



Metro Vision Growth and Development Supplement

Adopted January 18, 2012

Introduction

1. Overview

The *Growth and Development Supplement* is a formally adopted technical appendix of the *Metro Vision 2035 Plan*. It provides more detailed information about the application of policies established in the growth and development related elements of *Metro Vision*.

The DRCOG Board adopted a revised Metro Vision 2035 Plan in February 2011. This edition of the *Growth and Development Supplement* replaces the previous version of the *Supplement* adopted in August 2008, as amended in August 2009. Revisions to the previous edition focus on streamlining the document to more clearly outline policy rules and applications that directly further the implementation of *Metro Vision*.

2. Organization

The chapters of the *Growth and Development Supplement* relate to the three elements (Extent of Urban Development, Urban Centers and Rural Town Centers) within the growth and development portion of *Metro Vision 2035* with specific policy rules and applications that have been developed to further guide the implementation of *Metro Vision*. The *Supplement* details these rules and provides additional information that may be of interest. Metro Vision includes three other growth and development elements (Large-Lot Development, Freestanding Communities and Community Design) that do not have additional guidance and therefore are not addressed in the *Supplement*. For more information on these elements please see the *Metro Vision 2035* document.

3. Amendments

The *Growth and Development Supplement* has been formally adopted by the DRCOG Board. Because it is an adopted document, it can only be modified through a formal amendment process.

Local governments, DRCOG staff, or others may propose amendments to the *Metro Vision Plan* and the *Growth and Development Supplement* through the annual Metro Vision Plan Assessment Process (described in a separate document). The DRCOG Board may also direct that amendments be made in conjunction with the periodic plan update process, which occurs approximately every four years.

Extent of Urban Development

1. Overview

The Extent of Urban Development element of *Metro Vision 2035* establishes an urban growth boundary/area (UGB/A) for the Denver region “to promote an orderly, compact and efficient pattern of future development.” The current boundary encompasses 980 square miles of urban development, which is intended to achieve at least a 10 percent increase in the region’s overall density between 2000 and 2035. This chapter describes how DRCOG defines and administers the UGB/A.

Several key themes provide important context for DRCOG’s UGB/A policy:

- a. *Overall goal of a UGB/A policy.* There is general consensus that our region needs a coordinated approach to growth management that promotes a long-range, regional perspective on key issues facing our communities and promotes the policies of *Metro Vision*. Bringing communities together to enhance our region’s quality of life is *Metro Vision’s* most important goal. To maximize the benefits and minimize the costs of growth, *Metro Vision* promotes development patterns that make efficient use of public infrastructure, are sensitive to environmental considerations, and accommodate the diverse needs and lifestyles of our region’s residents. Forty-six of DRCOG’s member governments have indicated their commitment to growth management and *Metro Vision* principles by signing the Mile High Compact.
- b. *The assumption of good intent.* This acknowledges local control over land use decisions and the central role local plans play in implementing *Metro Vision*. It is founded on the assumption that local governments are making growth decisions consistent with *Metro Vision* principles and thus focuses the UGB/A request review process on identifying any reasons for the Board to *not* grant the request.
- c. *Context is everything.* This acknowledges that every community in the DRCOG region is different and seeks to implement the principles of *Metro Vision* in ways appropriate to their community. This requires the UGB/A criteria to avoid an overly structured “one size fits all” solution.
- d. *The appropriate focus for DRCOG is regional, not local.* It is not always possible to separate site-level particulars from region-wide impacts. Evaluation criteria should acknowledge, however, that the DRCOG Board’s appropriate role in collaborative growth management is at a “30,000 foot level.” This focuses the Board’s role on the types of issues about which DRCOG has both standing and expertise, such as coordinating regional transportation infrastructure development; articulating a vision for the region’s growth and development; and attaining regional air and water goals.

- e. *Everyone desires both rigor and simplicity.* The ideal approach provides appropriate information for regional decision making while minimizing staff time and allowing each community to speak to its unique circumstances.
- f. *Evolution of UGB/A and its various roles.* UGB/A now serves multiple roles in our region’s growth management decisions. The original intent was to use UGB/A as a “staging” tool that identifies where communities plan to grow over the long term to support regional modeling and efficient allocation of scarce regional resources. Some also view the UGB/A as a mechanism for constraining growth. UGB/A has taken on yet another role at the local level, as part of the entitlement process. This can limit local flexibility in reallocating UGB/A to different sites and may drive a request for new UGB/A, thus making UGB/A seem like a short-term planning tool. These views often conflict in conversations about regional growth management. They are, however, a real part of the dynamic of our approach and we need to acknowledge this reality and work within it. This may not diminish the conflicting viewpoints, but it does help frame the subsequent discussion.

