This framework builds on the American Planning Association’s Comprehensive Plan Standards for Sustaining Places. The Comprehensive Plan Standards define a set of six principles (statements of intent that underlie the plan’s overall strategy), two processes (planning activities that take place during the preparation of a comprehensive plan), and two attributes (planmaking design standards that shape the content and characteristics of the plan). For each principle, process, and attribute, the Comprehensive Plan Standards define related practices (planning action tools) for addressing sustainability through the comprehensive plan.

The interregional and megaregional practices below build on the Comprehensive Plan Standards by highlighting specific opportunities for localities to integrate an awareness of interregional or megaregional issues, systems, and resources into their comprehensive plans, and to plan for local policies and actions that will support interregional or megaregional goals.

**Livable Built Environment**
Definition: Ensure that all elements of the built environment, including land use, transportation, housing, energy, and infrastructure, work together to provide sustainable, green places for living, working, and recreation, with a high quality of life.

**Interregional/Megaregional practices:**
- **Plan for high-speed passenger rail.** High-speed passenger rail provides a convenient, and potentially more environmentally friendly, alternative to air travel for trips of 600 miles or less. Most high-speed rail proposals are megaregional in scale, connecting multiple metropolitan areas along a single corridor or through a hub-and-spoke system. Station areas and local transportation networks that facilitate intermodal connections and mitigate potential traffic conflicts can help improve high-speed rail system performance and maximize both local and megaregional benefits.

- **Plan for interregional transportation access for long-distance commuters.** Interregional transportation access for long-distance commuters involves first- and last-mile solutions that provide convenient access to limited-access roadways and bus and train services that connect multiple metropolitan areas. A small, but growing, percentage of adults live in one metropolitan area but work (one or more days a week) in another metropolitan area. The overwhelming majority of these individuals make their trip to work by private automobile. Land-use patterns and local transportation networks that facilitate connections to interregional transportation systems can help improve quality of life for long-distance commuters, either by making driving safer and more efficient or by encouraging mass transportation alternatives to private automobile trips.
• **Plan for interregional trail-oriented development.** Interregional trails are dedicated pedestrian and bicycle systems that connect multiple metropolitan areas. Trail-oriented development is characterized by mixed use development around trail access points and along trails, such that the location and design of the development encourage trail use and the patronage of local businesses. Long-distance trails bring visitors to host communities and provide recreational opportunities for residents. Many interregional trails use decommissioned rail corridors, and parcels adjacent to these corridors may require new land-use designations or public investments to spur redevelopment.

• **Plan for the mitigation of interregional natural hazards.** Interregional natural hazards are geological, hydrological, meteorological, climatological, or biological phenomena that have the potential to cause the loss of life or property across multiple metropolitan areas. These extensive hazards can lead to widespread disruptions of transportation and utility infrastructure and the temporary or permanent displacement of residents from one metropolitan area to another. Mitigating interregional hazards involves interregional coordination to assess risks and for pre-event planning to facilitate post-disaster recovery.

**Harmony with Nature**
Definition: Ensure that the contributions of natural resources to human well-being are explicitly recognized and valued and that maintaining the health of these resources is a primary objective.

**Interregional/Megaregional practices:**

• **Protect and manage interregional water resources.** Interregional water resources are water bodies, watersheds, floodplains, and aquifers that cross metropolitan area boundaries or provide source water from one metropolitan area to another. Water use, pollution, or runoff in one community can have detrimental effects on water supply or quality in communities located in other metropolitan areas. Similarly, protecting and responsibly managing local water resources can have beneficial effects on water supply and quality across multiple metropolitan areas.

• **Plan for the provision or protection of interregional green infrastructure.** Interregional green infrastructure features are open spaces, greenways, and protected lands that cross metropolitan area boundaries. These features may be linked to create an interregional green infrastructure network that provides wildlife habitat, ecosystem services, and recreational opportunities across multiple metropolitan areas. The multiple local and interregional benefits of contiguous green infrastructure networks increase as the size and integrity of the network increases.

• **Participate in interregional transportation demand management programs to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.** Transportation networks connect across local and regional areas. Increasingly, people live in one metropolitan area and commute to another for work, primarily by car. Interregional transportation demand management refers to strategies that reduce or redistribute demand for single-occupant vehicle trips between metropolitan areas to increase the efficiency of the overall transportation network, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and improve air quality.

