

MetroFuture: Making a Greater Boston Region

An Initiative of the Metropolitan Area Planning Council

www.metrofuture.org

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The image on the cover is a “word cloud” that depicts the 50 most commonly used words in this document, with the size of the word proportional to its frequency.

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Organizational hierarchy:

Strategy #1: Strategy

A. Sub-Strategy

1) Recommendation

- 1.a Implementation Step
(Complete text of Implementation Steps not included in this draft)

Strategy # 1: Implement Coordinated Plans

A. Increase municipal planning capacity

- 1) Ensure each municipality has professional planning staff
- 2) Increase capacity of citizen boards through education
- 3) Foster informed public participation in planning efforts
- 4) Build local capacity to use planning support tools
- 5) Provide more general non-contract technical support through MAPC subregions
- 6) Support the development of local plans and zoning consistent with MetroFuture

B. Modernize planning and development tools

- 7) Modernize the Zoning Enabling Act and Subdivision Control Law
- 8) Adopt best practices for permit streamlining
- 9) Establish local and regional Transfer of Development Rights programs
- 10) Use phased development and rate-of-development controls to manage growth
- 11) Formalize development agreements

C. Establish consistency of plans across all levels

- 12) Formalize the Commonwealth Sustainable Development Principles and Objectives
- 13) Regularly update MetroFuture land use plan and objectives, consistent with state principles/objectives
- 14) Assess consistency of municipal plans and actions with MetroFuture objectives
- 15) Establish local aid formulas and tax sharing programs that promote plan consistency

D. Coordinate sustainable state policies and programs

- 16) Ensure state policies and investments are consistent with the Sustainable Development Principles
- 17) Establish mechanisms for state accountability and consistency of Sustainable Development Principles
- 18) Target capital funding to proposals consistent with regional plan
- 19) Adjust 40B regulations to promote both affordable housing production and plan consistency
- 20) Revise MWRA expansion policies to promote sustainable growth
- 21) Modify MEPA reviews to encourage sustainable development
- 22) Align school building assistance priorities with sustainable development patterns
- 23) Incorporate sustainable growth projections in Water Management Act permitting

E. Foster private sector demand for sustainable development

- 24) Disseminate information regarding the economic and environmental costs of development alternatives
- 25) Foster corporate engagement through sustainability-oriented networking and recognition programs

26) Pursue education and marketing to promote “regional-mindedness”

Strategy # 2: Democratize Information

A. Align data collection and policymaking

- 1) Develop regional indicators to measure progress toward MetroFuture goals
- 2) Collect Metro Boston's "Top Ten Most Wanted Data Sets"
- 3) Implement a regional research agenda to inform planning and development policy
- 4) Ensure Massachusetts is accurately counted in the Decennial Census
- 5) Inform US Census efforts through the Population Estimates Program

B. Improve state and local capacity to utilize planning and decision support tools

- 6) Expand appropriate use of visualization and decision support technology in the region

C. Support State and Regional Data Intermediaries

- 7) Implement Massachusetts Office of Geographic and Environmental Information (MassGIS) Strategic Plan
- 8) Establish a Commonwealth Center for Data
- 9) Strengthen MAPC's Data Center and GIS Lab as Metro Boston's Regional Data Intermediary

D. Build and maintain strong "information infrastructure"

- 10) Create the information infrastructure necessary to make data accessible in a timely manner
- 11) Use licensing to allow public use of government-created data while protecting agency interests.