2. Development classification system

DRCOG uses the following definitions to classify development as urban, semi-urban, semi-rural, rural, or open space. DRCOG applied these definitions for the first time in 2007, when the Board adopted the first *Metro Vision 2035 Plan*. The definitions provide a consistent, region-wide classification system to support regional planning activities, such as land use and travel demand modeling. Many local governments use different development type classification systems to support local planning activities.

Urban

- a. Residential subdivisions or groupings of 10 or more residential parcels with an **average residential lot size of less than 1 acre.**
- b. Commercial and industrial subdivisions.
- c. Commercial activity on isolated parcels, not within platted subdivisions, with more than 50 employees. Example: large agricultural-related sales or manufacturing operations in outlying areas.
- d. Includes enclaves of semi-urban and other development, smaller than 80 acres in total area, surrounded by urban development. This includes rights-of-way, schools, and other tracts of land that are within separate filings, or not within a platted subdivision.
- e. Includes all of the area within a platted subdivision (that has been classified as urban), including rights-of way and utility easements, regardless of size, and parks, schools, protected open space and other undevelopable land, less than 160 acres (per individual parcel or tract). Does not include open space and other types of undevelopable land larger than 160 acres.
- f. Excludes enclaves of urban development smaller than 10 acres in total area that are surrounded by non-urban development.

Semi-Urban

Residential subdivisions or groupings of 10 or more residential parcels with an average residential lot size **greater than or equal to 1 acre and less than 10 acres.**

Semi-Rural

Residential subdivisions or groupings of 10 or more residential parcels with an average residential lot size greater **than or equal to 10 acres and less than 35 acres.**

Rural

- a. Parcels that are not part of an urban, semi-urban, or semi-rural subdivision and that are **35 acres or larger.**
- b. Any undevelopable parcel **160 acres or larger**

Open space

- a. Protected open space (from DRCOG's most recent inventory).
- b. Excludes parcels that are part of a subdivision and less than 160 acres.

3. Mapping rules

DRCOG applies the following rules to generate maps classifying all of the existing development within each jurisdiction, based on the development types defined above. Note that earlier rules override subsequent rules. For example, if the development type of a particular parcel is designated under Rule 1, it cannot be changed by subsequent rules. Rule 9 is an exception.

RULE 1: Parcels identified in DRCOG's open space map layer are classified as open space unless they are within a platted subdivision and are less than 160 acres.

RULE 2: All undevelopable parcels larger than 160 acres are classified as rural, even if they are within a subdivision that is classified as urban, semi-urban, or semi-rural.

RULE 3: Parcels within a residential subdivision are classified as urban if the average residential lot size is less than 1 acre, semi-urban if the average residential lot size is greater than or equal to 1 acre and less than 10 acres, and semi-rural if the average residential lot size is greater than or equal to 10 acres and less than 35 acres.

RULE 4: Parcels within a commercial or industrial subdivision (any subdivision where more than half of the parcels are used for commercial or industrial activities) are classified as urban. Parcels with commercial or industrial uses involving more than 50 employees, not within a platted subdivision, are designated as urban.

RULE 5: Parcels that are not within a platted subdivision but are included in previous DRCOG inventories of the urbanized area (e.g., DRCOG’s 2004 inventory which classified areas as urban using aerial photography) are classified as urban.

RULE 6: Parcels that are not within a subdivision that has been classified as urban, semi-urban or semi-rural, and that are equal to or greater than 35 acres, are classified as rural.

RULE 7: Groupings of 10 or more residential parcels that are not within a platted subdivision are classified as urban if the average parcel size is less than 1 acre, semi-urban if the average parcel size is greater than or equal to 1 acre and less than 10 acres, and semi-rural if the average parcel size is greater than or equal to 10 acres and less than 35 acres.

RULE 8: Any remaining parcels not meeting the criteria established in the previous rules are given the same classification as the surrounding parcels. Parcels within the same platted subdivision or grouping of parcels are all assigned the same development type, unless otherwise specified (e.g., open space 160 acres or larger). Parcels classified in the local assessor’s database as right-of-way or exempt, that are not within a platted subdivision, are classified individually (not as part of a grouping of parcels).

RULE 9: Contiguous areas classified under previous rules as non-urban that are less than 80 acres and surrounded by urban development are designated as urban. Contiguous areas of urban development that are less than 10 acres and surrounded by non-urban development are designated the same as the surrounding development type, or as rural if surrounded by open space.

