

Hennepin County

2024 Federal Legislative Priorities and Platform



January 2024

hennepin.us



Here together. For the better.

In Hennepin County, we have:

A superior transportation system

Hennepin County builds roads, bridges and transit lines, and is served by freight and passenger rail, shipping, an international airport and more.

Health and care innovation

From Hennepin Healthcare, a level one trauma center, to dozens of medical based companies spread across the county, we drive healthcare innovation. Hennepin Healthcare System's partnerships with the researchers at the University of Minnesota and other healthcare incubators across the county are a source of medical innovation that benefits the entire world.

Access to capital

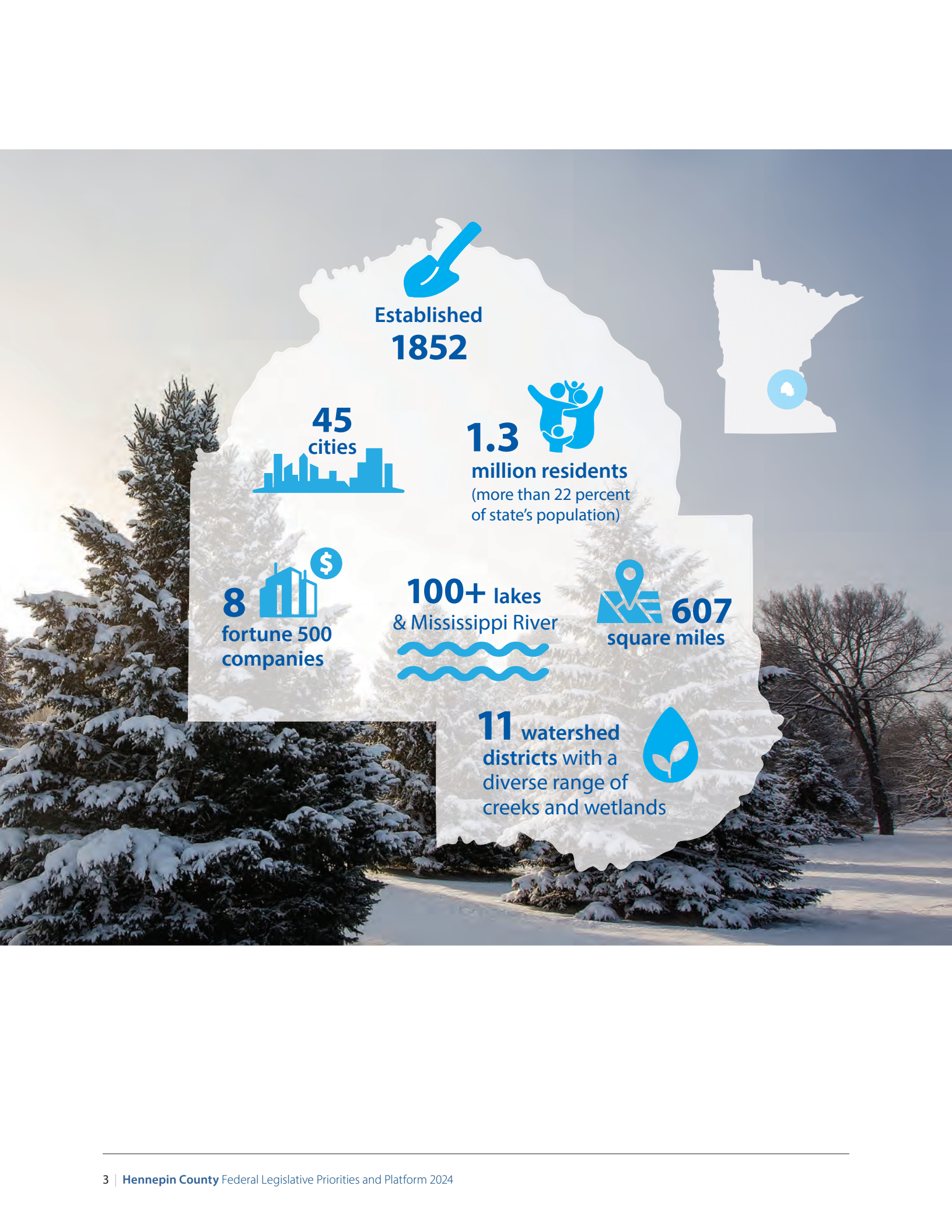
Businesses under \$1 million in revenue in the Twin Cities region access up to \$800 million in loans every year.

Financial stability

Hennepin County has an estimated GDP of \$129 billion and has maintained a AAA credit rating since 1977.