Strategy # 3: Strengthen Municipal Finance

A. Modernize municipal governance structures and practices

- 1) Implement best practices for municipal charters and governance structures
- 2) Improve the effectiveness of Town Meeting form of government
- 3) Review the Commonwealth's home rule structure and revise as necessary
- 4) Use the internet to enhance transparency and civic participation
- 5) Resolve remaining vestiges of county government

B. Control municipalities' fixed costs: health care, pensions, debt

- 6) Control municipal health care costs through participation in group plans and Medicare
- 7) Safeguard and restore basic personnel management powers
- 8) Reform underperforming municipal pension programs
- 9) Reform public employee pension system to eliminate exceptions, loopholes, and unfunded liabilities

C. Enable more cost-effective service delivery

- 10) Increase the use of municipal performance monitoring and benchmarking to improve service delivery
- 11) Use dispute avoidance and resolution systems to control costs on municipal capital projects
- 12) Increase the use of enterprise funds for fee-based municipal utilities
- 13) Increase use of senior citizen volunteers for municipal functions
- 14) Facilitate the creation of new municipal electric utilities

D. Ensure that state assistance to local government is sufficient and predictable

- 15) Stabilize local aid and revisit local aid formulas
- 16) Maintain the state income tax rate at current levels

E. Provide cities and towns with flexibility to raise local revenues.

- 17) Increase participation in the Community Preservation Act and ensure consistent state match
- 18) Increase the diversity of local revenue sources
- 19) Enable widespread use of Impact Fees
- 20) Adjust Proposition 2 ½

F. Reduce the burden of education funding

- 21) Develop a "school cost insurance" program for all growth consistent with the regional plan
- 22) Seek opportunities to create new regional school districts or consolidation of administrative functions

Strategy # 4: Build Regional Collaboration

A. Strengthen MAPC as a regional resource

- 1) Strengthen the technical assistance capacity of regional planning agencies
- 2) Modernize enabling statutes for Regional Planning Agencies

B. Support regional collaboration, purchasing, and service delivery

- 3) Establish regional collaboration as a priority for all Commonwealth policies and programs
- 4) Increase joint procurement and service delivery through MAPC
- 5) Strengthen incentives to foster inter-municipal collaboration
- 6) Deliver regional public health services
- 7) Consider municipal mergers to increase efficiency and enhance the quality of services

C. Work together to make a safer region

- 8) Regionalize emergency dispatch
- 9) Increase the use of mutual aid and mutual assistance agreements
- 10) Collaborate on emergency planning efforts and implementation of emergency preparedness, hazard mitigation, and climate change adaptation recommendations

D. Plan together for regional development

- 11) Establish advisory review process for border developments
- 12) Develop and implement inter-municipal dispute resolution systems
- 13) Increase intermunicipal park/greenway/trail planning
- 14) Pursue regional housing production and preservation efforts

E. Share costs and benefits of development

- 15) Create tax-sharing districts for major developments
- 16) Establish a metropolitan tax sharing program

Strategy # 5: Enable Compact Growth

A. Plan for compact growth to serve community needs

- 1) Support district plans for compact growth
- 2) Use visualization and decision support tools to engage the public in district planning
- 3) Develop capital plans for compact growth areas
- 4) Broaden use of Chapter 40R Smart Growth Zoning Districts

B. Ensure good design and access

- 5) Facilitate widespread adoption of form-based codes
- 6) Adopt innovative parking strategies
- 7) Increase the availability of car-sharing services
- 8) Maintain historic resource inventories and plans
- 9) Provide financial support for historic preservation and restoration
- 10) Facilitate adaptive reuse and preservation
- 11) Promote the use of New Urbanism and Traditional Neighborhood Development

C. Encourage market response to district plans

- 12) Adopt best practices for permit streamlining
- 13) Expand regional support for marketing compact growth sites
- 14) Apply split tax rate to land/buildings to promote redevelopment
- 15) Increase the use of Tax Increment Financing
- 16) Increase the use of District Improvement Financing
- 17) Enable widespread application of Impact Fees

D. Remove Barriers to Development

- 18) Support revitalization of contaminated “brownfields”
- 19) Support the use of shared septic systems and small wastewater treatment facilities

E. Increase Vitality of Existing Centers

- 20) Increase use of Business Improvement Districts
- 21) Facilitate use of Main Street or similar programs

Strategy # 6: Improve City Life and School Quality

A. Ensure high quality educational opportunities in urban communities

- 1) Build teacher and school capacity through trainings and partnerships
- 2) Modernize school administration and intervention strategies
- 3) Support students and engage their parents and communities
- 4) Increase school choice in underperforming districts