Notes:

- a. The interpretation of a parcel or subdivision being used for residential or commercial purposes is based on assessor records, employment records, and aerial photography, and does not necessarily reflect local zoning.
- b. The determination of development type is based on an evaluation of each individual subdivision filing. (Note, however, that the application of Rule 9 will generally result in a uniform classification over an entire multiple-filing subdivision.)
- c. In some cases, additional input from the individual jurisdiction is used to classify development rather than relying solely on subdivision and land use records in the assessor data.

4. UGB/A allocation request process

The DRCOG Board established a UGB/A Working Group to address issues that arose over the expansion of the UGB/A during the *Metro Vision 2035* update in 2007. This section describes the Working Group’s final recommendations for considering proposed expansions of the UGB/A.

Overall process

- a. Every four years, coinciding with the update cycle of the Metro Vision Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), the DRCOG Board invites member requests for additional UGB/A. Members may also submit an emergency request at any time, following the process set out below (see Emergency requests).
- b. Member governments requesting additional UGB/A submit an application describing how their request meets the threshold criteria adopted by the Board (outlined below).
- c. A “peer-review” team of Board members, member government planners and DRCOG staff, appointed by the Board Chair specifically for this purpose, reviews the applications to confirm requests meet the threshold criteria. Communities applying for additional UGB/A are excluded from the team. Requests that do not meet the threshold criteria do not proceed any further, although communities have an opportunity to appeal at this point (see appeals procedure outlined below).
- d. The peer-review team forwards all eligible requests to DRCOG staff who conduct a modeling analysis comparing a base year (e.g., 2010) and the existing UGB/A with the proposed expansion (the aggregate of all the eligible requests). The modeling analysis produces metrics reflecting the impact of the expansion on *Metro Vision* goals (outlined below), which DRCOG staff forwards to the Board for its consideration.
- e. Based on the outcome of the modeling analysis, the Board decides whether or not to grant the aggregate allocation requests. At its discretion, the Board has the option of allocating some, but not all of the aggregate amount of UGB/A. This “partial allocation” process is set out below.

Threshold criteria

Given the diversity of DRCOG’s membership and the corresponding importance of context in evaluating the merit of individual UGB/A requests, the threshold review process focuses on high-level issues relevant to the principles of *Metro Vision* and the region’s growth as a whole. Communities requesting additional UGB/A should keep the following points in mind:

- a. The burden for making a case for new UGB/A clearly falls on the requesting community. It must make a strong case to the peer review team justifying the need for new UGB/A and describing how the request fits within the community’s overall plans for growth.
- b. The criteria outlined below provide a starting point. Requesting communities need to adequately address these and all other points relevant to the context of their request, supported by whatever data and information they deem relevant to their request.
- c. The level of detail provided should be appropriate to the scale of the request – i.e. communities requesting larger growth allocations should provide more detail, particularly regarding impacts on neighboring jurisdictions and regional infrastructure.

- d. This threshold review is an evaluation of the community's efforts – taken as a whole – toward addressing the broader Metro Vision goals articulated in the criteria. It is not a review of the specific UGB/A request area in isolation from the community's other development activities.

Each proposal must address the following five issues. Examples of the types of information that would be useful to the peer review panel in evaluating UGB/A requests are listed in italics.

- a. Need for additional UGB/A
 - *Revised population and/or employment forecasts*
 - *Why the need cannot be accommodated through infill and redevelopment*
 - *Why the need cannot be accommodated within the community's existing UGB/A allocation – e.g., through use of the UGB/A flexibility provisions*
- b. Consistency with *Metro Vision*. The proposal must address each of the three major elements of *Metro Vision* – Growth and development, transportation and the environment – and must cite the goals and policies that are the most relevant to the particular context of the proposal. **The proposal must also specifically mention the community's policies regarding densification of the current and planned urbanized area.**
 - *Adoption of the Mile High Compact*
 - *Adoption of Metro Vision goals and/or policies within the local comprehensive plan*
 - *Other local plans or programs that promote Metro Vision goals and policies*
 - *Track record of local progress toward Metro Vision goals*
- c. Consistency with local plans
 - *Amendment of the comprehensive plan to reflect the proposed UGB/A request (in process or completed)*
 - *Opportunities for public comment on the proposed UGB/A request at the local level*
 - *Plans/financing for infrastructure and urban services required to support the proposed growth allocation, **with specific mention of the availability of water to serve the proposed allocation (required of all proposals)***
- d. Impact on neighboring jurisdictions
 - *Identification of potential impacts and plans for mitigating these impacts*
 - *Relationship to neighboring comprehensive plans*
 - *IGAs with neighboring jurisdictions*
- e. Impact on regional transportation and wastewater infrastructure
 - *Identification of potential impacts and plans for mitigating these impacts*
 - *Information on how the proposal will leverage the region's investment in multi-modal transportation*
 - *Information on how the proposal will enhance the efficiency or capacity of regional facilities*

