

CLIMATE MIGRATION IN GREATER CINCINNATI:

Becoming a Resilient and Welcoming Region



A Report on the 2025 Climate Migration Project



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Introduction

On the Horizon: Climate Migration

Globally, the World Bank projects that up to 143 million people could be displaced within their own countries by climate change by mid-century. In the United States, more than 13 million people may be forced to move due to sea-level rise alone. This shift will likely trigger a wave of migration as people move inland from vulnerable coastal and western regions of the United States. At the same time, the mainland United States will continue to receive migrants from places like Puerto Rico and Central America, where climate-related disasters like earthquakes and hurricanes are already causing displacement.

Around the world, communities are beginning to confront how climate change will reshape their populations and landscapes. The communities that are proactively planning for these demographic shifts will lead the way in climate adaptation and preparation.

While the precise impacts on individual regions remain uncertain, Greater Cincinnati's relative advantages – abundant freshwater, comparatively lower climate disaster risk, and established resilience – position it as a potential climate destination. These strengths mean the region could attract people seeking safety, stability, and quality of life.

The Possibilities for Greater Cincinnati

Greater Cincinnati has the opportunity to become a national leader in addressing climate-related migration, leveraging its history as a welcoming city and its strong foundation in climate resilience and sustainability. With increasing evidence that climate change is influencing migration patterns, the region has a unique opportunity to proactively plan for population inflows while ensuring equitable investments in both existing communities and newcomers. Proactive planning, investment, and collaboration will be critical to ensuring that the entire region is prepared to meet the challenges and opportunities of climate migration in an equitable and sustainable manner.

In 2025, with financial support from Unbound Philanthropy and the City of Cincinnati, a team of partners from Greater Cincinnati and national subject matter experts sought to better understand the implications of migration to the region fueled by climate impacts, and to convene regional decision makers around planning for changing population levels and demographics. This collaboration became the 2025 Climate Migration Project, conducting research, developing conclusions, and determining the next phases in climate migration preparedness. This report details the research, engagement, analysis, and recommendations from the Climate Migration Project with the objective to drive strategies that position Greater Cincinnati for positive growth within a changing climate.





2025 Climate Migration Project Partners



The **City of Cincinnati's Office of Environment & Sustainability** leads the Green Cincinnati Plan, which has helped establish Cincinnati as a national leader in sustainability and a destination for businesses and individuals.



Cincinnati Chamber's Center for Research & Data delivers data-driven analysis regarding vital regional indicators and outcomes. The Center helps regional leaders, community partners, and policymakers make informed decisions around priorities like talent attraction, inclusive economic growth, and community-wide goals.



Green Umbrella is Greater Cincinnati's Regional Climate Collaborative, leading cross-sector collaboration to accelerate climate action. Green Umbrella is a member organization with hundreds of members including nonprofits, businesses, educational institutions, and local governments.



HDR Inc. is a 100% employee-owned, global professional services firm specializing in architecture, engineering, environmental and construction services.



ICLEI-USA leads the nation's largest network of local governments committed to sustainability and climate action. As an affiliate office of the global ICLEI network, ICLEI-USA connects to more than 2,500 local and regional governments in 125+ countries.



LINCOLN INSTITUTE
OF LAND POLICY

Lincoln Institute of Land Policy seeks to improve quality of life through the effective use, taxation, and stewardship of land. A nonprofit, private-operating foundation, the Lincoln Institute researches and recommends creative, nonpartisan approaches to land as a solution to economic, social, and environmental challenges.



The 2025 Climate Migration Project

The 2025 Climate Migration Project had the following goals:

- Help regional stakeholders better understand population and demographic trends
- Inform communities of the opportunities and challenges associated with a growing population, such as infrastructure needs, due at least in part to climate migration
- Help the team of partners better understand the current capacity of communities to address welcoming and resilient systems
- Activate communities on next steps to build welcoming and resilient systems and infrastructure

The project happened in two stages: **Research & Education** and **Activation**.

Stage I: Research & Education

Green Umbrella and HDR Inc. conducted a focus group engagement series with support from the City of Cincinnati and Refugee Connect. These focus groups were grounded in current data and trends from research conducted by HDR Inc.

During Stage I, the team brought on the Cincinnati Regional Chamber's Center for Research and Data as a partner to enhance and contribute to the project through demographic analysis.