B. Improve urban public safety

- 5) Support proven youth violence prevention programs
- 6) Increase community policing efforts
- 7) Increase the analytical use of crime statistics
- 8) Expand prisoner re-entry programs to reduce recidivism

C. Foster sustainable neighborhood redevelopment

- 9) Support neighborhood redevelopment initiatives of Community Development Corporations
- 10) Return foreclosed, vacant, and abandoned properties to productive use
- 11) Prevent displacement of existing urban residents

D. Improve urban services, maintenance, and accessibility

- 12) Increase the use of municipal performance monitoring and benchmarking to improve service delivery
- 13) Increase bicycle, pedestrian, and transit accessibility and safety

E. Foster urban vitality: arts, culture, shops, and services

- 14) Strengthen downtown and neighborhood business districts
- 15) Support arts and culture to build community and civic engagement
- 16) Support arts districts through public policy

F. Improve urban parks and the urban environment

- 17) Coordinate urban park planning, development, administration and regional connections
- 18) Leverage partnerships and private funding to improve maintenance of urban parks
- 19) Increase the urban tree canopy
- 20) Expand urban farms and community gardens
- 21) Protect and restore urban wilds, waterways, and urban ecology

Strategy # 7: Protect Natural Landscapes

A. Plan for land preservation on a state and regional basis

- 1) Develop statewide plans for land conservation
- 2) Bring strategic and regional perspectives to local open space planning
- 3) Establish stronger “No Net Loss” policies for natural land resources
- 4) Exclude valuable natural resource lands from areas identified as priority development areas or focus areas for growth

B. Increase funding for priority land acquisition

- 5) Develop open space funding sources through use of a regional “Greenfield Fee”
- 6) The Commonwealth should provide adequate funding for open space
- 7) Increase local capacity for open space acquisition

C. Support private sector conservation initiatives

- 8) Establish and expand conservation tax credit programs
- 9) Expand the use of Conservation Restrictions and Agricultural Preservation Restrictions
- 10) Increase participation in the Chapter 61 programs
- 11) Increase estate planning assistance to farmers and owners of natural resource lands

D. Create a new generation of farmers through training, technical assistance and access to capital

- 12) Increase training opportunities and internships for new farmers
- 13) Provide more training and technical assistance to immigrants and refugees who wish to begin farming
- 14) Increase financing options for local farmers
- 15) Provide greater security and longer lease lengths for farmers leasing publicly-owned farmland

E. Build a stronger market for local agricultural products

- 16) Create and strengthen marketing programs for local food
- 17) Expand school and institutional purchasing programs.
- 18) Standardize labeling or verification programs for “local foods”
- 19) Create more infrastructure to support processing and distribution of local produce.
- 20) Establish a Boston Public Market to provide a year-round venue for local food products

F. Remove regulatory and labor-related barriers to agricultural expansion/diversification

- 21) Revise local zoning to support diversified agricultural operations
- 22) Increase the role of agricultural commissions in protecting and promoting agricultural activity

- 23) Increase the use and effectiveness of “Right to Farm” bylaws that protect farmers
- 24) Coordinate social and transportation services to link workers with farm employment

G. Adopt sustainable land use controls in natural landscape areas

- 25) Eliminate “Approval not Required” (ANR) process for land subdivision
- 26) Adopt true large lot zoning
- 27) Implement environmentally-friendly roadway standards
- 28) Protect scenic roads through development controls and sensitive design

H. Increase the use and impact of Open Space Residential Design

- 29) Permit Open Space Residential Design “as of right” and require its use in sensitive resource areas
- 30) Improve design of Open Space Residential Developments

Strategy # 8: Expand Access to Housing

A. Develop coordinated regional and local plans for diverse housing production

- 1) Prepare regional housing production plans
- 2) Prepare municipal Housing Production Plans that reflect MetroFuture growth targets
- 3) Guide housing efforts through a “Regional Housing Advisory Committee”