Modeling metrics

DRCOG staff will provide the Board with outcomes from DRCOG’s transportation, land use and air quality models documenting the impact of the aggregate UGB/A requests on the following regional metrics. The analysis will compare the change in these metrics between a base year (e.g., 2010), the adopted version of Metro Vision (currently 2035) and the expanded UGB/A that would result from granting the aggregate requests.

Specific metrics may include the following:

- a. Region-wide gross household density
- b. Vehicle miles of travel
- c. Average commute time
- d. Additional lane miles of congested roadways
- e. Changes in congestion on already congested roadways
- f. Mode share
- g. Air quality: Comparison with approved emissions budgets
- h. Transit accessibility, as measured by:
 - The percent of households located within a half mile of a rapid transit station
 - The percent of households with access to 100,000 or more jobs within 55-minute transit trip
- i. Demand for new regional infrastructure¹, as measured by the following metrics:
 - The percent increase in lane-miles of severely congested roadways
 - The percent increase in wastewater produced by urban-density households and jobs located outside of the UGB/A.
- j. Other metrics relevant to Metro Vision goals

Emergency requests

The following conditions apply to communities needing to make an off-cycle UGB/A request:

- a. Any such request would go directly to the Board for consideration at their regular monthly meeting. The request would go to the Board without the normal peer review.
- b. The Board member of the requesting community is responsible for forwarding the request to the Board, and ensuring the request is placed on the Board agenda.
- c. The community must indicate why the request cannot wait until the next cycle.
- d. The community’s request must address the same threshold criteria used in the standard process.
- e. On the advice of DRCOG staff, the Board may waive the requirement to run the request through the DRCOG modeling analysis prior to making its decision.

¹ Demand for new regional infrastructure serves as a proxy for cost.

Appeals procedure

Requesting communities that do not meet the initial threshold criteria have an automatic right to appeal this decision to the full Board. The procedure for appeals is as follows:

- a. DRCOG staff will transmit to the Board the complete evaluation of the peer review team, including those requests the team determined did not meet the threshold criteria.
- b. The Board Chair will automatically offer the Board representative of any community that did not meet the threshold conditions the opportunity to address the Board.
- c. The appeal must indicate why the community disagrees with the peer review team's conclusion regarding the threshold criteria.
- d. The Board as a whole will consider the appeal. The Board could then act to override the recommendation of the peer review team (and thus include the request in the modeling analysis phase of the review process) if a majority of the total participating membership votes to do so.

Partial allocations

The following describes the method by which the Board may allocate some, but not all, of the requested UGB/A:

- a. The outcomes of the regional modeling leave the Board with concerns about some or all of the eligible requests.
- b. The Board articulates its concerns to the pool of applicants and directs them to work together to develop a solution that addresses the Board's concerns.
- c. If the Board is comfortable with the resultant solution, it may proceed to allocate UGB/A consistent with the proposed solution.
- d. If the Board has remaining concerns, it may allocate some or all of the UGB/A with conditions on specific proposals.
- e. In the absence of a solution acceptable to the Board, the Board may deny some or all of the requests.

5. Other UGB/A policies

Urban growth area communities

A community may elect not to define a fixed urban growth boundary establishing specifically where future development will occur. They may instead use an "urban growth area" approach and simply track the amount of development occurring within their jurisdiction to ensure that it does not exceed their individual growth allocation.

A community may utilize an urban growth area (UGA) rather than an urban growth boundary (UGB) subject to the following conditions:

- a. The community develops a monitoring system to track the amount of new area committed to urban development and notifies DRCOG of the results on at least an annual basis. The annual report will include, at a minimum, tables and maps describing in detail the new areas that are committed. DRCOG requests that

- communities submit the report by March 1 of each year, so that any potential regional impacts can be assessed in conjunction with the annual Metro Vision plan assessment process. DRCOG encourages communities to submit the report to appropriate neighboring jurisdictions as well.
- b. The community notifies DRCOG of the development phase that is used to commit the land to urban development. This may be at annexation, zoning, platting or another stage where public decisions have been made.
 - c. The community works with DRCOG to maintain an “unofficial UGB” map of expected urban growth in the community to support regional transportation planning efforts. DRCOG will not show this unofficial UGB on any published maps.

