



(Downtown Minneapolis provides a number of ways to travel: by foot, by bicycle, by car, by bus, or by light rail.)

HENNEPIN COUNTY SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

I. Context

Hennepin County is distinguished by its diversity of land and people. From its high density and rich historic districts in downtown Minneapolis, through multiple suburban communities with abundant housing and commercial and recreational services, to the rural areas of the west and northwest where farms, lakes, and open spaces prevail, Hennepin County affords its residents many choices in housing, transportation, and lifestyles. That diversity of choices makes Hennepin a great place to live and work as evidenced by the fact that almost a quarter of Minnesota's residents have chosen Hennepin as home.

The county envisions a future with healthy, successful residents in safe, vibrant communities. To make this vision a reality, the county is transforming its approach to community development from focusing on individual "projects" to a multidisciplinary strategy to build and strengthen sustainable communities. This sustainable development strategy has emerged in recent years and is particularly appropriate at this point in time given demographic, economic, infrastructure and other trends. While the county sustainable development strategy will put new emphasis on integrated development of housing, jobs, and multi-modal transportation to afford new choices for the county's growing, changing population, it does not diminish the importance and value of traditional housing, employment, and transportation patterns and markets that remain popular and viable.



Hennepin County
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Hennepin County's Housing, Community Works and Transit Department (HCWT), as a principal implementation agency of county programs, brings together financial resources, staff, and partners to achieve sustainable development results. Sustainability, in this context, involves weaving together community and economic development, environmental, health, affordable housing, multi-modal transportation, and workforce development disciplines and resources to improve quality of life in the county while preserving resources for future generations.

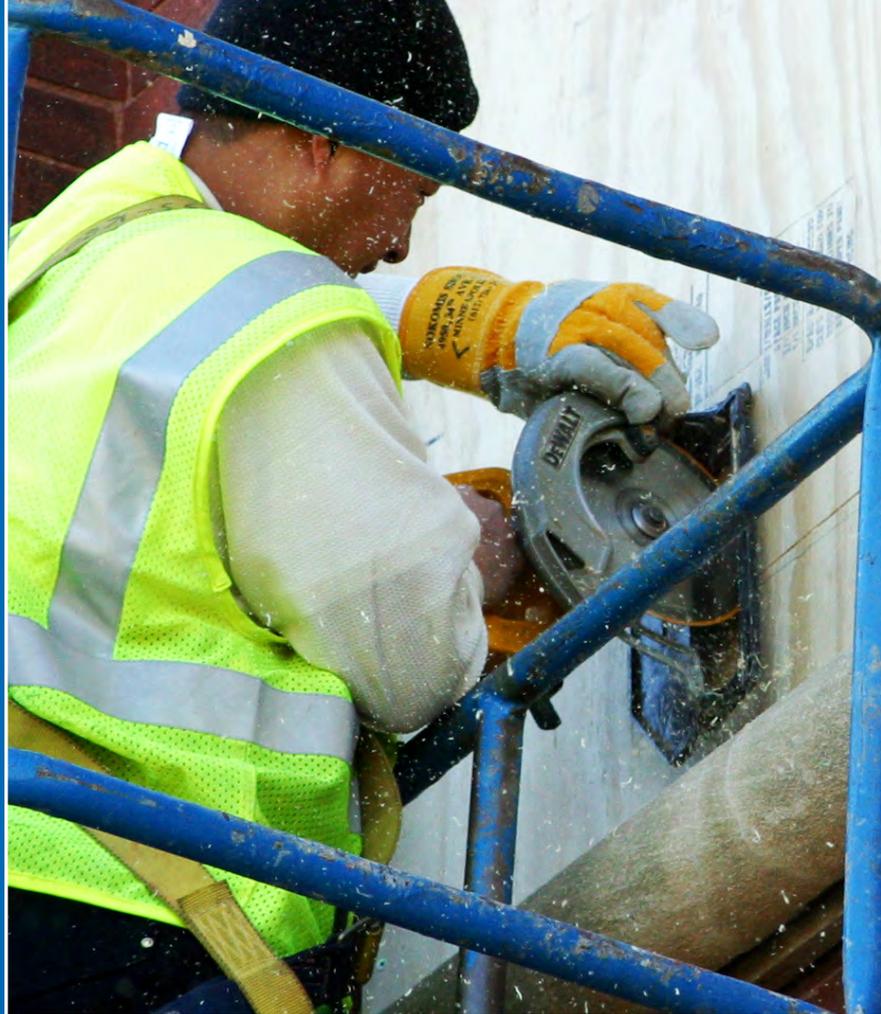
HCWT advances its strategy by administering and directing multiple funding streams; building strong partnerships with private, public, and non-profit organizations; and leveraging and maximizing private investments. This document describes HCWT's sustainable development approach and provides a lens to view sustainable development programs, guide implementation, and create opportunities in a rapidly changing environment.