B. Increase affordable housing production in appropriate locations

- 4) Increase state funding for affordable housing development
- 5) Develop a Regional Housing Fund
- 6) Form municipal Affordable Housing Trusts
- 7) Recognize and support the nonprofit housing development sector
- 8) Increase production of “scattered site” affordable housing development
- 9) Encourage adoption of Smart Growth Zoning Overlay Districts

C. Diversify overall housing supply and affordability

- 10) Use “inclusionary zoning” as a tool to increase affordable housing production
- 11) Increase production of accessory apartments
- 12) Implement permitting best practices that streamline housing production

D. Connect residents to housing opportunities

- 13) Develop employer-assisted housing options and programs
- 14) Increase support for Housing Consumer Education Centers
- 15) Prevent foreclosures
- 16) Provide comprehensive, regional responses to homelessness

E. Ensure Fair and Accessible Housing

- 17) Develop a Regional Fair Housing Compact program
- 18) Implement a fair housing impact review process
- 19) Determine the impact of local preference policies
- 20) Publicize and enforce federal and state anti-discrimination laws
- 21) Increase housing accessibility and adaptability
- 22) Increase the application of universal design principles

F. Preserve, maintain, and upgrade existing affordable housing stock

- 23) Support and expand housing rehabilitation activities
- 24) Monitor deed restrictions to preserve affordability of units; preserve expiring use units or mitigate their loss
- 25) Modernize public housing

Strategy # 9: Support Healthy Families

A. Link health and planning

- 1) Strengthen coordination between health and planning boards/agencies
- 2) Incorporate public health into municipal master plans.
- 3) Expand programs designed to foster walking and biking to school
- 4) Adopt and implement Hazard Mitigation Plans

B. Broaden universal early education and care

- 5) Expand the network of high quality early education centers
- 6) Provide professional development opportunities for early childhood caregivers
- 7) Improve nutrition and physical activity opportunities in regulated child-care sites

C. Improve access to after-school and out-of-school programs

- 8) Create public-private partnerships to provide resources for out-of-school programs
- 9) Streamline access to funding for after-school and out-of-school programs

D. Use school-based programs to help children establish healthy lifestyles

- 10) Continuously assess school wellness and health policies
- 11) Disseminate and implement updated health and physical education framework and curricula
- 12) Establish standards for healthy snacks and beverages in schools
- 13) Invest in professional staff and facilities for fresh food preparation
- 14) Expand farm to school programs
- 15) Create “Edible Schoolyards” and associated programming

E. Ensure access to healthy food

- 16) Establish a Food Policy Council
- 17) Use financing and regulatory tools to bring supermarkets and healthy food outlets to underserved areas
- 18) Expand offerings of existing markets
- 19) Expand participation in the WIC program

F. Reduce exposure to environmental contaminants

- 20) Expand the use of healthy building techniques
- 21) Improve indoor air quality in schools
- 22) Reduce pesticide use
- 23) Increase lead-based paint abatement programs
- 24) Expand tobacco cessation programs

G. Ensure equitable access to quality health care

- 25) Increase asthma treatment and prevention programs

- 26) Ensure that health insurance is universal and affordable.
- 27) Create a state Center for the Elimination of Health Disparities
- 28) Ensure linguistically accessible and culturally appropriate health care

H. Coordinate policies to create an elder-friendly region

- 29) Collect data to ensure that older adults are being well served by state and local service providers
- 30) Coordinate transportation planning and service provision to the Commonwealth's elderly population.
- 31) Provide housing options attractive to older adults

Strategy # 10: Invest in a Skilled Workforce

A. Increase capacity and sustainability of public higher education

- 1) Address the revenue gap for public colleges and universities
- 2) Coordinate and support capital investments at public colleges and universities
- 3) Support non-credit continuing education, workforce development, graduate courses, and ESOL programs
- 4) Reform and modernize administrative procedures in the community college system
- 5) Reform DCAM procedures to make it easier for institutions to occupy & improve rental spaces