Flexibility provisions (self-certification)

The self-certification process allows communities to make small changes to their UGB/A allocation that do not have regional impact without seeking Board approval. Self-certifications fall into two categories:

- a. communities proposing to revise the UGB/A map without increasing their overall allocation, and
- b. rural town centers, which may increase their growth allocation up to 10 percent per year, not to exceed two square miles total.

Communities requesting such changes simply need to provide DRCOG with a map of the revisions, a statement describing the expected land use of the proposed area for use in regional forecasts, and a letter indicating that the proposal meets the criteria outlined in the table on the following page, thereby demonstrating no regional impact. DRCOG requests that communities submit this information by March 1 of each year, so that it can be incorporated into the annual Metro Vision plan assessment process.

Criteria	Map revisions	Rural town centers
The revised area is consistent with the community’s current comprehensive plan.	X	X
The revised area is consistent with local open space plans.	X	X
The revised area is consistent with the goals and objectives of the current <i>Metro Vision Plan</i> .	X	X
The community has informed the county, adjoining local governments and affected service providers of the revised area.	X	X
The revised area does not require a change to the Regional Transportation Plan or a new air quality conformity analysis.	X	
The revised area does not affect the need for, or nature of, improvements to regional infrastructure either already constructed or identified in the first three years of the current Transportation Improvement Program. This would not include commitments that also serve designated urban areas.	X	
The revised area is contiguous with areas within municipal limits or previously identified for growth by the municipal comprehensive plan, or as defined in municipal annexation law and annexation boundaries defined by adopted intergovernmental agreements between neighboring municipalities.	X	
The change does not increase the community’s overall UGB/A allocation	X	
The change does not increase the community’s overall UGB/A allocation by more than 10 percent, and cumulative changes do not exceed two square miles in total.		X

UGB/A and annexations

DRCOG allocates UGB/A to each member jurisdiction. Therefore the situation may arise whereby a city annexes an area located within a county’s UGB/A. Ideally, cities and counties facing this situation will have entered into an intergovernmental agreement (IGA) that includes a provision for resolving UGB/A issues. DRCOG assumes that any self-certified UGB/A changes are consistent with such IGAs.

The following policies apply when an IGA is not in place:

- a. When a city annexes developed land located within the county’s UGB/A, DRCOG will subtract the area from county’s UGB/A allocation and add it to the city’s UGB/A allocation.
- b. When a city annexes undeveloped land located within the county’s UGB/A, the city and county must determine whether the annexed area
 - a. is subtracted from the county’s allocation and added to the city’s allocation; or
 - b. is covered with UGB/A “flexed” from elsewhere within the city’s allocation (see the flexibility provisions above), which allows the county to move the annexed amount to another location; or

- c. will remain non-urban and does not require UGB/A, which also allows the county to move the annexed amount to another location. In this situation, the city may subsequently apply for new UGB/A to cover the annexed area.

The city and the county will notify DRCOG of their joint intention regarding the annexed UGB/A as part of the self-certification letter.

When a county intends to remove UGB/A from an area within three miles of the incorporated limits of a city, the county will notify the affected city prior to any self-certification.

Surplus UGB/A in land-locked communities

Following DRCOG's adoption of new development type definitions and mapping rules in 2007 (see Sections 2 and 3 above), some areas previously classified as urban are now classified as semi-urban. Because communities do not need to cover semi-urban areas with UGB/A, this mapping change created surplus UGB/A within some communities, especially "land-locked" communities that could not allocate the UGB/A elsewhere. Staff identified eight land-locked communities where the mapping change resulted in surplus UGB/A: Bow Mar, Cherry Hills Village, Englewood, Federal Heights, Greenwood Village, Northglenn, and Sheridan.

To address the concern that these communities may require additional UGB/A in the future, the DRCOG Board directed that these communities automatically receive additional allocation if and when they identify a need to redevelop area within their jurisdiction (referred to as the "hold harmless" provision). DRCOG lists the surplus UGB/A set aside for this purpose as "currently unallocated" in Appendix A of the *Metro Vision Plan*.

Allocation for the Lowry Range property

In October 2007 the DRCOG Board stipulated that the allocation of 5.2 square miles for the Lowry Range Property in Arapahoe County is contingent upon permanent protection of the conservation area described in the State Land Board's master plan for the property. Protection of this area, a 22,000-acre tract of land south of Quincy Avenue, does not necessarily need to involve a conservation easement. Open space acquisition or other methods may be used, as long as the conservation area is permanently protected.