II. Overarching Strategy

HCWT's Sustainable Development Strategy aims to align resources to integrate multi-modal transportation, economic development, housing, and community choices. To support this strategy, the department seeks collaborations and investments that are responsive to the diverse communities of Hennepin County and yield multiple, intertwined benefits. While the county's rural, suburban, and urban areas may have different priorities, their success depends on each other's vitality.

HCWT uses this strategy to target limited resources and guide policymakers, partners, and staff to collaboratively develop sustainable communities. The federal government's Sustainable Communities initiative mirrors and reinforces this development approach.

Implementation of the Sustainable Development Strategy centers on four interrelated approaches:



EDUCATION AND TRAINING FOR ECONOMIC AND JOB GROWTH

Hennepin County recognizes the importance of education in developing the highly trained workforce that is key to regional competitiveness. The county also recognizes the supportive role it must play in partnering with school districts, municipalities and other institutions to help students and their families in achieving educational success. Through A-GRAD (Accelerating Graduation by Reducing Achievement Disparities), the county is actively engaged through its criminal justice, corrections and social services departments to ensure youth graduate from high school. For jobseekers, county programs provide training, credentials and services to support work readiness and job placement.

Suburban Hennepin County and Carver County, designated as a Workforce Service Area, administer programs under the federal Workforce Investment Act. Hennepin County's Human Services and Public Health Department provides welfare-to-work training. The Dislocated Worker program serves employees who recently lost employment through no fault of their own (lay-off, closure, etc.). Through assessment and skills upgrading and working closely with business partners, the program seeks to return these workers to the workforce as quickly as possible at or near previous wage levels.



(Sentencing to Service Homes builds employment skills for offenders through carpentry training.)

REDUCING VEHICLE-MILES TRAVELED (VMT)

As part of transportation systems planning, the county uses multiple approaches to reduce the number of vehicle miles traveled:

- Transit Actions – Encourage transit oriented development (TOD), support and invest in expansion of transit services and infrastructure along county-owned right-of-ways, such as Community Works areas and the Southwest and Bottineau corridors.
- Pedestrian / Bicycle Actions – Improve pedestrian and bike connections to major centers and transit station facilities.
- Roadway Actions – Implement Travel Demand Management (TDM) strategies, such as telecommuting, expanded park-and-ride lots, and increased use of Intelligent Transportation Systems, such as traffic signal coordination and advanced traveler information systems.

1. Improving Transportation Options

HCWT supports multi-modal (pedestrian, bike, transit, vehicle, and freight) transportation corridors to create sustainable, healthy communities for people who live in, work in, or visit the county. Multi-modal corridors offer a variety of transportation options for people of all means and abilities to get where they want to go in a safe and timely manner.

The county seeks to leverage housing, employment, and other activity center development along corridors well served by transit and also easily accessible to pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists. Targeted development can increase corridor attractiveness for business and housing and enhance equity by improving access to destinations via non-auto means. Walkable, bikeable communities with good transit access encourage physical activity, promote better health, and help lower a household's overall housing and transportation costs. Associated reductions in automobile use support environmental sustainability and a reduced carbon footprint.

Desired Outcome: Focused growth along multi-modal corridors improves health; reduces carbon footprint and vehicle-miles traveled; and creates synergies from colocating housing, employment, services, and activity centers.