On August 6, 2025 Green Umbrella, HDR, the City of Cincinnati, and the Center for Research & Data hosted a public climate migration webinar that addressed feedback gathered during the focus groups, provided an update on data from the Cincinnati Regional Chamber, and discussed challenges.

Stage II: Activation

The Resilient & Welcoming Region workshop convened more than 70 government officials, local refugee and immigrant support nonprofits, direct service organizations, and business leaders to consider climate migration impacts and cross-sector preparation.

Green Umbrella, the City of Cincinnati's Office of Environment & Sustainability, HDR, and the Cincinnati Chamber's Center for Research & Data partnered to host the Resilient & Welcoming Region Workshop. Additional support was provided by David Lubell of ICLEI-USA; Patrick Welch of Lincoln Institute of Land Policy; Beth Gibbons, Chief Resilience Officer for Washtenaw County, MI; and Terry Schwarz, Cleveland Urban Design Collaborative.

Stage I: Research & Education

Focus Group Convening

The project partners interviewed six multi-sector focus groups from across the 16-county metropolitan region. Meetings took place between June 23, 2025 and July 31, 2025. Sectors included:

- Local and Regional Governments
- Nonprofit and Philanthropic
- Housing and Homelessness
- Anchor Institutions
- Transportation and Utilities
- Economic and Urban Development

The team also hosted a roundtable to hear from local immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers in collaboration with Refugee Connect, as well as another roundtable with the Environmental Advisory Board of and a group of directors from the City of Cincinnati.

Focus Group Feedback

Across the eight focus groups, the team convened 60 individuals representing 52 separate organizations across Greater Cincinnati. Green Umbrella and HDR Inc. first asked each focus group about the types of external forces for planning consideration. This helped inform the basis of the exploratory scenario planning exercise on August 20, 2025. The primary forces highlighted by participants included:

- State and Federal Policy/Funding Cuts
- Housing Market
- Social Pressures/Politics
- Climate Change (particularly excess precipitation)
- Environmental Threats
- Grid Capacity / Energy Consumption
- Water Availability / Consumption
- Economic Pressures
- Demographic Changes



Focus Group Feedback cont'd

The discussion continued with the focus group leaders asking: “Are there benefits to preparing for population growth, even if it does not occur?” Participants’ answers included:

- Infrastructure investment, preparedness, and improved public health outcomes
- Proactive community building prior to crises
- Sustainable development and attention to affordable housing
- Increase in tax base from new residents
- Larger labor force
- More demographic and economic diversification
- Increase in regional stability

The focus group leaders asked about the challenges of preparing for population growth, given that this scenario is not a certainty. The participants discussed:

- General uncertainties (who, when, where, how many, etc.) makes planning challenging
- The general public does not understand climate threats and there is a need for more engagement and education
- Resource constraints, especially housing availability and affordability
- Infrastructure gaps, in particular stormwater, public transportation, school capacity, and energy grid
- Social equity, including needs for immigrant and newcomer communities and the lack of a formal refugee settlement program
- Regional planning, governance, and coordination barriers

Lastly, the focus group leaders asked participants about their vision for the metro Cincinnati region to conclude the conversation with hope and possibility. Participants shared their aspirations related to housing and community development, economy, transportation and infrastructure, regional planning and coordination, social equity, and leadership.

For a full Focus Group Summary, see Resource A in the appendix.

Research & Data: Findings from the Climate Migration Outlook Report

Because of the trends identified from HDR Inc.’s research and the focus groups’ responses, the team brought on the Cincinnati Regional Chamber’s Center for Research & Data as a partner, which initiated research for the Cincinnati Region Climate Migration Outlook Report (see Resource C in the appendix for the report). The Climate Migration Outlook Report examines and analyzes Cincinnati’s position in the national and global migration shift. It explores potential population scenarios and outlines steps the region can take to adapt for a more resilient, inclusive, and prepared future for the Greater Cincinnati region.

The report shows that Cincinnati has not attracted migrants at the same rate as other regions, illustrated by the region’s comparatively low foreign-born population. This has contributed to the lack of working-age populations and demographic challenges mentioned at the beginning of this report. The Cincinnati region’s advantageous geographic location provides an opportunity to change this trend.

