



Flexible Rural Development Standards

Imagine 2050 Update

September 17, 2026

metro council.org



Flexible Rural Development Standards

Today's Discussion

- Background
- Analysis/Engagement
- Proposed Updates
- Next Steps

Flexible Development Guidelines

History

- 2006 Rural Issues Working Group
- Concern about rural development patterns
- Need to clarify policy
- 2008 Adopted Flexible Development Guidelines
- 2016 Developed Factsheet
- Imagine 2050: Commitment to update

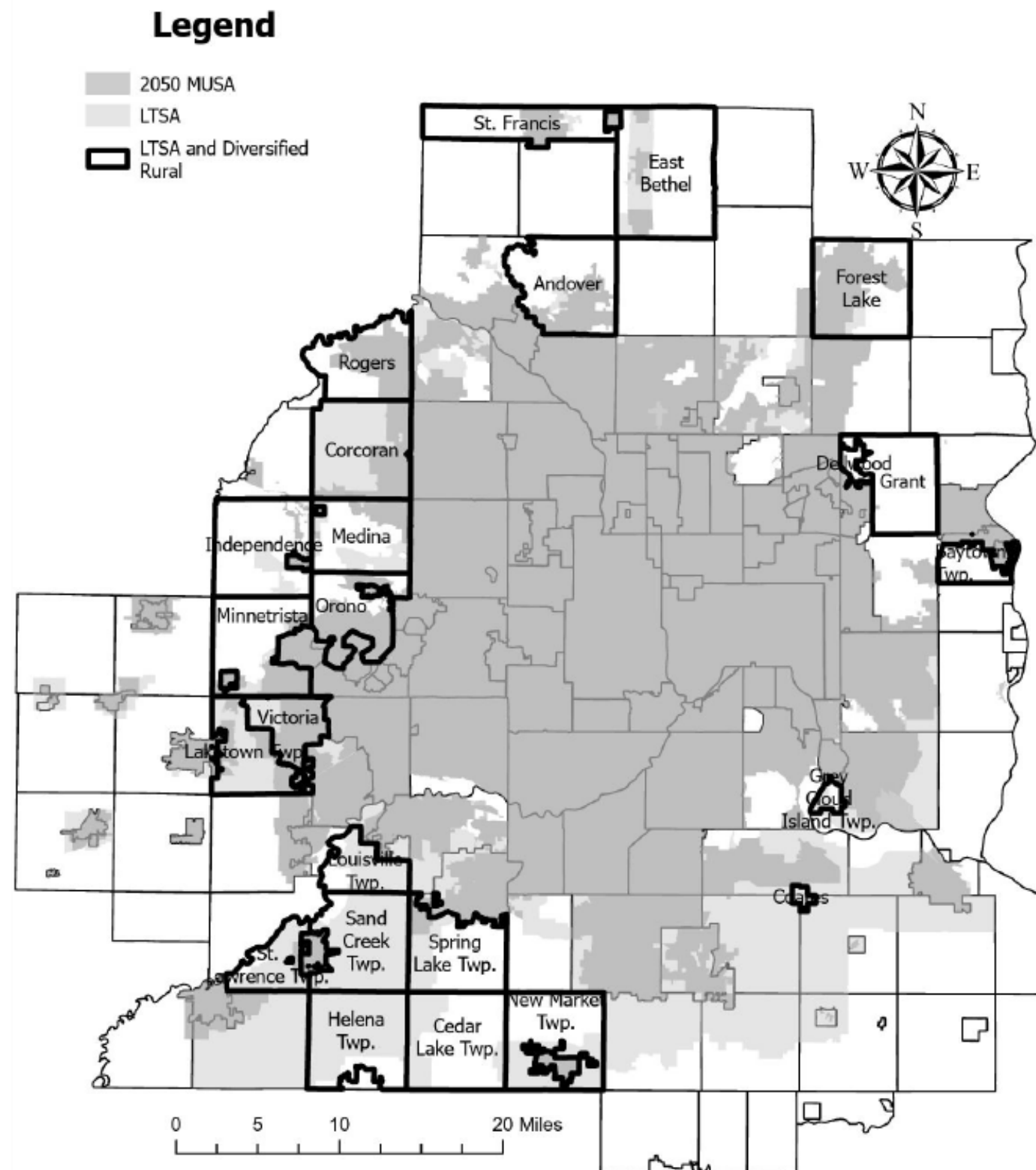
Purpose

- Allow for development within Diversified Rural's Long-Term Service area
- Ensure that development facilitates orderly and economical expansion of regional system