2. Enhancing Economic Development and Competitiveness

To support existing and emerging employment centers, HCWT emphasizes business development and expansion and job creation through access to capital and workforce development. Easy access to employees, customers, and suppliers strengthens economic competitiveness and development. For example, county support of multi-modal corridors connects housing and employment centers, educational opportunities, and other needs – making it easier for people, particularly those without vehicles, to access these opportunities. Moreover, this strategy encourages commercial and economic vitality by leveraging private investments along regional corridors.

Desired Outcome: A vibrant, diverse business community that provides well-paying jobs accessible to a workforce with a range of skills.

3. Promoting Equitable, Affordable Housing

HCWT supports housing development along multi-modal corridors to maximize efficient, reliable access to destinations. The department promotes decent, safe, mixed-income housing choices so residents can live where they want and access jobs, educational opportunities, and other destinations.



NEW MEASURES OF AFFORDABILITY: HOUSING + TRANSPORTATION

Many homebuyers and renters do not factor transportation costs into housing decisions. However, the greater a household's cost for transportation, the fewer dollars available for childcare, education, healthcare, and healthy food.

Unlike house payments, Americans pay transportation costs in disaggregated ways: weekly gas purchases, monthly car payments, semi-annual insurance premiums, and periodic maintenance. Consequently, a person may only realize their transportation costs after moving to a new home. The Center for Neighborhood Technology's Housing and Transportation (H+T) Affordability Index

for 337 metro regions demonstrates that development patterns can influence household travel costs.

The Index measures the two largest household costs – housing and transportation – by Census block group. The index (www.htaindex.org) measures the true affordability of housing based on location. The traditional definition of affordable housing (housing costs at 30 percent or less of a household's income) identifies 69 percent of the nation's Census block groups as affordable. With a 45 percent affordability benchmark for housing and transportation costs, only 39 percent of block groups remain affordable.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING INCENTIVE FUND (AHIF)

Operating under the Hennepin County Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HCHRA), the AHIF program provides capital funding to assist in the preservation and development of long-term affordable housing. AHIF primarily targets housing opportunities for households with incomes at or below 50 percent of area median income (AMI), with priority given to units affordable to households at or below 30 percent AMI. The program

emphasizes projects which connect stable housing to transit, employment centers, schools, and supportive services. On average, the AHIF program assists 10-15 mixed-income housing and/or mixed-use projects per year, creating or preserving 200-400 affordable housing units annually. AHIF funding typically leverages approximately \$17 in other private and public funding sources for each \$1 in local assistance.

Housing choice has many dimensions. Quality housing should be available to those with a wide range of incomes and needs. Lifecycle housing references a range of housing options that should be available within each community to meet people's needs and preferences at all of life's stages – multifamily, townhouses, detached homes, condos, senior housing, and accessible housing – so that a person can remain in a community as health, lifestyle, family, and housing needs change.

Under the sustainable development approach, the impact a household's transportation choices on household budgets is also considered. Reducing a household's reliance on the automobile, for example, provides greater budget flexibility for other needs. Tools, such as the Center for Neighborhood Technology's Housing and Transportation Index, allow people to compare average housing and

transportation costs to make more informed home location choices.

Desired Outcome: A range of safe, mixed-income housing units that meet residents' needs and have access to employment sites, transit corridors, and other key destinations.

4. Valuing and Supporting Existing Communities

Through its sustainable development approach, HCWT recognizes the important role that transportation system connectivity plays in improving communities. Transportation means more than roads, mobility, and safety – it supports and strengthens communities. Multi-modal



(The new Minnesota Twins ballpark was built with light rail and commuter rail in mind.)

TRANSIT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT (TOD)

The Hennepin County Board of Commissioners established the TOD program in 2003 to provide needed capital to housing and economic development projects along transit corridors throughout the county. The TOD program funds mixed-use commercial and housing developments that exhibit intensive land use and increase ridership, infrastructure efficiency, and public safety. The TOD program also funds infrastructure and public realm improvements for future development

and existing transit-rich neighborhoods. Municipalities, development authorities, non-profit and for-profit developers are eligible to apply for funding through a competitive RFP process conducted annually. From 2003 through 2010, Hennepin County has awarded over \$15 million in TOD funds to both urban and suburban TOD projects and leveraged over \$250 million of private and \$100 million of other public funds.