Cincinnati’s geographic position puts it on the map for those seeking refuge from severe climate impacts. People looking to relocate typically seek out places with existing personal networks, affordable housing, lower cost of living, walkability and public transit, and ample employment opportunities – areas in which the Midwest as a whole already performs well. To compete with similarly-sized Midwestern cities in areas less prone to extreme climate events, Cincinnati must become a more welcoming, attractive, and competitive destination.

Outcomes of the possible scenarios from the Climate Migration Outlook Report are shown in Table A below.

Scenario	Description	Population Change	Key Assumptions	Infrastructure Needs & Outcomes
Scenario 1: Stagnation	Cincinnati continues its current path with no attempt to attract new residents.	-78,307	No new efforts to attract migrants, international migration slows, outmigration continues	Minimal investment, risk of underutilized infrastructure, economic stagnation
Scenario 2: Modest Growth	Cincinnati adopts moderate housing, transportation, and livability improvements.	+219,484	Proactive housing policy, expanded transportation options, region positions itself as a climate haven	73,677 new housing units, 3,054 mile increase in transit service, optimization and update current infrastructure where necessary
Scenario 3: High Migration Influx	Cincinnati becomes a major climate migration destination.	+578,971	National migration accelerates, climate conditions worsen elsewhere	219,466 new housing units, 9,650 mile increase in transit service

Table A - Scenario Summary Table

Research & Data cont'd

Cincinnati faces headwinds, including housing affordability and availability challenges, an aging population, and slowing international immigration levels. If left unaddressed, these factors could limit the region's ability to welcome and support new and existing residents.

The lessons from other cities are instructive. Houston's post-Katrina experience highlighted the importance of linking housing with transportation access. Orlando and Buffalo demonstrated how social networks influence relocation patterns, while Duluth's climate-messaging campaign revealed the risks of overlooking equity in attracting newcomers.

The Climate Migration Outlook Report underscores that migration will likely be gradual and shaped by "pull" factors such as affordability, job opportunities, and quality of life, rather than sudden, large-scale displacement. However, climate disasters and economic disruption in other parts of the country could accelerate inflows, creating periods of rapid change. Regardless of future events, preparing for these possibilities through good planning and resilience-building also benefits the existing community.



Key themes from the report include the need to:

- Prepare proactively for multiple scenarios so that infrastructure and housing can keep pace
- Foster a welcoming culture that builds inclusive networks and emphasizes sustainability
- Maintain affordability through zoning reforms, diverse housing options, and protections against displacement
- Invest in transportation infrastructure by expanding transit and active mobility, recognizing that many newcomers may not arrive with cars

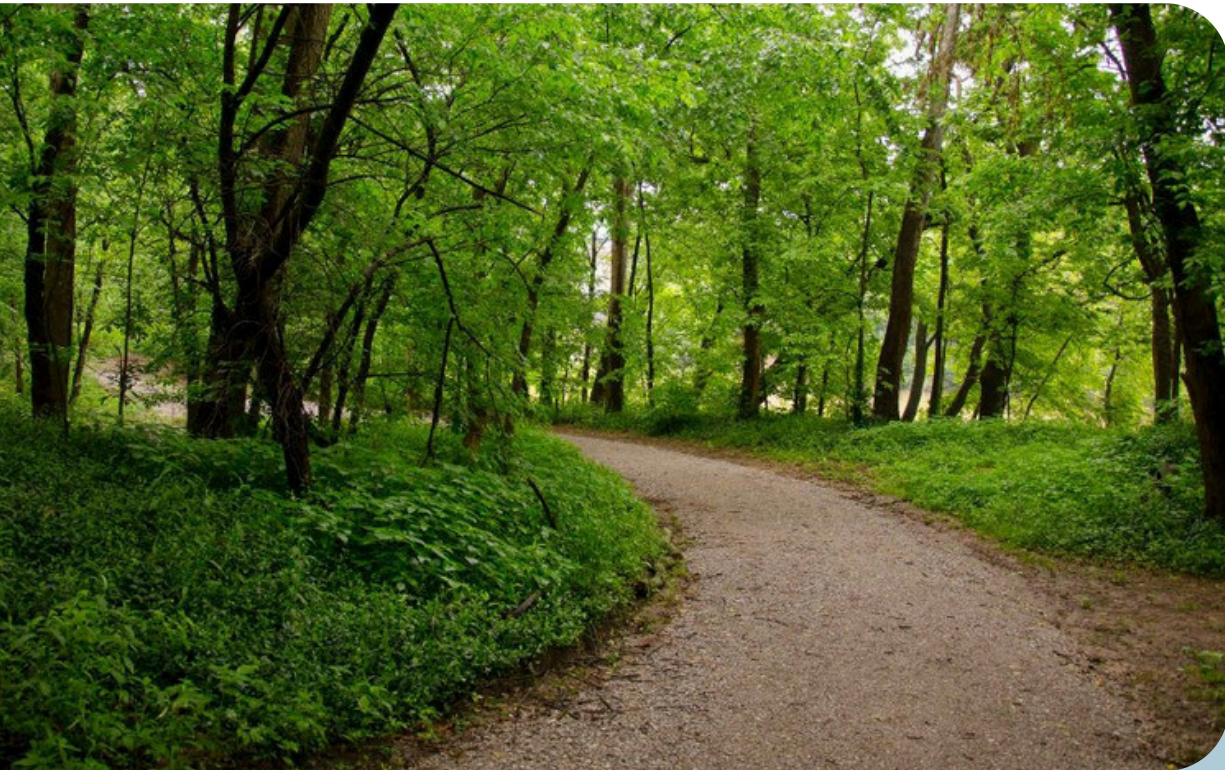
View detailed findings in Resource C in the appendix.