The Board stipulated that proposed transportation facilities to serve the Lowry Range property shall not receive points for criteria requiring that facilities be either completely or partially within the UGB until the conservation measures described above are in place. This condition applies to both the scoring process used to determine eligibility for inclusion in the fiscally constrained RTP and for the scoring process used to allocate funds through the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

Urban Centers

1. Overview

The urban centers element of *Metro Vision* aspires for the Denver region to become an international model for healthy, livable communities. Vibrant urban centers connected by a robust multi-modal network are central to this vision. *Metro Vision* recognizes that each urban center will be unique, but all will:

- be active, pedestrian-, bicycle-, and transit-friendly places that are more dense and mixed in use than surrounding areas;
- allow people of all ages, incomes and abilities to access a range of housing, employment, and service opportunities without sole reliance on having to drive;
- promote regional sustainability by reducing per capita vehicle miles traveled, air pollution, greenhouse gas emissions and water consumption; and
- respect and support existing neighborhoods.

Metro Vision further establishes a goal of accommodating 50% of all new housing units and 75% of all new jobs in urban centers between 2005 and 2035. Scenario modeling during the development of *Metro Vision* demonstrated that achieving the urban centers goal would positively benefit the achievement of other goals established by *Metro Vision* (e.g. reducing regional per capita vehicle miles traveled and greenhouse gas emissions).

This chapter establishes the criteria and the process DRCOG uses to designate new urban centers and revise existing urban centers.

2. Urban Center Categories

Metro Vision accommodates a wide array of unique urban centers including traditional downtowns, transit station areas, existing and emerging employment centers, and greenfield areas with development plans consistent with the key characteristics of urban centers described in *Metro Vision*. Urban centers are categorized in terms of progress toward realizing the local vision for each center: emerging, existing and planned.

- Emerging centers are expecting significant growth relative to existing conditions (more than 50% growth in combined jobs and housing units)
- Existing centers have substantial development. These centers are expecting less than 50% growth in combined jobs and housing units.

- Planned urban centers are largely undeveloped, but will become intensely developed over time. These areas have less than 100 housing units and less than 100 jobs.

3. Designation Process and Criteria

Metro Vision provides clear guidance on the desired attributes of urban centers (e.g. pedestrian-friendly, range of housing options, features that promote regional sustainability, etc.). The process to designate urban centers stresses this core set of attributes, but also considers local circumstances. All urban centers will be located within the region’s urban growth boundary/area (UGB/A) and encompass between approximately 100 – 1,000 acres.

The following is an outline of the process for designating urban centers.

1. During Cycle 1 of the annual *Metro Vision* Plan Assessment process, jurisdictions schedule an informal consultation meeting with DRCOG staff to discuss urban center proposals and the information the jurisdiction plans on submitting for evaluation (see Sections 5 and 6 below).
2. During Cycle 2, jurisdictions formally submit urban center proposals for evaluation by DRCOG staff and a panel of volunteers (see Section 4 below for evaluation panel operating procedures).
3. DRCOG staff and evaluation panel hold initial meeting to review urban center proposals.
4. DRCOG informs jurisdictions of any additional information needed to complete evaluation.
5. Evaluation panel provides recommendations to DRCOG staff on urban center designations.
6. DRCOG staff provides the Metro Vision Issues Committee (MVIC) with evaluation panel recommendations and staff findings.
7. DRCOG staff forwards MVIC’s recommendation to the DRCOG Board of Directors for their final consideration.

DRCOG staff and the evaluation panel will use the following criteria to evaluate urban center proposals. Each criterion includes a weighting factor (indicated as percent).

- Existing and proposed housing and employment densities (10%)
- Existing and proposed efforts to create an urban center that is active, bicycle-, pedestrian- and transit-friendly (25%)
- Existing and proposed efforts to create a range of housing, employment and supporting service opportunities for people of all ages, incomes and abilities (25%)

- Existing and proposed strategies and activities within the proposed urban center that will contribute to the region’s collective achievement of Metro Vision’s other sustainability goals (20%)
 - Reduce the percent of trips to work by SOV to 65% by 2035
 - Reduce regional per capita VMT by 10% between 2005 and 2035
 - Reduce per capita Greenhouse Gas emissions from the transportation sector by 60% between 2005 and 2035
 - Increase the rate of construction of alternative transportation facilities
 - Reduce regional per capita municipal and industrial water use
- Existing and proposed efforts to work with surrounding neighborhoods and communities on the vision, plan, implementation and any necessary and/or recommended mitigation strategies for the proposed urban center (10%)
- Local commitment and innovation (10%)

4. Evaluation Panel – Operating Procedures

The evaluation panel will include representatives of member governments and regional planning partners that have actively contributed to the development and implementation of *Metro Vision*. The evaluation panel serves in a strictly advisory capacity. The DRCOG Board retains the authority to approve a proposed urban center.