COOL COUNTIES

Hennepin County is a founding member of a coalition of counties across the United States taking action to eliminate the causes of global climate change. This initiative will rely on reduced and cleaner energy consumption through energy efficiency and renewable energy generation. The effort will include green building

design, more efficient vehicle fleet management and transportation practices and other targeted greenhouse gas emission reduction programs. Hennepin County is committing to reducing greenhouse gas emissions 80 percent by the year 2050.

access connects communities and neighborhoods, enabling people to get to destinations on foot or by bicycle, transit, or vehicle.

HCWT works in partnership with local governments and stakeholders to enhance quality of life, economic vitality, and private investment in communities. Through program tools, such as transit oriented development assistance (TOD), affordable housing incentives (AHIF), workforce development, and other forms of assistance, the department supports communities in their development and redevelopment efforts. Working with communities on land use and station area planning ensures that transit corridors preserve open space and have well designed commercial, residential, civic, and other destinations nearby. Good design contributes to a community's sense of place and makes it safe and easy for all to access those destinations.

Desired Outcome: Communities with better health, stronger local economies, and improved multi-modal access to

destinations.

III. Strategy Application

Hennepin County began implementing its sustainable development strategy by consolidating previously independent programs, staff, and funding streams. Consolidation did not occur simultaneously, but evolved as county officials recognized interrelationships among program functions and opportunities to leverage greater results through coordinated planning and implementation.

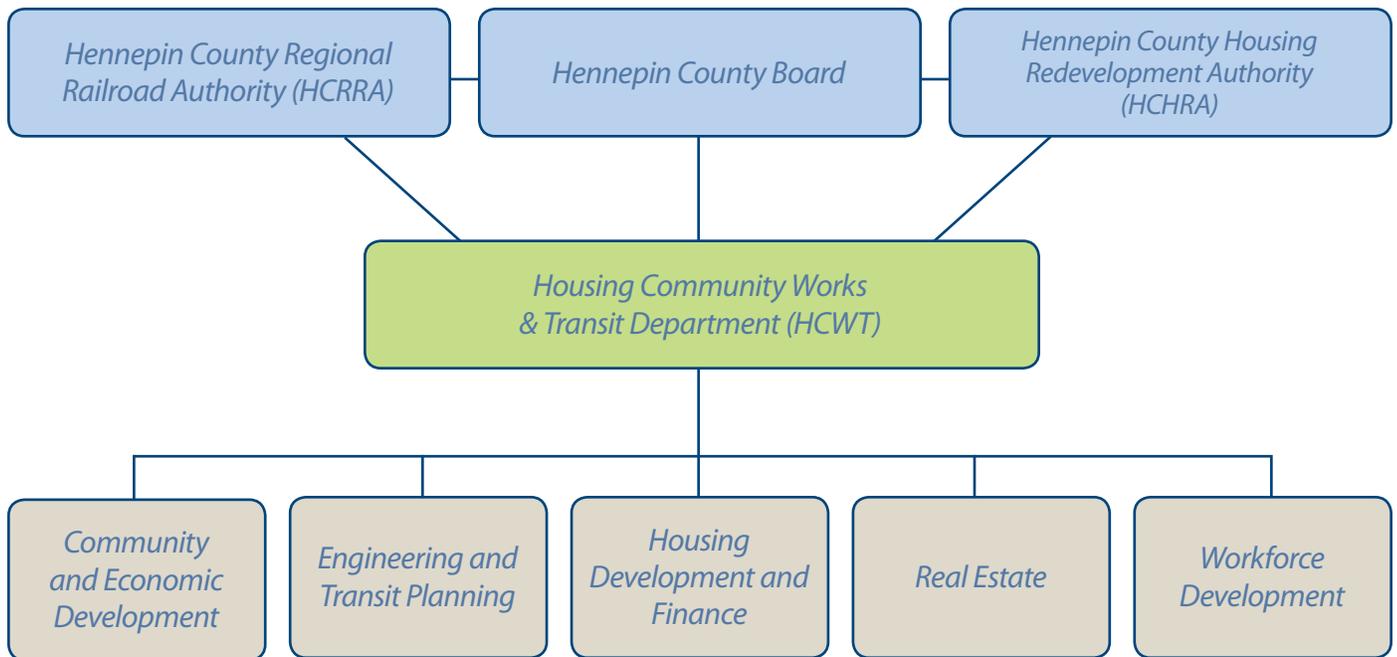
1. Creating an Integrated Team

In the 1990s, as the Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority (HCRRA) acquired abandoned rail corridors and prepared early plans for transit infrastructure, the combination of engineering and transit planning and