Public Webinar

On August 6, 2025, Green Umbrella, HDR Inc., the City of Cincinnati, and the Center for Research & Data hosted a public climate migration webinar that addressed feedback gathered during the focus groups, provided a data update from the Climate Migration Outlook Report, and discussed challenges. The webinar highlighted that proactively preparing for population growth instead of reacting under emerging pressure can help the region strengthen infrastructure, avoid past development mistakes, spread housing responsibilities more equitably, advance a shared vision for mixed-income, sustainable communities, and ensure welcoming and belonging for all.

Participants named significant challenges, including uncertainty about the scale and timing of growth, limited resources, infrastructure gaps, fragmented regional governance, and risks of displacement or inequitable impacts. The discussion pointed toward a regional vision centered on coordinated planning, transit-oriented and integrated housing, resilient infrastructure, inclusive economic development, and diverse, collaborative leadership to guide a climate-ready population.

To see the webinar slidedeck, see Resource B of the appendix.



Stage II: Activation

The Resilient & Welcoming Region Workshop

On August 20, 2025, Green Umbrella, the City of Cincinnati’s Office of Environment & Sustainability, and the Cincinnati Chamber’s Center for Research & Data partnered to host “Climate Migration in Greater Cincinnati: Taking Action to be a Resilient & Welcoming Region Workshop” at the University of Cincinnati’s Digital Futures Building. This Resilient & Welcoming Workshop invited government officials, local refugee and immigrant support nonprofits, and business leaders to consider climate migration impacts and cross-sector preparation. For the full workshop agenda, see Resource E of the appendix.

The workshop opened with an overview presentation of possible climate migration pathways for the Greater Cincinnati region, grounded in population projections from the Center for Research & Data report, and a scenario matrix that paired population change with levels of regional collaboration. Following the overview, participants worked in small groups to imagine life under specific scenarios, identify impacts across key sectors, and develop strategies and policy recommendations to mitigate challenges and improve quality of life. The small-group discussion concluded with cross-group sharing and prioritization of strategies that would strengthen regional resilience regardless of future population or collaboration outcomes.



Mayor Aftab Pureval



Workshop Plenary Panel

A plenary panel was next, featuring Cincinnati Mayor Aftab Pureval, Welcoming America’s Melissa Bertolo, and regional housing expert Kristen Baker, Executive Director of LISC - Greater Cincinnati. The title of the panel was “Climate Migration in Greater Cincinnati: Taking Action to be a Resilient and Welcoming Region,” and it explored a number of themes related to climate mobility and welcoming, such as:

- What do we mean by “climate mobility” (also called climate migration) and “climate mobility infrastructure?”
- What is hard vs. soft climate mobility infrastructure, and why do we need this infrastructure now?
 - Hard Infrastructure: physical assets such as roads, bridges, energy grids, water supply, sewage systems, telecommunications, and more.
 - Soft Infrastructure: institutional and human capital assets such as governance systems, cultural frameworks and activities, economic structures, and more.
- Similarities and differences between welcoming international migrants, and welcoming internally displaced climate migrants.
- Why we must prepare for a “spectrum” of climate migrants.
- How preparing to make Cincinnati more welcoming, equitable and resilient can help improve the lives of all Cincinnati residents, both existing and new.