2008 Ordinance Guidelines

- City must state purpose is facilitating future urbanization
- City must describe characteristics of land required for future urbanization
- 25% can develop; 75% reserved for future
- City must require reserved land to be protected by development agreement or deed restriction
- City must provide for rezoning of parcel when urban services are available
- Encourages the use of community wastewater systems to serve clusters

Diversified Rural and Long-Term Service Area



Analysis

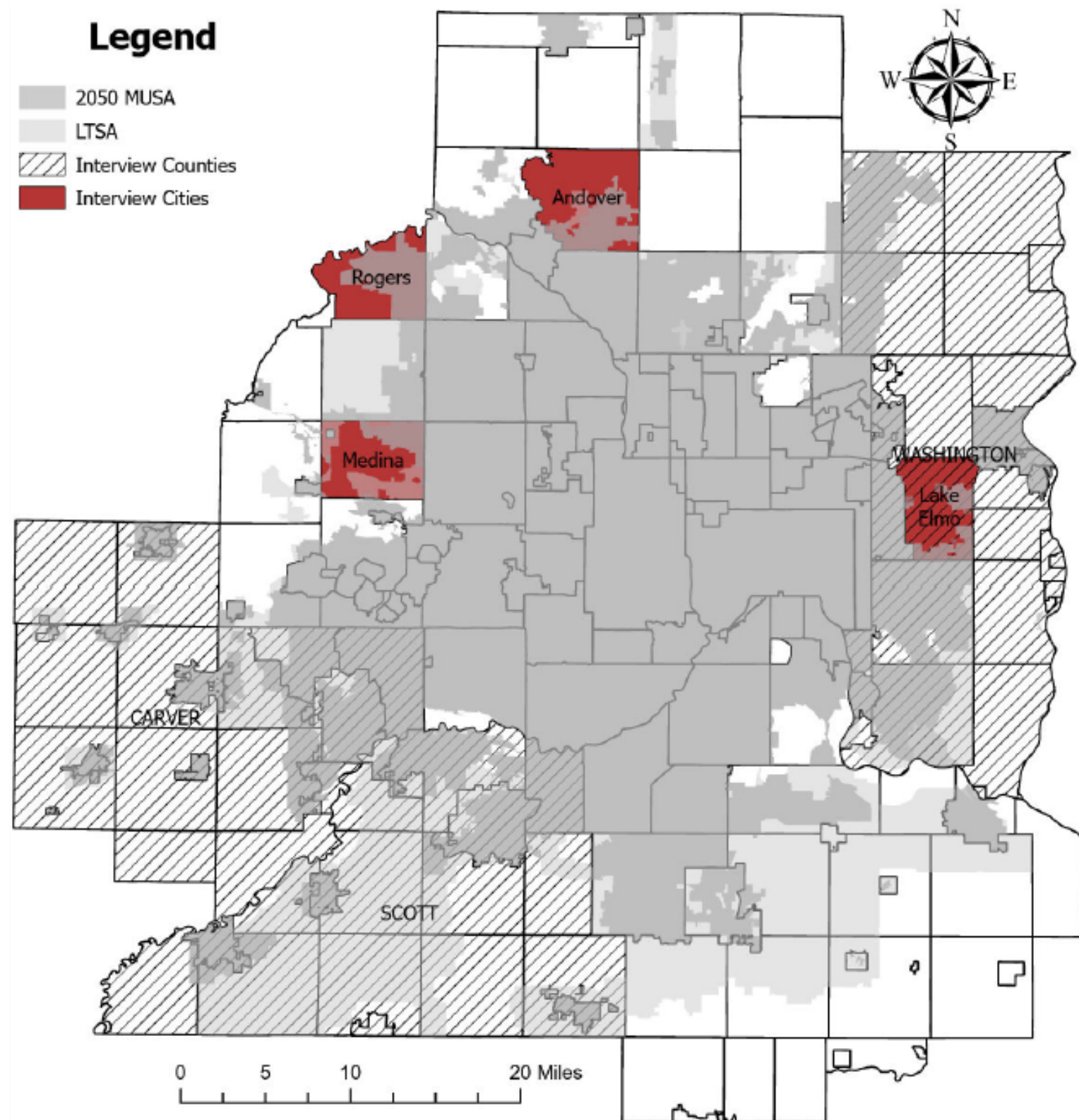
Background Research

- 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.

