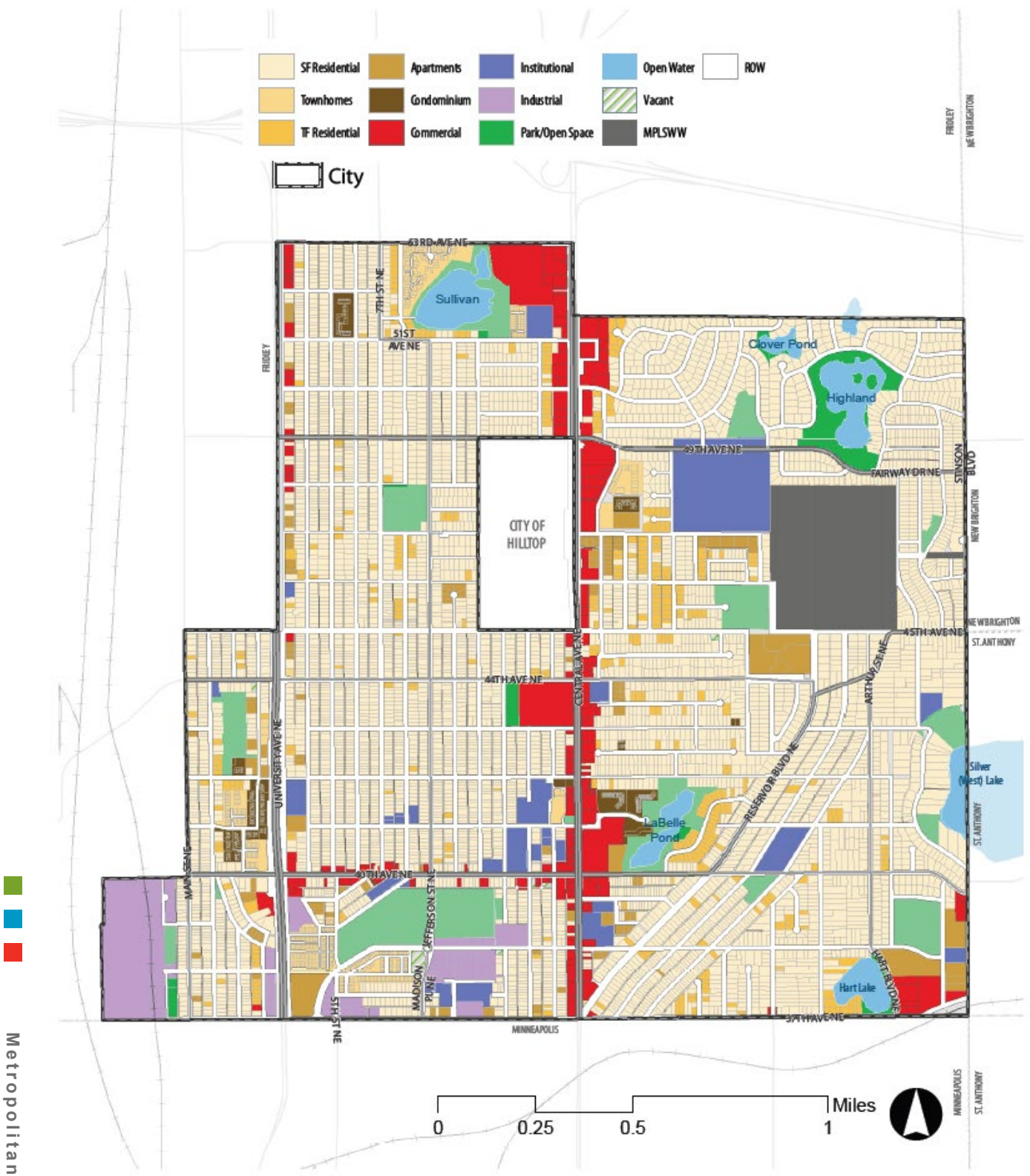
Figure 2. Location Map Showing Community Designations



Imagine 2050 Community Designations

- Urban
- Urban Edge
- Suburban
- Suburban Edge
- Rural Center
- Diversified Rural
- Rural Residential
- Agricultural
- Non-Council Community