Panelists not only shared deep dives on the “state of the field” from their perspectives, but engaged in a cross-panel discussion guided by the following questions:

- What are ways in which welcoming immigrants and welcoming climate migrants are similar? In what ways may they differ?
- What might the arrival of the climate displaced mean for existing residents, especially around the issue of housing? What are key considerations and strategies to address potential displacement and/or gentrification?
- What are some of the challenges in addressing these issues? What are the gaps and opportunities Greater Cincinnati currently faces on climate and welcoming?
- What are important next steps to lead this work at the city level? The regional level? What are engagement, project, and policy opportunities? How do we ensure that this work is advanced equitably? How do we get other cities in the region and beyond to follow Cincinnati’s lead on climate mobility?

Scenario Planning

The Resilient & Welcoming Workshop featured a scenario-planning exercise, beginning with a summary of the different pathways the Cincinnati region may take with regards to climate-induced population growth¹. Two population projections shaped discussion:

- Population decline or stagnation
- Moderate growth, adding 160,000 new residents by 2050

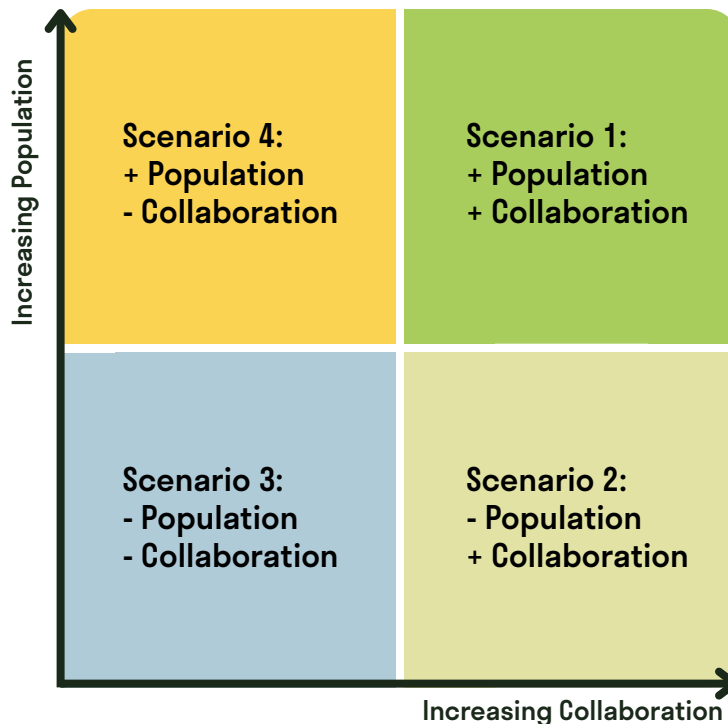
A matrix of potential scenarios was created using population levels as one axis and level of regional collaboration as the other. See Figure 1 for a breakdown of the scenario matrix.

¹These pathways are based on population projections completed by the Center for Research & Data in the Cincinnati Region Climate Migration Outlook Report in the appendix.

Workshop attendees were divided into groups and asked to imagine what life would be like in a specific scenario. This conversation created a list of impacts expected for the Cincinnati region. Attendees categorized the impacts into the following areas: Transportation & Utilities, Economic Development & Jobs, Social Services, Environment & Climate, Politics & Governance, and Housing & Land Use.

Considering these impacts, groups crafted strategies to prepare for their scenario, mitigate negative impacts, and leverage their scenario dynamics for improved quality of life. The results were a series of policy recommendations for each scenario.