B. Broaden access to public higher education

- 6) Reduce financial barriers to attending public institutions of higher education
- 7) Expand distance learning programs and alternative delivery models for public higher education
- 8) Locate new public higher education facilities in smart growth locations and improve transit access to public higher education

C. Coordinate and align public higher education curriculum

- 9) Establish formal coordination between public higher education curriculum and workforce development needs
- 10) Facilitate the creation of new programs in high-demand fields at state and community colleges
- 11) Strengthen coordination within the community college system

D. Adopt new strategies to improve student performance, graduation rates, and employment outcomes

- 12) Implement comprehensive measurement and assessment systems for community colleges
- 13) Increase coaching, counseling, and mentoring
- 14) Facilitate transfers across the entire public higher education system
- 15) Align secondary and post-secondary curriculum

E. Remove barriers to labor force participation

- 16) Reform the Criminal Offender Records Information (CORI) system

F. Position immigrants as key assets to the region's economy

- 17) Expand funding for the adult basic education, including English for Speakers of Other Languages
- 18) Evaluate and adopt innovative service delivery models for Adult Basic Education and English language classes
- 19) Reform visa and green card systems to support immigrant entrepreneurs and skilled workers

- 20) Develop a better understanding of immigrants and economic development to inform public policy

G. Support older workers and lifelong productivity

- 21) Develop flexible approaches to part-time work and phased retirement
- 22) Re-tool workforce development programs to meet the needs of older workers
- 23) Support financial literacy so workers are prepared for retirement
- 24) Re-Tool Councils on Aging

H. Support Individual Asset Building and Financial Literacy

- 25) Bring unbanked individuals into the mainstream banking sector
- 26) Encourage asset building and provide incentives to save

Strategy # 11: Focus Economic Growth

A. Create jobs in MetroFuture-consistent locations

- 1) Target economic incentive programs and technical assistance to locations consistent with the MetroFuture land use plan
- 2) Increase employment density in appropriate suburban job centers
- 3) Streamline approvals through community involvement, expedited permitting, and pre-permitting
- 4) Bring a Smart Growth perspective to economic development marketing

B. Capitalize on existing medical and educational institutions

- 5) Create formal alliances to support higher education/civic collaboration
- 6) Support research programs and public/private collaboration at public post-secondary universities
- 7) Support coordination of creative economy initiatives

C. Support small businesses and entrepreneurs

- 8) Develop economic development plans that support small businesses
- 9) Facilitate access to capital for small businesses
- 10) Expand access to appropriate technical assistance, business services, and training
- 11) Support unconventional work locations: home offices, live/work spaces, and business incubators
- 12) Provide financial services that operate smoothly in a transnational milieu

Strategy # 12: Expand Coordinated Transportation

A. Integrate land use and transportation planning

- 1) Implement a comprehensive corridor planning process
- 2) Strengthen Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) evaluation criteria
- 3) Improve data modeling and analysis to support transportation decision-making
- 4) Ensure that the MPO structure promotes accountability and diversity of opinion
- 5) Conduct regional transportation and land use planning as an integrated, regionally-controlled activity
- 6) Build local capacity to integrate land use and transportation planning
- 7) Reform federal and state legislative earmarking systems

B. Prioritize transit and transportation alternatives

- 8) Invest in projects that expand and add capacity to the existing transit system
- 9) Establish “first mile/last mile” services around commuter rail stations
- 10) Improve the transit experience through high quality stations, stops, and customer service
- 11) Create dedicated lane capacity for transit and alternative modes
- 12) Incorporate “complete street” best practices in roadway development and design efforts
- 13) Stabilize and coordinate funding sources for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure and programs
- 14) Maintain and manage bicycle and pedestrian facilities and traffic as full-fledged transportation linkages
- 15) Preserve and fully utilize existing rights of way
- 16) Provide pay-as-you-drive insurance