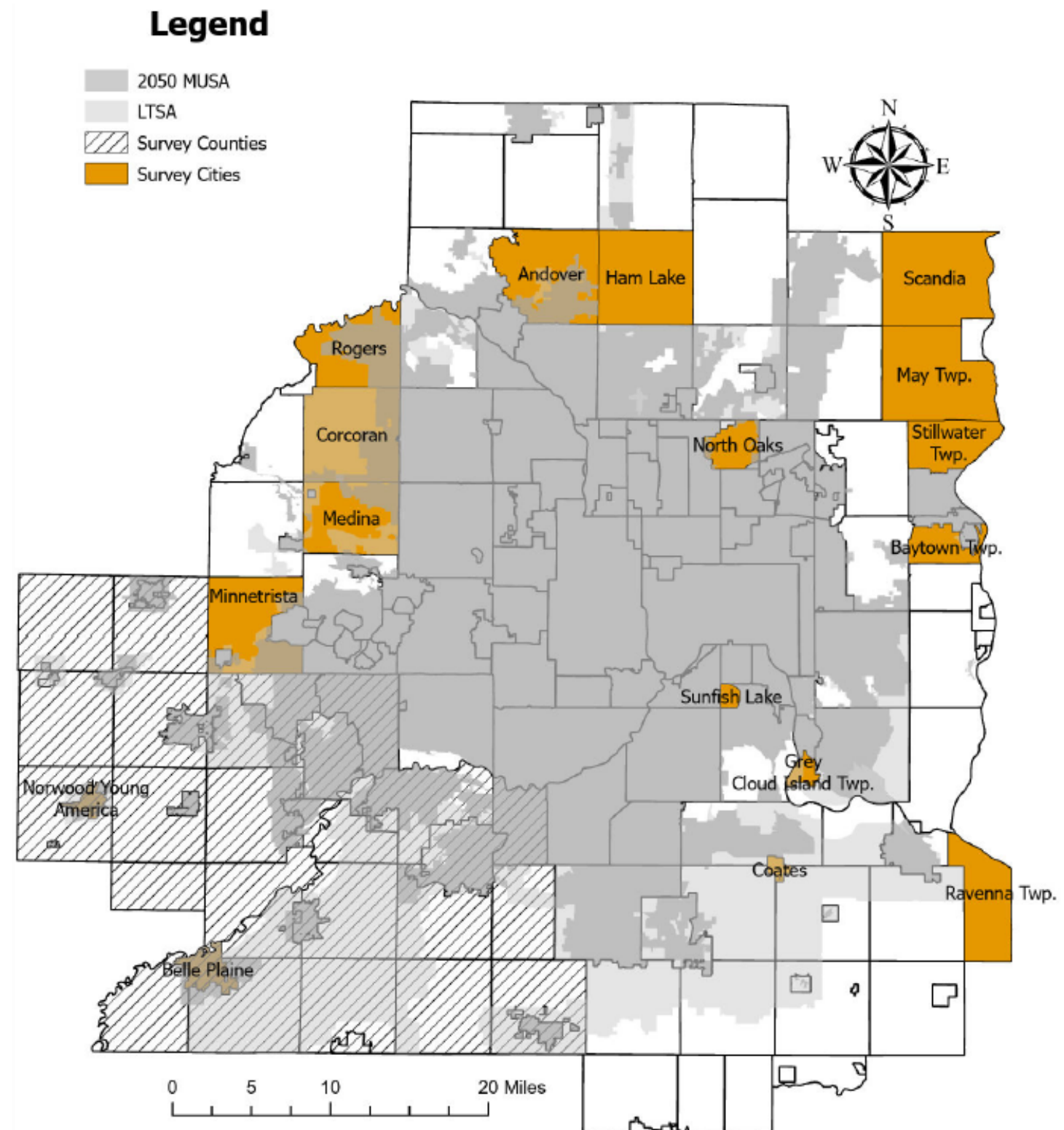
Engagement: Interviews



What we've learned (interviews)

- Guidelines not being used for intended purpose - future urbanization.
- Interpreted “Guidelines” to offer more flexibility than intended.
- Financial viability difficult when a large percentage of the land reserved for future development.
- Reluctance to annex cluster developments due to costs of extending infrastructure.