- Responsibilities - The urban centers evaluation panel will review proposed urban centers and provide a recommendation to DRCOG staff as to whether proposed urban centers should be designated and recognized in *Metro Vision*.
- Membership – Members of the evaluation panel serve on a voluntary basis.
 - DRCOG will annually solicit member governments and regional planning partners interested in serving on the evaluation panel.
 - Member government participants will include a representative cross-section of jurisdictions within the DRCOG planning area.
 - Member governments proposing a new urban center or substantial revisions to an existing center are not eligible to serve on the panel.
 - Member governments will constitute the majority of the evaluation panel.
 - The evaluation panel will include at least 9, but no more than 15 members.
- Meetings – At minimum the evaluation panel will meet twice during the evaluation process.
 - Meeting 1: DRCOG staff will brief the panel on the urban center proposals. The panel will determine if any additional information is needed to complete the evaluation.
 - Meeting 2 (and subsequent meetings as needed): The panel will provide a recommendation to DRCOG staff. When the panel recommends against designating a proposed urban center it will offer guidance on how the

applicant could improve the submittal. If the panel recommends designation it may elect to provide guidance on potential strategies and opportunities the jurisdiction should consider in efforts to implement the local vision for the urban center.

- Voting – The evaluation panel will seek consensus for their recommendations, but will vote if necessary.

5. Submittal Process – Required Items

The framework for evaluating proposed urban centers emphasizes local commitment and actions that are consistent with the regional vision for urban centers. The burden falls on local communities to make the case that proposed urban centers currently possess the key attributes of urban centers established by *Metro Vision*, or have the strong potential to do so in the future. Jurisdictions may use locally appropriate data and information to make the case, and should provide details on local commitment, strategies, implementation efforts and innovative activities that are consistent with the *Metro Vision* urban center policies. The following items are required for all submittals.

- Proposed name of urban center
- Proposed classification as an existing, emerging or planned urban center (see description in Section 2)
- Map of proposed urban center (plus boundary file in GIS format if available) with description for rationale for the boundary
- Existing number of housing units and jobs within the urban center
- Description of how the proposed urban center is consistent with the urban centers vision statement outlined in *Metro Vision* (see evaluation criteria above)
- Planned number of housing units and jobs within the urban center in the horizon year of the current *Metro Vision* plan and that horizon year plus five years (i.e., applicants seeking to amend *Metro Vision 2035* would provide estimates for 2035 and 2040)
- Basic description of method used to estimate future housing units and jobs
- Existing and future housing unit and employment densities within the proposed urban center relative to the entire jurisdiction and/or the surrounding area
- Description of any specific phasing elements of local government’s implementation strategy
- Existing and proposed multi-modal facilities or services located or operating in the proposed center
- Current housing diversity and efforts to provide more housing options for persons and families of all ages, incomes and abilities
- Relevant sections or summaries of local plans that identify the existing and future characteristics of the proposed urban center
- Information on small area planning, beyond the comprehensive plan, that has occurred

- Relevant sections or summaries of existing local implementation guides (e.g. zoning, capital improvement plans, etc.) that identify strategies and mechanisms to create an urban center that is consistent with *Metro Vision*

6. Submittal Process – Optional Items

Metro Vision establishes region-wide aspirations and each local government contributes in a manner appropriate to local circumstances and objectives. In addition to required items outlined in Section 5 jurisdictions are also encouraged to submit any information that will provide DRCOG staff and the evaluation panel with information related to local conditions and context. The following are examples of information that jurisdictions could provide. As described in Section 3 above, jurisdictions should meet with DRCOG staff during Cycle 1 of the *Metro Vision* Plan Assessment process to discuss the information they plan on submitting.

- Description of the proposed urban center’s unique history, character and/or sense of place
- Recent and near-term actions to implement the local vision for the proposed urban center
- Local and/or regional partners that are actively involved in strategies to implement key elements of the local urban center vision
- Mechanisms or programs in place to promote infill and redevelopment
- Efforts to create a multi-modal environment that increases connectivity both within the center and the region as a whole
- Efforts to create a vibrant area through programs (e.g., recurring/special events, etc.)