C. Establish stable and sufficient financing for all modes

- 17) Increase statewide transportation revenue generation
- 18) Stabilize and strengthen finances of the MBTA and regional Transit authorities
- 19) Implement tolling strategies to reduce congestion and raise revenue
- 20) Eliminate agency-level inefficiencies and redundancy
- 21) Increase local and regional revenue generation for transportation
- 22) Maintain fares as a significant source of revenue for the MBTA and regional transit authorities

D. Promote an efficient and transparent project delivery system

- 23) Adopt a realistic and financially constrained regional and state Transportation Improvement Programs
- 24) Utilize public-private partnerships and other alternative project delivery methods where appropriate
- 25) Increase transportation agency capacity to design and construct high-quality projects

- 26) Implement dispute avoidance and resolution systems for transportation projects
- 27) Implement comprehensive transportation performance analysis and reporting

E. Establish a comprehensive maintenance program for safety and future cost savings

- 28) Develop a comprehensive asset management/life-cycle cost system
- 29) Reduce the backlog of structurally deficient bridges
- 30) EOTPW should address the inherent disincentive in the current agency budget process

F. Improve the competitiveness of rail freight

- 31) Conduct statewide freight priority needs assessment
- 32) Establish double-stacking priority

Strategy # 13: Conserve Natural Resources

A. Plan for sustainability

- 1) Coordinate state and regional efforts
- 2) Incorporate sustainability practices into municipal planning and operations
- 3) Pursue regional collaboration for energy services and technical assistance

B. Conserve Energy

- 4) Implement stronger energy efficiency and green building standards
- 5) Promote distributed generation and combined heat & power at compact growth locations
- 6) Give consumers more information about energy use, cost, and efficiency
- 7) Create new funding mechanisms for energy efficiency improvements
- 8) Increase efficiency of transportation system

C. Promote the use of renewable resources

- 9) Reduce regulatory and financial barriers to local renewable energy production
- 10) Increase market demand for renewable energy

D. Manage water demand through education, pricing, technical assistance, and regulation

- 11) Increase public awareness regarding water conservation
- 12) Adopt water pricing structures as a primary mechanism to manage water demand
- 13) Use full cost pricing and use water revenues to fund conservation programs
- 14) Increase the use of low-water landscaping
- 15) Provide technical assistance to residents and businesses
- 16) Establish and enforce standards and restrictions for outdoor irrigation systems
- 17) Establish comprehensive programs to directly regulate water usage during peak periods
- 18) Increase incentives for installing water-efficient products

E. Implement water/wastewater/stormwater utility “best practices” across the region

- 19) Conduct integrated water management planning
- 20) Reduce inflow and infiltration
- 21) Water utilities should conduct comprehensive water system audits and assessments on a regular basis
- 22) Conduct frequent systemwide leak detection and prevent water theft
- 23) Ensure compliance with pressure reduction regulations
- 24) Establish fee-based stormwater utilities

F. Expand the use of reclaimed water and alternative supplies

- 25) Establish state policies supportive of water reuse

- 26) Provide technical assistance and training to promote water reuse
- 27) Require evaluation of water reuse opportunities as a condition of water service for large developments
- 28) Encourage water reuse in state-funded construction projects
- 29) Increase the use of rainwater harvesting

G. Use technical analysis to support more flexible regulatory mechanisms for water withdrawal

- 30) Conduct hydrologic analysis to assess environmentally sustainable yield of water supplies
- 31) Implement water banking programs
- 32) Provide more transparent access to statistical data collected through water permitting

H. Promote local treatment and recharge of stormwater and wastewater

- 33) Establish land use controls and stormwater regulation to promote stormwater best practices and Low Impact Development
- 34) Expand septic system management programs
- 35) Favor decentralized wastewater solutions and strictly condition access to sewer extensions

I. Protect the quality of water supplies through source controls and land use planning

- 36) Adopt and update water resource protection zoning
- 37) Strengthen local regulation of hazardous materials

J. Increase waste reduction and recycling

- 38) Strengthen incentives for recycling and composting
- 39) Increase waste diversion infrastructure at the generator, local, and regional levels