As a global hub of commerce and a national center for health care delivery and innovation, our relationship with the Federal Government has local, regional, and national significance.

A thriving Hennepin County is important to the country.



Established
1852



45
cities

1.3 
million residents
(more than 22 percent
of state's population)

8 
fortune 500
companies

100+ lakes
& Mississippi River

 **607**
square miles

11 watershed
districts with a
diverse range of
creeks and wetlands



Policy priorities

Health and human services

Encourage innovation and recognize racism as a public health crisis in addressing complex health and human services problems; and recognize public health crises through prevention. Maximize partnerships among federal, state, county, and private funders to support sustainable models of health and wellness.

Safety-net health services

Address racism as a public health crisis by ensuring access to meaningful and affordable healthcare and promoting the financial vitality of safety-net systems, like Hennepin Healthcare System, in the context of federal reforms to publicly funded healthcare programs.

Housing

Leverage limited resources more efficiently and seek additional investments to advance stable, safe, and dignified housing for individuals and families and reduce disparities.

Platform direct funding priorities

Blue Line extension (Bottineau LRT)

\$20 million under FTA Capital Investment Grants Program

Accessibility and safety improvements needed along county roads for Arterial Bus Rapid Transit corridors

\$25 million under the FHWA Surface Transportation Program

Emergency Shelter Program

\$750,000 under HUD's Community Development Fund Program

Hennepin Emergency Medical Services

\$2.7 million under HRSA's Health Center Program

Climate Action Plan

\$2 million under DOE Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Program

Climate and environment

Protect the environment and conserve resources



Support legislation and administrative policies that protect the environment, conserve resources, build equity and resiliency, and promote adaption to the impacts of climate change. Promote and support state laws and programs that will help achieve the county's Climate Action Plan, Zero Waste, and Net Zero greenhouse gas emissions goals.

Climate and environment

- Support federal investment and partnership to protect natural resources and enhance community forests to mitigate the effects of climate change, reduce air pollution, sequester carbon, and respond to the loss of trees due to emerald ash borer and other invasive pests and pathogens.
- Continued federal support for the funding and redevelopment of brownfields.
- Support federal investment in technologies that address climate change and increase renewable energy production, including geothermal, hydrogen, wind, solar, and renewable natural gas.
- Support federal investment and adoption of policies that reduce transportation carbon emissions and support pathways toward miles travelled reductions.
- Support federal investment and adoption of policies that accelerate a zero waste future including, pass national extended producer responsibility policies, establish labeling and design standards, reduce single use plastics and toxics in materials, reduce climate impacts from landfilling, funding infrastructure that aid in solutions for waste and food waste prevention and management.

Elections

Support federal funding for county elections operations



Support federal funding for county elections operations, including election security, equipment, software, staffing, voter education and outreach, communications, and election materials translation.

Elections

- Support a federally mandated and standardized early voting period.
- Support the expansion of jurisdictions required to provide elections materials in multiple languages and modalities in order to improve understanding of elections, increase accessibility for voters who speak a language other than English, and improve voter participation.

Health and human services

Improve outcomes for all residents



Encourage innovation and recognize racism as a public health crisis in addressing complex health and human services problems. Maximize partnerships among federal, state, county, and private funders to support sustainable models of health and wellness.

Health and human services

- Make permanent COVID-19 pandemic-related waiver authority for health and human services programs, including reimbursement for all telehealth modalities and continuous eligibility to promote coverage and increase access to healthcare.
- Maximize state flexibility under Medicaid to encourage innovation in the delivery of care that improves overall population health and rewards efficiency in both adult and juvenile systems.
- Advance funding models that recognize the unique needs and service models within Children’s Mental Health that require a robust array of Behavioral Health strategies and support for families.
- Support interventions to address critical public health needs such as unsheltered homelessness, emergency preparedness, HIV/infectious diseases, mental health, suicide prevention, opioids and other substance use disorders, food insecurity, and maternal and child health.
- Support and promote comprehensive reproductive care and sex education. Oppose efforts to restrict access to reproductive healthcare.
- Eliminate federal barriers to data sharing so that local governments can better support care coordination and efficient service delivery.
- Support elimination of the Medicaid exclusion for all pre-adjudicated persons under supervision by the criminal legal system. Support state flexibility in the Medicaid program to cover such individuals regardless of the status of their charges or sentence.
- Support resource allocation and policies that fully integrate medical and behavioral health services and provide patient-centered, culturally responsive care.
- Adequately fund continued direct federal investment for protection of older adults to maximize partnerships among federal, state, and county agencies to build an effective and sustainable Adult Protective Services program.
- Support expanding allowable services covered by the Family First Preservation Services Act to include culturally responsive services.
- Reduce administrative burdens and increase access to SNAP.