(Increased bike lanes allow residents to travel to school or work easily while promoting a healthy lifestyle.)

Figure 1: Housing, Community Works, & Transit Functions



ACTIVE LIVING

Active Living is lifestyle that integrates physical activity into daily routines through activities such as biking, walking or taking transit, while building healthier and safer communities. This is important because regular physical activity can help people live longer, healthier lives and reduces the risk of chronic diseases such as heart disease, stroke, hypertension, diabetes, colon cancer and osteoporosis.

Since 2006, Hennepin County has been a national leader in developing an Active Living program.

Success continues to grow through Active Living Hennepin County, a partnership with cities, businesses, and state and local agencies. This partnership works together to increase opportunities for Active Living in communities through policy change, infrastructure planning, targeted workshops, and supportive tools such as model policies, guidelines, and a start up toolkit. Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota and the Minnesota Department of Health fund Hennepin County's activities.

COMPLETE STREETS

One result of the Active Living program was the adoption of a county Complete Streets policy in July 2009. Complete Streets are designed and operated to assure safety and accessibility for all users of roadways, including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders and motorists. Complete Streets are now a priority on all corridors and in every transportation and development project. To implement Complete Streets, the county is integrating user needs with the project area's character and community values as it conducts project planning and design.

In addition to the policy, Hennepin County has initiated a Complete Streets Task Force. The task force's role is to review and recommend to the Board the most effective use of available funding streams for Complete Streets; develop consistent implementation principles, practices and guidelines; and identify demonstration projects for Hennepin County's Complete Streets policy that will provide examples of the diversity of Complete Streets.

real estate functions created the nucleus of what became the Housing, Community Works and Transit (HCWT) Department.

Transfer of the Community Works program and establishment of the Transit Oriented Development (TOD) program in the early 2000s added development functions. Shortly thereafter, housing, community development, and business assistance programs broadened the department's responsibilities. In 2005, the addition of Active Living Hennepin County brought in a partnership of cities, businesses, state and local agencies, and Hennepin County departments to promote complete streets, active living, and healthy community design.

In 2008, HCWT added Sentencing to Service Homes, a program for corrections inmates to learn carpentry and construction skills on rehabilitation and new construction projects in community settings. A few years later, in recognition of the importance of workforce development, job access, and affordable housing as elements of the sustainable development strategy, workforce development and investment programs transferred to HCWT. Figures 1 and 2 show HCWT's current organization and resource portfolio.

HCWT aligns many of the county's sustainable development resources in a single department to integrate implementation of a sustainable communities strategy. The department also provides all administrative and policy support services to the Hennepin County Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HCHRA) and the HCRRA, both governed by

the same seven county commissioners who comprise the Hennepin County Board.

2. Collaborating with Partners

The county uses the unique and distinct authorities of Hennepin County, the HCHRA, and the HCRRA to implement its sustainable development strategy. HCRRA, through HCWT, works with the Metropolitan Council to implement their shared vision of improving transit service in Hennepin County. In addition, Hennepin County works with its four partner counties on the County's Transit Improvement Board, created in 2008 by the State Legislature, to prioritize and fund regional transitway projects.

HCWT also partners with the Hennepin County Transportation Department to maximize economic development and green spaces along county roadways and to ensure that the county's transit and highway investments are coordinated and support one another. County roads, for example, provide critical connections to transit stations and make stations accessible to persons driving, biking or walking.