- Cluster developments meeting density maximums are rarely economically viable, typically producing high end developments with small unit counts.
- Low number of rural cluster developments being requested with low unit counts.
- Communal septic systems have a worrisome track record/maintenance.
- Interest in flexibility to protect natural systems.

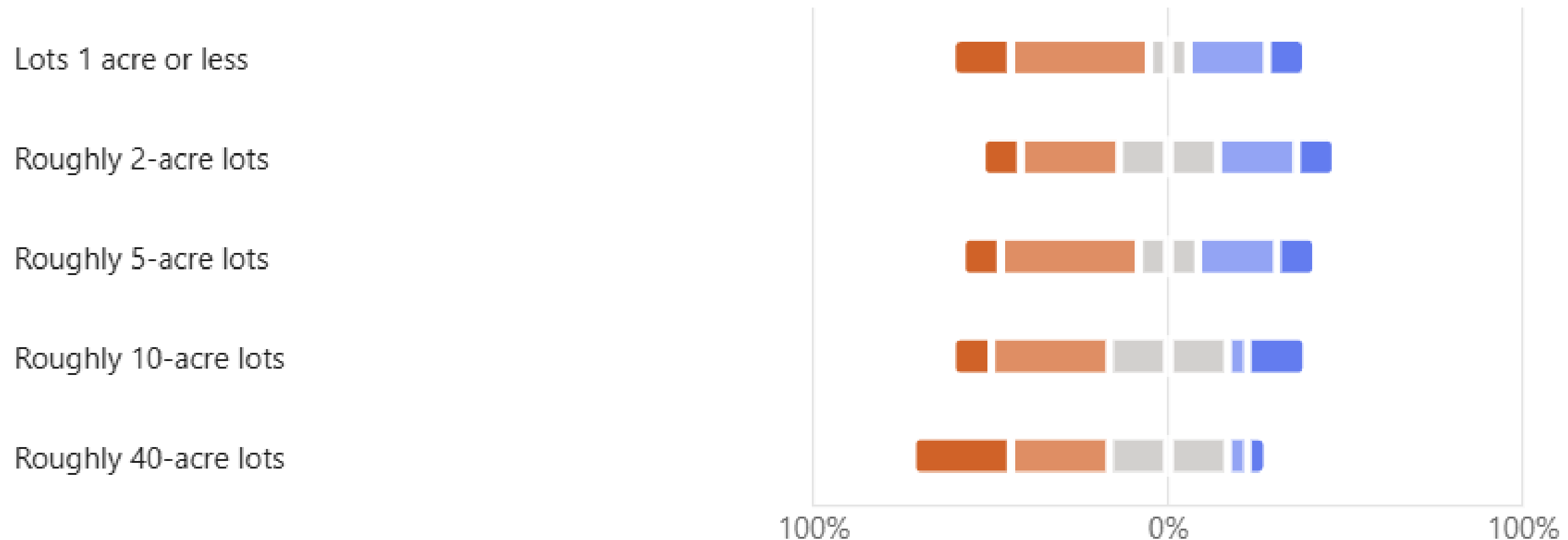
Engagement: Survey



What we've learned (survey)