• **Prepare for the interregional effects of climate change.** As the earth’s climate changes, local and regional conditions will change. Residents and economic activity will be displaced from coastal areas affected by sea-level rise or recurrent flooding and inland areas subjected to prolonged drought. In many cases, this will lead to demographic changes and economic restructuring in metropolitan areas proximate to those experiencing displacement.

**Resilient Economy**
Definition: Ensure that the community is prepared to deal with both positive and negative changes in its economic health and to initiate sustainable urban development and redevelopment strategies that foster green business and growth and build reliance on local assets.

**Interregional/Megaregional practices:**

• **Support interregional economies.** People may live and work in different metropolitan areas, and households and firms may purchase goods and services from multiple metropolitan areas. These economic interrelationships can lead to zero-sum competition among communities in multiple metropolitan areas, or they can promote net economic gains in these areas. Local support for an interregional economy involves identifying a distinct economic niche and then nurturing the businesses that can thrive in that niche through land-use policies and strategic capital and programmatic investments.
• **Plan for interregional freight transportation and supply chain management.** Freight rail and highway infrastructure often connects multiple metropolitan areas, and freight traffic often originates in a different metropolitan area than its final destination. Supply chain management addresses the movement of goods through the freight network. In some cases the costs of interregional freight traffic are disproportionately born by host communities that receive few benefits from that traffic. Land-use patterns and local transportation networks that minimize conflicts with freight traffic can help improve the efficiency of freight systems, while also saving residents time and money.

• **Plan for interregional utility systems.** Energy and telecommunications infrastructure often connects multiple metropolitan areas, and service delivery areas may cross metropolitan area boundaries. In some cases unplanned, leapfrog development can lead to uneven utility service quality or availability. Compact land-use patterns that minimize conflicts with utility infrastructure and provide for the orderly extension of services can help improve local services and save customers money.

### Interwoven Equity

**Definition:** Ensure fairness and equity in providing for the housing, services, health, safety, and livelihood needs of all citizens and groups.

**Interregional/Megaregional practices:**

- **Promote interregional environmental justice.** Interregional environmental justice is characterized by land-use decision-making processes that afford the same level of protection from environmental and health hazards to all people, regardless of race, color, national origin, income, or place of residence. Some facilities—such as landfills, incinerators, waste-transfer stations, coal-fired power plants, and intermodal freight hubs—serve customers in multiple metropolitan areas but have negative environmental effects that are often borne disproportionately by lower-income communities of color. Promoting interregional environmental justice at the local level involves advocacy on behalf of host communities and land-use policies and public investments that minimize exposure to environmental risk.

- **Provide affordable housing.** Affordable housing is not equitably distributed within or between neighboring, economically interdependent metropolitan areas. This inequitable distribution of affordable housing is one factor contributing to the rise in long-distance commuting. Communities that provide affordable housing have a supply of low- and moderate-income housing that is proportional to the aggregate demand for that housing across economically interdependent metropolitan areas, which can reduce the need for long-distance commuting.

- **Promote interregional jobs-housing balance with equitable transportation connections between job centers and housing to reduce the need for long-distance commuting.** The jobs-housing balance is defined by the ratio of jobs to housing within a commuter shed. As interregional commuting increases, commute sheds for a metropolitan area expand and affordable housing options may not be located in close proximity to employment centers. Affordable, safe, and convenient transportation options are not equitably distributed within or between neighboring, economically interdependent metropolitan areas. Working to address the jobs-housing balance and planning for equitable transportation connections that connect where people live with where they work can improve access to employment opportunities, reduce the transportation cost burden, and reduce the need for long-distance commuting.

- **Address interregional access to public services, facilities, and health care.** Accessible, high-quality public services, facilities, and health care are not equitably distributed within or between neighboring, economically interdependent metropolitan areas. A lack of convenient and affordable housing and transportation choices in communities with high-quality public services, facilities, and health care can lead to lower-income households traveling long distances to access adequate facilities and services. Addressing access to public services, facilities, and health care beyond community boundaries can improve connections between residents and services.

### Healthy Community

**Definition:** Ensure that public health needs are recognized and addressed through provisions for healthy foods, physical activity, access to recreation, health care, environmental justice, and safe neighborhoods.
Interregional/Megaregional practices:

- **Coordinate with neighboring jurisdictions to meet or exceed federal and state air quality standards.** Air pollution produced in one metropolitan area may have negative health effects in neighboring metropolitan areas. Similarly, emissions from freight transportation between metropolitan areas can create acute air quality problems in specific communities. Local efforts to exceed federal and state air quality standards can help reduce incidences of nonattainment in neighboring metropolitan areas. Land-use policies and strategic capital and programmatic investments that dramatically reduce vehicle miles traveled can help communities exceed federal and state air quality standards.