HCWT, as the lead entitlement agency, works on behalf of suburban Hennepin County for U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) programs, including Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), HOME Investment Partnership, and Emergency Shelter Grants. Locally, HCWT and the HCHRA routinely partner with the

HENNEPIN COMMUNITY WORKS

Through the Community Works program, Hennepin County seeks to enhance how Hennepin County communities work together to create good jobs, provide access to employment, and build the long-term value of communities. The program aims to improve implementation systems and target investment in infrastructure, public works, parks, and the natural environment.

Community Works projects tend to be large, public infrastructure projects, such as the Midtown Greenway, Humboldt Greenway, Lowry Corridor, Minnehaha-Hiawatha Community Works, and Southwest LRT Community Works. Through 2011, the county has provided \$97 million of county bond and property tax funds for planning, land acquisition, infrastructure, and construction related to these projects. Community Works projects target investments that can become catalysts for broader community improvements and private investment, leading to job creation, tax base growth and higher quality of life.

FIVE PRINCIPLES GUIDE THE COMMUNITY WORKS PROGRAM:

- Stimulate employment development
- Build bridges for effective planning and implementation
- Maintain and improve natural systems
- Strengthen communities through connections
- Enhance the tax base

Minnesota Housing Finance Agency, Metropolitan Council, Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, and municipal development agencies to undertake a wide range of housing and community development efforts.

3. Implementing the Strategy

HCWT's sustainable development strategy continues to evolve, reflecting best practices from county work and elsewhere. These successful projects are among the many that informed application of sustainable development practices throughout the county:

- Midtown Greenway: this six-mile linear corridor across south Minneapolis, opened in phases from 2000 – 2006, exemplifies how a multi-use trail through a low- and middle-income community can create jobs, stabilize property values, foster redevelopment, and encourage non-motorized transportation choices while preserving the opportunity for future transit. The success of this corridor has been enhanced by the Midtown Community Works Partnership, which has provided leadership through its public and business partners and resources for implementation.
- Humboldt Greenway: this 25-acre redevelopment project in north Minneapolis, which began in 2001 and is still under development, has replaced substandard housing with over 190 single-family homes, townhomes, and senior apartments and enhanced natural connections to stabilize and diversify

a declining community.

- Lowry Avenue Corridor: this five-mile linear corridor across north Minneapolis, constructed from 2006 – 2010, links redevelopment of a county road as a multi-modal corridor with economic development to stabilize and improve housing and businesses in a low-income area.
- Village Creek redevelopment: this project in Brooklyn Park's Village Creek area involved initial planning in 2005 that catalyzed redevelopment of underutilized properties with a mixed-use community and the daylighting of Shingle Creek. Subsequent CDBG investment supported the opening of a neighborhood police office. Federal foreclosure funding improved and strengthened existing housing stock.

The Minnehaha-Hiawatha Community Works project marks an effort to “catch up” on integrating transitway development with broader development goals. The Hiawatha light rail transit line, the region's first LRT transitway, was designed and constructed in the early 2000s with little integrated consideration of land use or development. In 2007, after noting the impacts and limited benefits to some communities along the line, Hennepin County created the Minnehaha-Hiawatha Community Works project to generate development, housing, and other benefits linked to the Hiawatha LRT line and reconstruction of Minnehaha Avenue (county road 48) in south Minneapolis.



(The Lowry Corridor project helped increase access to the surrounding community.)



(The Counties Transit Improvement Board is dedicated to increasing local transit options.)

COUNTIES TRANSIT IMPROVEMENT BOARD

CTIB demonstrates the county's growing role in transit planning. In 2008, the state Legislature granted authority to the seven metropolitan area counties to impose a one-quarter percent sales tax and \$20 fee per vehicle sale to fund construction and operation of transitways. Hennepin, Anoka, Dakota, Ramsey, and Washington Counties opted to exercise this new authority and form the Counties Transit Improvement Board.

Since its establishment in 2008, CTIB has made \$315 million in transit investments that have significantly accelerated transit development in the region. These investments have made possible construction of the Fridley commuter rail station, Apple Valley bus rapid transit (BRT) station, Central Corridor LRT, and Cedar Avenue BRT transitway, and have prepared the SW LRT project to begin preliminary engineering.