5. How much demand is there in your community for the following product types?

● No Demand ● Weak Demand ● Moderate Demand ● Strong Demand ● Very Strong Demand



What we've learned (survey)

6. How much interest is there in using cluster developments:

[More details](#)

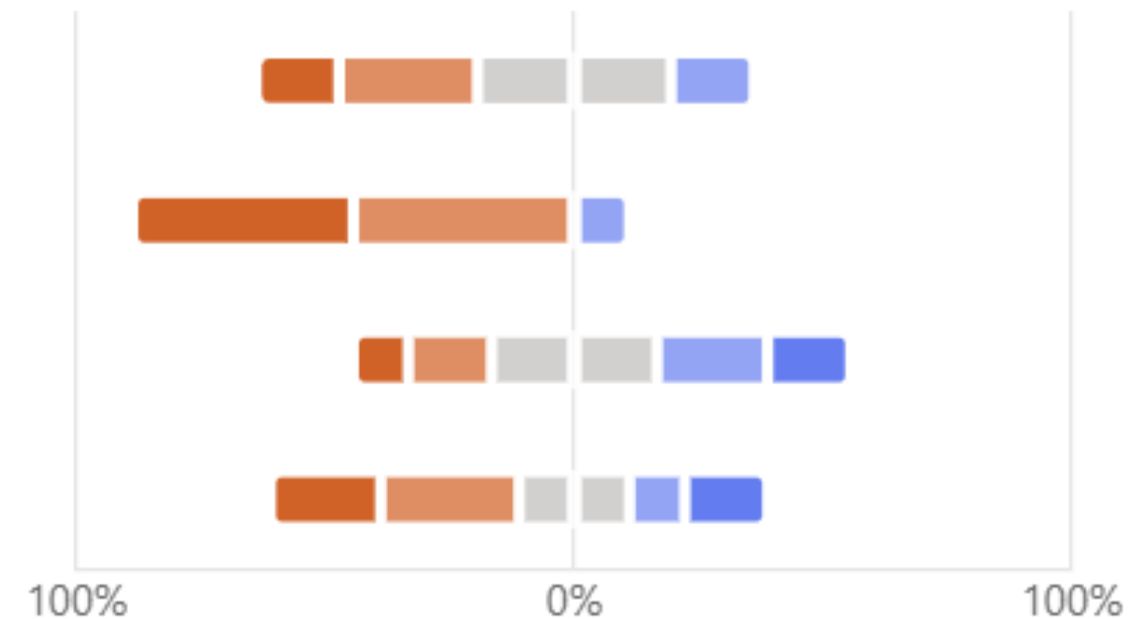
● No Interest ● Low Interest ● Moderate Interest ● High Interest ● Very High Interest

Generally.

