

# WASTEWATER REVIEW FACT SHEET

## LOCAL PLANNING HANDBOOK

### METROPOLITAN COUNCIL REGIONAL WASTEWATER SYSTEM

The Met Council's mission is to foster efficient and economic growth for a prosperous metropolitan region; we do this through our regional investments, including those in our wastewater system. The Legislature has entrusted the Met Council with authority to plan for region's orderly and efficient growth, and to provide essential services that benefit the metro area.

The Met Council ensures cost-effective and efficient use of existing and future regional infrastructure. Our region has high-quality, cost-efficient service that protects public health and the environment. The Met Council's Environmental Services division is nationally renowned for its superior work treating wastewater. Environmental Services consistently achieves near-perfect compliance with federal and state water discharge standards while holding rates about 35% below the national average.

### WASTEWATER REVIEW OF LOCAL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATES

[Imagine 2050](#) and the regional system plans comprise the Met Council's Metropolitan Development Guide, which is the region's plan to ensure orderly and economical development and re-development.

Local governments need to submit a wastewater and comprehensive sewer plan that describes service needs from the regional system. We review wastewater plans to ensure conformance with our [2050 Water Policy Plan](#) and [Imagine 2050](#) to make sure that our regional system has adequate capacity to serve the planned development and redevelopment in the right locations at the right times. This review also helps ensure that we are being good stewards of the regional investment in our wastewater infrastructure by getting the most out of our infrastructure, which includes reducing Inflow and Infiltration.

For communities with a locally owned and operated wastewater system, we work to ensure these systems are adequately managed and maintained around the region. This helps to ensure that local capacity is available but also helps to prevent costly regional infrastructure investments in inadequately maintained systems.

We also review comprehensive plans for compliance with State regulations. For example, it is important that subsurface treatment systems (SSTS), which are primarily in rural areas, are properly managed and maintained. In these areas we also ensure that planned development is at densities that are consistent with the Community Designations and with the Long-Term Service Area for future sewer service.

### FOR WASTEWATER, WHAT DOES CONFORMANCE MEAN?

We are required by law to review comprehensive plans to determine if they: 1) conform to metropolitan system plans; 2) are consistent with other adopted plans of the Met Council; and 3) are compatible with the plans of adjacent jurisdictions. Conformance with regional system plans is most important to the Met Council and its mission of coordinated orderly economical development of the region.

If a comprehensive plan update or amendment is "in conformance" with regional system plans, it means that a community's planning is in line with our regional system plans. Within the Metropolitan Urban Service Area, this means communities are meeting the overall density expectations identified in [Imagine 2050](#). A plan that is in conformance is ensuring orderly and efficient land use to make the best use of public and private investment.

### SUBSTANTIAL IMPACT OR DEPARTURE

If a plan is "not in conformance" with regional system plans, it means that the community's planning may have a potential to impact our regional system investments for wastewater, which would either be **over-utilization** (substantial impact) or **under-utilization** (substantial departure) of the wastewater system.

Over-utilization occurs when local development will use more regional capacity than is currently available or planned. Under-utilization occurs when low-density development uses less than currently available or planned regional capacity. Under-utilization is likely to require additional infrastructure elsewhere in the region.

Local comprehensive plans that may have a substantial impact on - or contain a substantial departure from - the metropolitan wastewater system plan affect how the Met Council constructs, operates, and maintains the regional wastewater system and can result in system inefficiencies if the nonconforming plans are allowed to be implemented.

### SUBSTANTIAL IMPACT OR DEPARTURE SCENARIOS

There are several scenarios where a comprehensive plan or amendment has the potential for substantial impact or substantial departure. These are described below:

- A substantial system impact may occur under various scenarios, including when:
- The regional wastewater system was not designed to provide wastewater service for the proposed sewer service area; or
- The projected flow from the sewer service area is greater than planned; or

- The timing for the proposed growth is prior to implementation of a planned improvement to, and greater than what can be accommodated by, the regional wastewater system; or
- The peak wet-weather flows from the local government unit exceeds its designed capacity within the regional wastewater system, and thus there is inadequate capacity to accommodate the planned growth for the local government unit or tributary local governmental units.

A substantial departure may occur when:

- A local governmental unit proposes forecasts for sewered development densities that are lower than Met Council density standards that are the basis for regional infrastructure planning purposes; or
- When a local government unit proposes densities that exceed Met Council policy for unsewered areas that are within the long-term regional wastewater service area, thus preventing future economical sewered development.

If a community's plan may have a potential impact or departure, the Met Council's first approach is to work with the community. The Met Council may require a community to modify its comprehensive plan if the conclusion is that the local plan is more likely than not to have either a substantial impact on, or to contain a substantial departure from, the Met Council's adopted policy plans and capital budgets for metropolitan wastewater service.