IV. Adaptable Approach

As HCWT implements existing projects and plans and designs new ones, the sustainable development approach continues to evolve. Multi-jurisdictional and multi-partner collaboration is an important ingredient for success. The Midtown Community Works and Bottineau Boulevard Partnerships are excellent examples of such collaboration and the results it can achieve. The county's sustainable development strategy will continue to evolve as the Central, Southwest, and Bottineau transit corridors progress, presenting new opportunities for integration with nearby economic development, housing, open space, park, and road projects.

Southwest LRT Community Works: This project exemplifies the county's sustainable development strategy. The proposed 15-mile, 17-station Southwest LRT line, projected to open in 2017, will run from downtown Minneapolis to the region's southwestern suburbs. The project has advanced through a decade of feasibility studies, an alternatives analysis, and a draft environmental impact statement. A locally preferred alternative for the LRT line was selected in spring 2010. The project is expected to receive federal approval to enter

preliminary engineering in spring 2011.

In anticipation of the Southwest LRT project's entry into preliminary engineering, the Hennepin County Board established the Southwest LRT Community Works project to integrate corridor-wide land use, development, housing, and access planning with the LRT line's engineering and design. Southwest LRT Community Works, in collaboration with the Metropolitan Council and its Southwest LRT Project Office, will integrate LRT engineering and land use planning from the outset of the preliminary engineering process. This coordinated work, which also engages the cities and many other stakeholders along the corridor, seeks to maximize economic and community benefits of public transit investments and stimulate private investment within the corridor. [See box for additional information]

National Recognition: National funders have affirmed Hennepin County's development approach. In 2010, Living Cities, an innovative philanthropic collaboration of 22 of the world's largest foundations and financial institutions, selected the Twin Cities, including Hennepin County, as one of five Integration Initiative sites nationally to improve

SOUTHWEST COMMUNITY WORKS – ORGANIZATIONAL MODEL

To achieve the objective of integrating LRT engineering with land use and development planning, the county and the Metropolitan Council have jointly developed an innovative organizational model with the following features:

- Multiple organizational linkages between the SW LRT Project and the SW LRT Community Works project, including shared business and community advisory committees, to advise and inform both the SW LRT and the SW LRT Community Works governing bodies.
- A project office housing both the SW LRT project engineering and Community Works staff, including two full time professional staff, an engineer and a planner, charged with actively promoting and managing the dialogue between engineering

and land use, both within the project office and throughout the community.

- Community meeting rooms and public space for residents to learn about the LRT project and review plans for associated development. Residents will also be able to submit ideas for consideration, view models of LRT and station area plans, and learn of scheduled public meetings and other community engagement opportunities.

Drawing on Community Works' successful program emphasis on employment development, community connections, natural systems, tax base enhancement, and public and private investment coordination, the county is updating old and adding new programmatic elements. These changes reflect the connections between housing, transportation, employment, environment, health, and energy and their emerging integration in national public policy, finance, and philanthropy.

the lives of low-income people and the urban areas in which they live. The Integration Initiative seeks to demonstrate how the public, private, philanthropic, and nonprofit sectors can improve the lives of low-income people in urban communities by tackling problems long considered intractable. The award recognizes the county's integrated approach to treat community problems comprehensively. Living Cities support will advance development of a regional, cross-sector framework for equitable TOD to ensure that low-income residents, businesses, and neighborhoods along the existing Hiawatha line and planned Central and Southwest lines benefit from transit-oriented investments.

Also in 2010, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development awarded the Metropolitan Council a \$5 million Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant. The grant expands existing regional planning efforts and promotes multi-modal transportation choices that provide access to affordable housing and jobs, encourage transit oriented development, support environmental preservation, and foster the participation of historically underrepresented communities in the planning process. Using "beyond the rail" planning of Central Corridor LRT as a model, the grant will help create corridor-wide plans and strategies to optimize development along five major corridors: Bottineau, Cedar Avenue Bus Rapid Transit, Gateway (I-94 East), Northstar Commuter Rail, and Southwest LRT.

Place matters: While not highly prescriptive, county plans recognize the importance of transportation choices, enhanced economic competitiveness, and equitable, affordable housing in fostering sustainable communities.