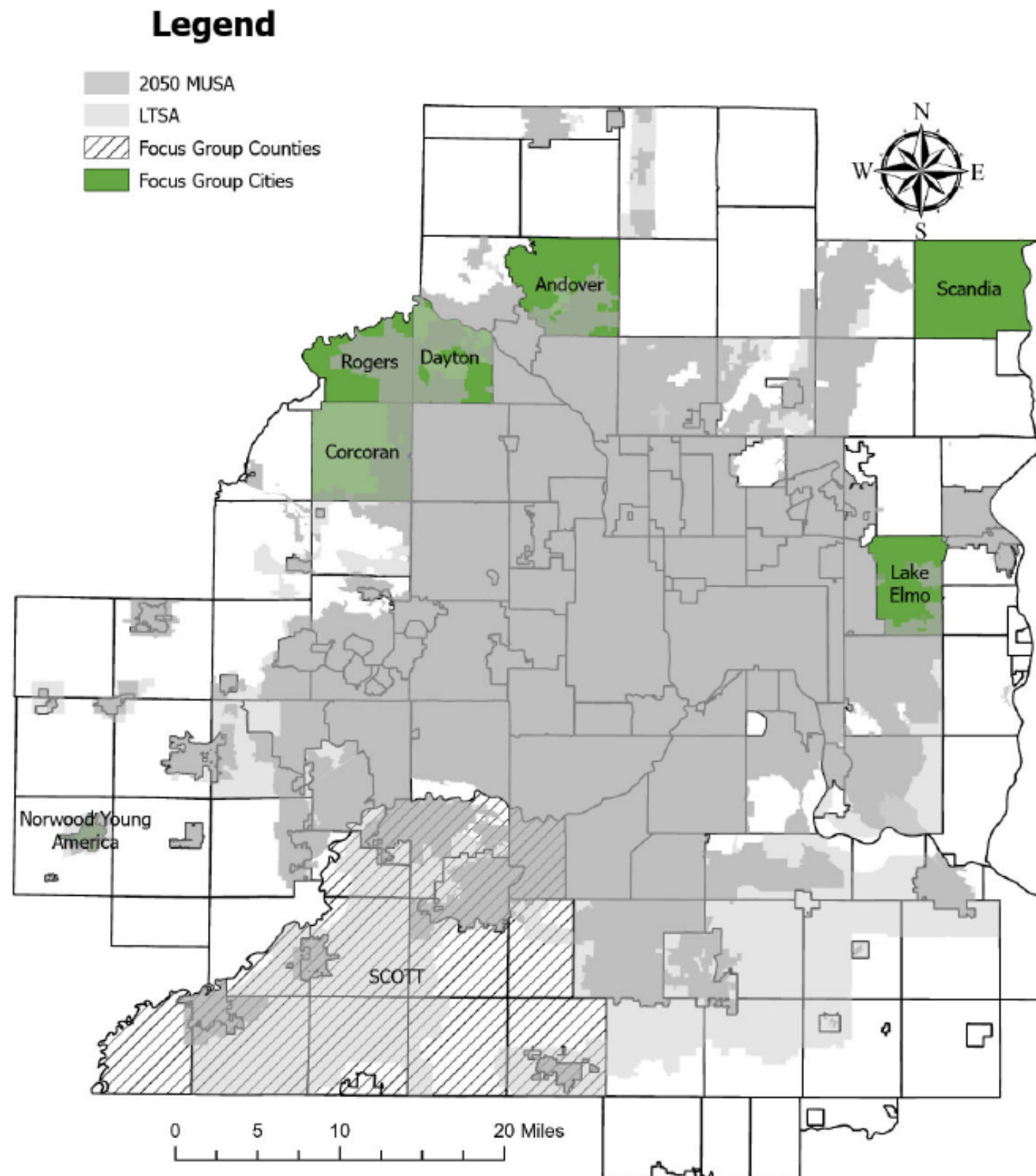
To create developments that will eventually connect to urban services.

To protect natural systems and resources.

To protect agricultural lands.



Focus Group



What we've learned – summary



- Communities were not using the flexible development guidelines as intended.
- Relatively few cluster developments; small unit count.
- Cluster developments meeting density maximums are often not economically viable.
- Cluster developments are producing high end developments with small unit counts.
- Communal septic systems high failure rate.
- Interest in cluster developments to protect natural systems.
- Interest in resource for rural cluster developments/ communal systems best practices.

Proposed Updates



- Eligibility/Local Responsibilities
 - Diversified Rural and LTSA, or special agreement
 - Comprehensive Plan consistency requirements
- New Program Requirements for Comp Plans
 - Comprehensive Plan mapping and implementation requirements
 - Submit copy of updated ordinances
 - Rural development monitoring program
- Minor Updates to Original Flexible Rural Development Guidelines
 - Guidelines to Standards

Next Steps



- LUAC Info Item: September 17
- CDC Info Item : October 19
- LUAC Business Item: November 19
- CDC Business Item: December 7
- Metropolitan Council Action:
Late Dec or Jan 13

Discussion and Questions



Discussion Prompts

- Feedback on proposed changes
 - Concerns with proposed Standards
 - Anything that you feel is missing or should be addressed.
- Items you would like more information on when this returns as an action item



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