7. Process to Revise Existing Urban Centers

DRCOG has designated urban centers in *Metro Vision* for over a decade. Previously designated urban centers may require occasional revisions to adjust boundaries, update future population and employment estimates and/or reflect new local priorities. Local jurisdictions may also elect to remove an urban center from *Metro Vision* if the area is no longer considered a local priority for growth and development.

DRCOG staff will handle most revisions to existing urban centers administratively. However, policy-level review may be needed in situations where the underlying intent and assumptions of local urban center planning have changed significantly. The following is an outline of the procedure for revising existing urban centers.

1. During Cycle 1 of the *Metro Vision* Plan Assessment process, jurisdictions schedule a consultation meeting with DRCOG staff to review proposed changes.

2. DRCOG staff determines if a policy-level review is warranted.
3. If a policy-level review is not warranted administrative modifications to urban centers will occur during Cycle 1.
4. If DRCOG staff determines that a policy-level review is warranted the proposed urban center revisions will follow the evaluation process for new urban centers described in Section 3.
5. The urban centers evaluation panel will review both new urban centers and substantially revised urban centers during Cycle 2.

8. On-going Evaluation and Assessment

Successful achievement of the *Metro Vision* goal to accommodate 50% of new housing and 75% of new employment growth in urban centers between 2005 and 2035 will in turn support progress on several other *Metro Vision* goals. DRCOG will monitor the collective performance of urban centers (share of housing unit and employment growth occurring within centers) and periodically share this information with the DRCOG Board and committees, local government planners and other interested regional planning partners.

To create a continuous dialogue on local implementation successes and challenges in realizing local visions and priorities for urban centers DRCOG will administer a periodic survey of urban center communities. The survey will collect key information that can assist DRCOG in understanding resources and technical assistance that may be needed. Below are examples of the types of information to be gathered as part of the survey.

- Commitment from sponsor that the area remains a local priority
- Recent planning and implementation accomplishments
- Challenges that have been overcome and other challenges that remain
- Near-term planning and/or implementation priorities
- Local efforts to monitor and evaluate performance
- Local recommendations for efforts DRCOG could pursue to assist with implementation
- Confirmation of planned future housing unit and job projections (horizon year and horizon year+5)

In addition to periodic surveys DRCOG will assess the existing and potential regional impact of urban centers based on accepted research findings or third party measurement tools (e.g. the “four D’s” of density, diversity, design and destination; Walk Score; accessibility measures, etc.).

Rural Town Centers

1. Overview

The rural town centers element of *Metro Vision* recognizes the small established towns and villages located in rural places beyond the region's urban area. These centers will provide services, employment and entertainment for residents, tourists and visitors. These areas will be relatively compact with infrastructure to accommodate population growth. Communities designated as rural town centers qualify for an automatic 10 percent annual increase in their growth allocation (see UGB/A flexibility provisions in extent of urban development element of this document).

2. Designation Process and Criteria

DRCOG staff identified rural town centers, based on input from local governments, in 2004 during the development of *Metro Vision 2030*. DRCOG may recognize additional rural town centers in conjunction with updates to *Metro Vision* or through the annual *Metro Vision* plan amendment process. Local jurisdictions are responsible for proposing an area to be designated as a rural town center during the amendment process.

DRCOG uses the following general criteria recognize rural town centers.

1. Less than two square miles of urban area

Only areas with a contiguous UGB/A less than two square miles qualify as a rural town center. If an existing rural town center grows larger than two square miles of UGB/A, it will no longer be a rural town center. It will instead simply be an outlying community (an isolated community not classified as a rural town center because it is more than two square miles in area).

2. Served by central water and sewer

Metro Vision policies suggest that rural town centers have the necessary infrastructure to accommodate additional growth in a relatively compact manner. Accordingly, only places served by central water and sewer can be rural town centers.

3. Separate from the larger urban area

Only communities clearly located beyond the larger urban area qualify as rural town centers. Some communities that may appear to be rural town centers – such as Morrison and Franktown – have not been designated as such in part because of their relatively close proximity to the larger urban area.

4. Incorporation

Some consideration is given to whether a community is incorporated, but incorporation is not an absolute requirement. Incorporated municipalities are more capable of providing central water and sewer service, and other services necessary to support additional population growth at relatively compact densities. Most of the rural town centers are incorporated, but a few (e.g., Strasburg and Byers) are not.

5. Future planned development

Some consideration is given to the future development plans of local governments, especially for potential rural town centers that are not incorporated. In some cases, a community may appear to meet other criteria for a rural town center, but the county within which it is located does not desire the community to grow any further.