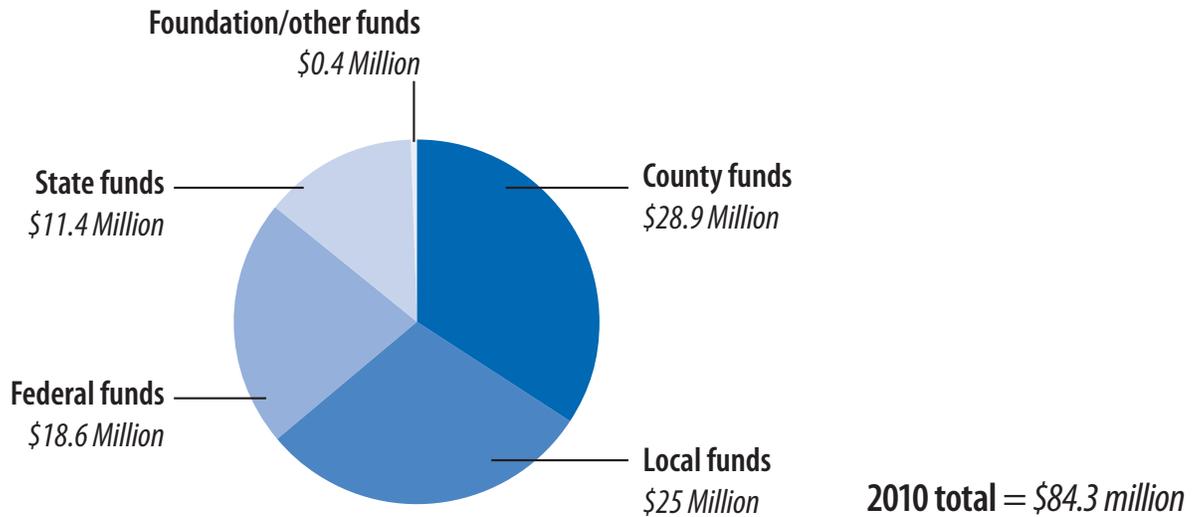
The county strives to create opportunities for people to live where housing, jobs, medical services, entertainment, and recreational opportunities can be reached by multiple transportation modes.

Planning for sustainable communities begins with a fresh assessment of future demographic trends and market conditions:

- A significantly older population – more people over age 65 and over age 85 with increasing health service needs and costs, a workforce shortage, and fewer school-age children;
- Increased ethnic diversity, particularly in younger populations;
- A major shift from households with children to childless households, particularly households headed by persons over age 55;
- Changes in market preferences as generational cohorts age, household structures change, and ethnic and economic diversity increases; and,
- Energy, water supply, and other environmental considerations.

Through its emphasis on integrating transportation, employment, housing, and communities, HCWT's sustainable development approach will help the county prepare for these anticipated demographic and environmental shifts. Hennepin County, HCWT, and partners continue to work toward a sustainable future for healthy, successful residents in safe, vibrant communities.

Figure 2: Housing, Community Works, & Transit Resource Portfolio



County funding sources:

- Affordable Housing Incentive Fund
- Community Works Program
- Environmental Response Fund
- Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority
- Hennepin County Housing and Redevelopment Authority
- Transit-Oriented Development Grants

Federal funding sources:

- Community Development Block Grant
- Dislocated Worker Adult and Youth Employment Training
- Federal Transit Administration
- HOME Investment Partnership
- Lead Abatement
- Neighborhood Stabilization Program
- Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant

State funding sources:

- Dislocated Worker Adult and Youth Employment Training
- Local Road Research Board
- Minnesota Historical and Cultural Grant (Legacy funds)
- Minnesota State Health Improvement Program
- Neighborhood Stabilization Program
- State bonds

Local funding sources:

- Common Bond
- Counties Transit Investment Board

Foundation/other funding sources:

- Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota
- Living Cities Integration Initiative

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Housing, Community Works and Transit Department

Phil Eckhart, Director

For more information about Housing, Community Works, & Transit, call 612-348-9260 or email hcwtml@co.hennepin.mn.us.

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