- **Promote interregional food security and access.** Agricultural lands may be located outside of metropolitan areas or cross metropolitan area boundaries. These lands often produce food processed, sold, and consumed in multiple metropolitan areas. At the local level, promoting interregional food security and access involves identifying distinct food production, distribution, or retailing niches and then nurturing the businesses that can thrive in those niches through land-use policies and strategic capital and programmatic investments.

- **Address interregional access to parks and recreation facilities.** Parks and recreation facilities are not equitably provided or maintained within or between neighboring, economically interdependent metropolitan areas. A lack of convenient and affordable housing and transportation choices in communities with high-quality parks and recreation facilities can lead to lower-income households traveling long distances to access parks. Residents of one community may also live in closer proximity to parks and recreation facilities in a neighboring metropolitan area. Addressing connections and access to parks and recreation facilities is important for the health and well-being of all.

**Responsible Interregionalism/Megaregionalism**

Definition: Ensure that all local proposals account for, connect with, and support the plans of adjacent jurisdictions and the surrounding region and that they incorporate interregional and megaregional considerations.

Interregional/Megaregional practices:

- **Include interregional data projections in local planning scenarios.** Interregional data projections are demographic and economic data sets that forecast future conditions at a scale that incorporates multiple economically interrelated metropolitan areas. These projections would help communities understand how interregional or megaregional trends are likely to influence future local demand for housing, transportation systems, and public facilities and services. In many cases, localities will need to aggregate existing regional data before generating interregional or megaregional projections.

- **Promote interregional cooperation and sharing of resources.** Currently, there are few formal governance mechanisms for interregional systems or resources. This places the burden on localities and regional entities to self-organize. Exploring opportunities for interregional cooperation or resource sharing may lead to improved efficiency and cost-effectiveness in local service delivery.

**Authentic Participation**

Definition: Ensure that the planning process actively involves all segments of the community in analyzing issues, generating visions, developing plans, and monitoring outcomes.

Interregional/Megaregional practices:

- **Participate in interregional planning efforts.** While there are few formal governance mechanisms for interregional systems or resources, there are interregional planning efforts—often focused on a specific issue that extends beyond jurisdictional boundaries, such as transportation or conservation—under way. Active local representation in these efforts can ensure that local considerations and priorities are included in interregional plans and initiatives, and ensure local inclusion in interregional coordination or resource sharing efforts.

**Accountable Implementation**

Definition: Ensure that responsibilities for carrying out the plan are clearly stated, along with metrics for evaluating progress in achieving desired outcomes.
Interregional/Megaregional practices:

• Establish cooperation with interregional planning efforts and initiatives. In addition to establishing interagency and organization cooperation, establish coordination with interregional planning efforts and initiatives. These actions can result in resource sharing and provide other benefits that facilitate plan implementation.

• Include reports on interregional efforts and initiatives in progress reports. When reporting on plan implementation, include reports on the status of interregional or megaregional efforts or initiatives that the jurisdiction is engaged in. This provides local elected officials and the public with information on local engagement in these efforts, their progress, and resulting local impacts, and raises awareness of how local actions can affect multiple metropolitan areas.

Consistent Content
Definition: Ensure that the plan contains a consistent set of visions, goals, policies, objectives, and actions that are based on evidence about community conditions, major issues, and impacts.

Interregional/Megaregional practices:

• Incorporate interregional considerations into assessments of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Evaluate how the locality’s relationship to existing or proposed interregional or megaregional infrastructure and systems, including environmental, economic, and social systems, affects its long-term prospects for health and prosperity.

• Include interregional data and information in the plan’s fact base. Include the megaregional context in the analysis of current conditions and projection of future conditions in the plan’s fact base.

Coordinated Characteristics
Definition: Ensure that the plan includes creative and innovative strategies and recommendations and coordinates them internally with each other, vertically with federal and state requirements, and horizontally with plans of adjacent jurisdictions.

Interregional/Megaregional practices:

• Coordinate with interregional planning efforts. A coordinated plan integrates with interregional planning efforts and initiatives, in addition to coordinating with neighboring jurisdictions and other levels of government.