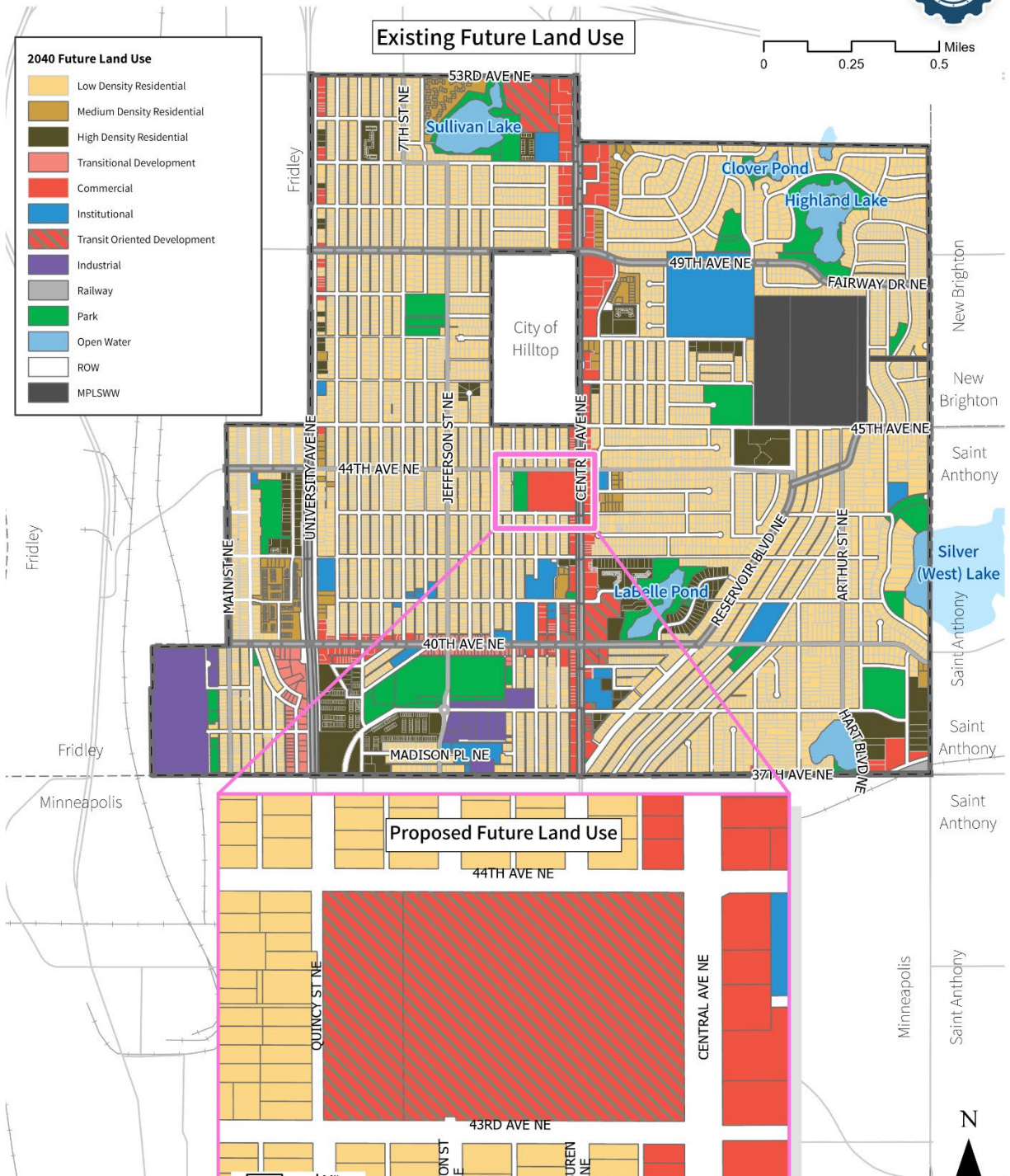
Figure 3. Current Land Use Guiding



Metropolitan Council

Figure 4. Future Land Use Guiding

4300 Central Avenue NE Comprehensive Plan Amendment



Metropolitan Council

Figure 5. Land guided for Affordable Housing

#	COMMUNITY	LAND USE	AVAILABLE ACRES	MIN DENSITY	Exp % Res (if mixed use)	Min Units Possible
	Columbia Heights	High Density Residential	5.73	15	100%	85.95
	Columbia Heights	Transit Oriented Development	28.69	25	85%	609,6625
			Total Acres: 34	Total Min Units: 696		

2021-2030 share of regional need for Affordable Housing: 186 Total Needed for Columbia Heights
 2021-2030 share regional need for Affordable Housing at 50% AMI and Below: N/A
 2021-2030 share regional need for Affordable Housing between 50% to 80% AMI: N/A
 2021-2030 total regional need for Affordable Housing: 38019
 Sufficient/(insufficient) units affordable at 50% AMI and below in areas with >= 12 units per acre minimum against share of regional need: N/A
 Sufficient/(insufficient) units affordable at 50% to 80% AMI in areas with >= 6 units per acre minimum against share of regional need: N/A
 Sufficient/(insufficient) units possible against share of regional need: 510
 Affordable units built since 2021: 62
 Sufficient/(insufficient) units possible adjusted for affordable units built: 572