Housing and community development

Support safe and stable housing



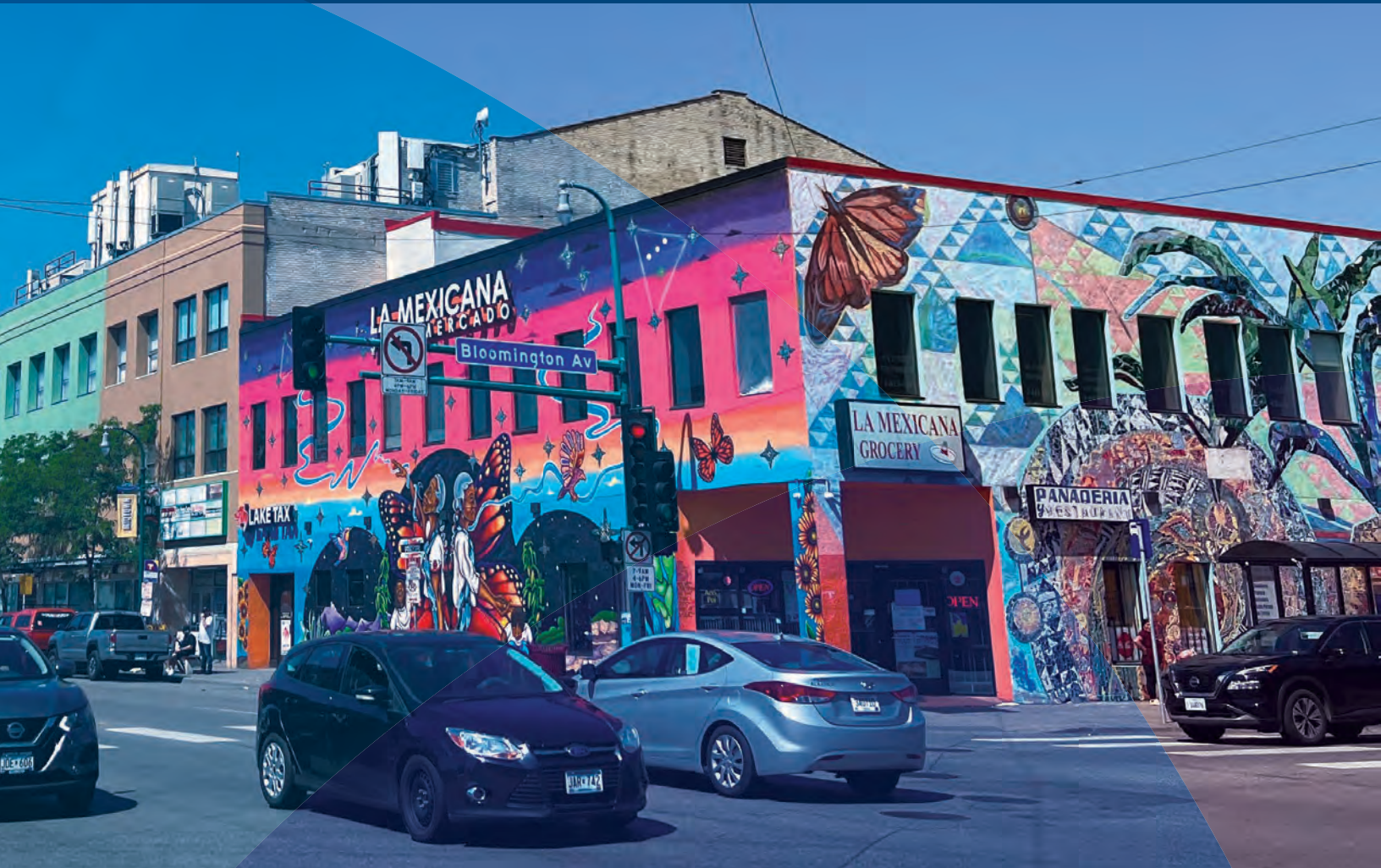
Support the full continuum of affordable housing options,
including for homebuyers and renters.

Housing and community development

- Increase federal funding for programs that assist households with very low incomes, veterans, the elderly, and people with disabilities to afford accessible, dignified, decent, safe, and sanitary housing. In particular, significantly expand the Section 8 program and housing finance programs.
- Support efforts to make homelessness rare, brief, and nonrecurring, including expanded funding for a housing-focused homeless response system.

Justice and equality

Ensuring equal protection



Ensure all residents receive equal protection under the law.
Equip government to protect, defend, and enable everyone's
ability to live freely and achieve their human potential.

Justice and equality

- Support comprehensive immigration reform that creates pathways to citizenship, authorizes employment for new arrivals, addresses workforce development opportunities, provides access to healthcare and education, and supports fair and equitable interface with local public safety agencies. Oppose efforts to reduce or restrict access to the social safety net for immigrants and eliminate barriers to refugee resettlement.
- Support and adequately fund essential safeguards for the voting rights of all citizens, including no-excuse in-person and mail-in early voting, and automatic voter registration. Oppose efforts to restrict access to voting.
- Support equal protection in law and federal regulations for all LGBTQI persons in housing, employment, healthcare/human services, education, and public accommodations.
- Support federal efforts and funding for digital equity to ensure all residents have access to affordable and reliable high-speed broadband choices, computing devices, training, and internet-safety skills.

Law, safety and justice

Protect public safety



Support criminal justice, mental health, and sentencing reforms that reduce racial disparities, advance proven diversion strategies and facilitate re-entry back into the community.

Law, safety and justice

- Reduce regulatory burdens (e.g., Institution of Mental Disease (IMD) exclusion, data sharing limitations) that compromise services for people experiencing mental illness before they become involved in the criminal legal system.
- Support continued federal investment in local re-entry programs and other initiatives critical to reducing adult and juvenile involvement in the criminal legal system.
- Encourage and reward state and local collaborations that reduce barriers to employment, housing, and behavioral health services, and support successful reintegration of individuals into the community.
- Provide federal support for evidence-based practices before, during and after initial contact with the juvenile and adult criminal legal systems.

Safety-net health services

Ensure access to health-care services for all



Address racism as a public health crisis by ensuring access to meaningful and affordable healthcare and promoting the financial vitality of safety-net systems, like Hennepin Healthcare System, in the context of federal reforms to publicly funded healthcare programs.

Safety-net health services

- Protect critical funding streams and payments to safety-net providers, including the 340B Drug Pricing Program, Graduate Medical Education, Medicaid direct payments, and supplemental payments for Medicare and Medicaid.
- Promote the long-term financial vitality of safety-net systems by aligning federal reimbursement with the cost of care, by supporting payment methodologies in both Medicaid and Medicare that recognize the challenges of caring for a disproportionate share of medically and socially complex patients.
- Promote the health of our patients by protecting and expanding meaningful health insurance coverage, access to life-saving prescriptions, and investments in mental health, maternal health, including healthcare for birthing people, and child and adolescent health.

Taxes

Assure flexibility to serve our residents



Support federal tax policies to leverage local investment in infrastructure, housing, and services.

Taxes

- Support continued tax-free status of municipal bonds and private activity bonds. Restore local government authority to advance refund tax-exempt bonds (authority was eliminated in the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017).
- Preserve and strengthen the Low-Income Housing, Federal Historic, and New Markets tax credit programs.

Transportation

Strengthen the long-term value of neighborhoods and communities



Sustain and strengthen the federal-state-county partnership that supports the nation's roads, bridges, transit, and rail systems. Ensure Minnesota's transportation infrastructure supports a 21st-century economy and vibrant, active communities.

Transportation

- Increase infrastructure investment through new sources of revenue and support continued federal partnerships in projects such as the Capital Investment Grant (CIG) program.
- Support key investments:
 - Green Line extension (Southwest LRT)
 - Blue Line extension (Bottineau LRT)
 - Highway 55 Bus Rapid Transit
- Support infrastructure funding at levels authorized in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and the Inflation Reduction Act.
- Support anti-displacement efforts to ensure current residents, small businesses, and cultural institutions are able to benefit from infrastructure and investment.

Workforce development

Meet the future workforce needs



Meet the future workforce needs of Hennepin County and other employers and address persistent disparities by connecting well-trained and qualified individuals to high-demand jobs in our region.

Workforce development

- Provide flexibility in Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act programs to better support career pathways and career technical education for dislocated or under-skilled workers, youth, and higher-barrier populations (e.g., recognition of employer- and industry-recognized credentialing for use of federal funds).
- Support regional sector-based partnerships providing career pathways to promote economic inclusion, address employment and income disparities, and meet industry hiring needs.
- Support efforts to raise and protect wages for residents at the lowest income levels and industries most affected by the pandemic, including raising the minimum wage to provide a livable wage and reflect regional costs of living.

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