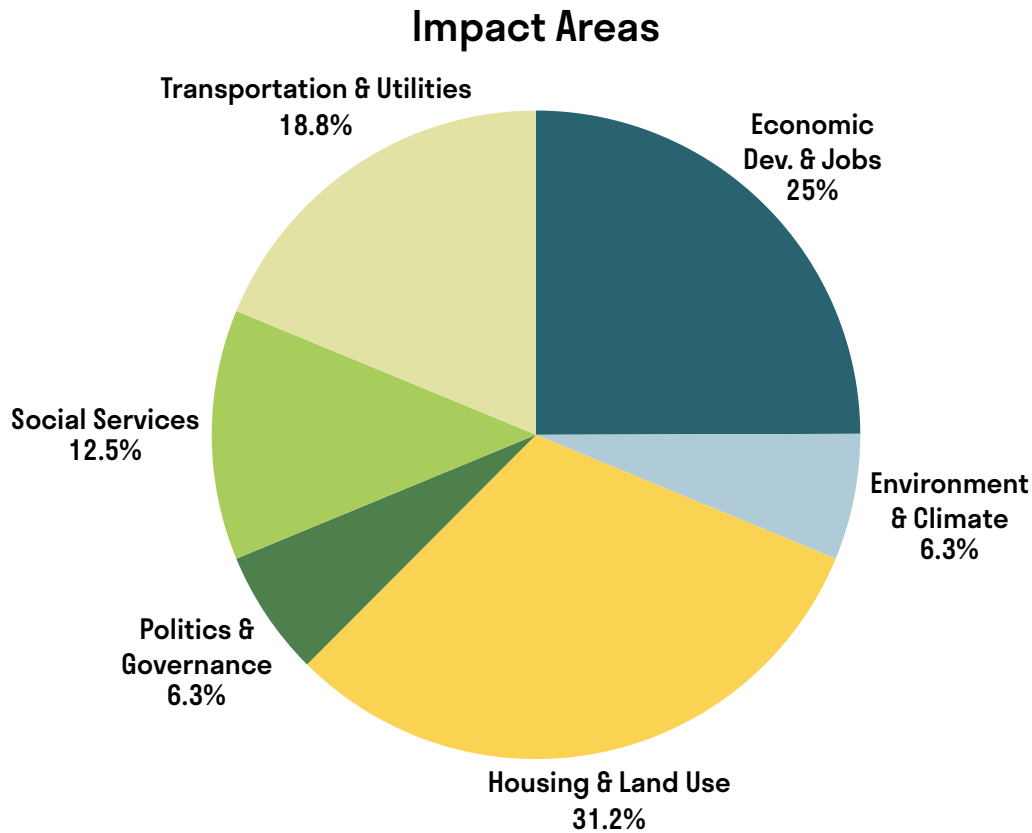
Figure 1



Having crafted scenario-specific strategies, groups shared their ideas with each other. This allowed workshop attendees to identify common strategies and highlight ideas that would work regardless of population or collaboration levels. These strategies were prioritized by the group as key next steps the Cincinnati region could take, regardless of how climate migration and regional collaboration develop.

The assessment of four future scenarios reveals that population change is the primary force shaping the region's economic vitality, environmental resilience, and service capacity. Workshop participants anticipated the creation of new opportunities in green industries, technology, and economic diversification in population growth scenarios; however, participants think these changes will place significant pressure on housing, infrastructure, and social services. Participants predicted population decline to reduce demand for housing, lower housing costs, shrink the tax bases, limit investment, and diminish social and utility service quality.

Figure 2 - Priority Impact Area Analysis



As displayed in Figure 2, about 31% of workshop participants identified housing and land use as their top concern, which are driven by affordability, supply shortages, sprawl, and the need for diverse housing options. Around 25% of participants highlighted economic development and jobs, noting the job market is changing, fewer large-scale opportunities, growing small businesses, emerging industries (AI, green jobs), and a clear need for workforce training. Transportation and utilities were mentioned by 19% of participants, with concern focused on rising costs and transportation reliability concerns, including higher utility bills, service lapses, and interest in regionalized systems. About 13% of participants pointed to social services, especially foundational gaps in healthcare access and education quality, signaling long-term human capital challenges. Environment & Climate were raised by 6% of the participants. Although this area is less frequently mentioned, it reflects concern about protecting natural resources, an undercurrent of sustainability concern and the need for stronger environmental action. Finally, 6% of participants identified politics and governance as a concern particularly declined tax revenue, which may limit ability to respond to pressures in other sectors.

Housing & Land Use, Economic Development, and Transportation & Utilities are predicted by participants to be the three most impacted areas across the scenarios. Stakeholder feedback was primarily focused on housing affordability and land use pressures, followed

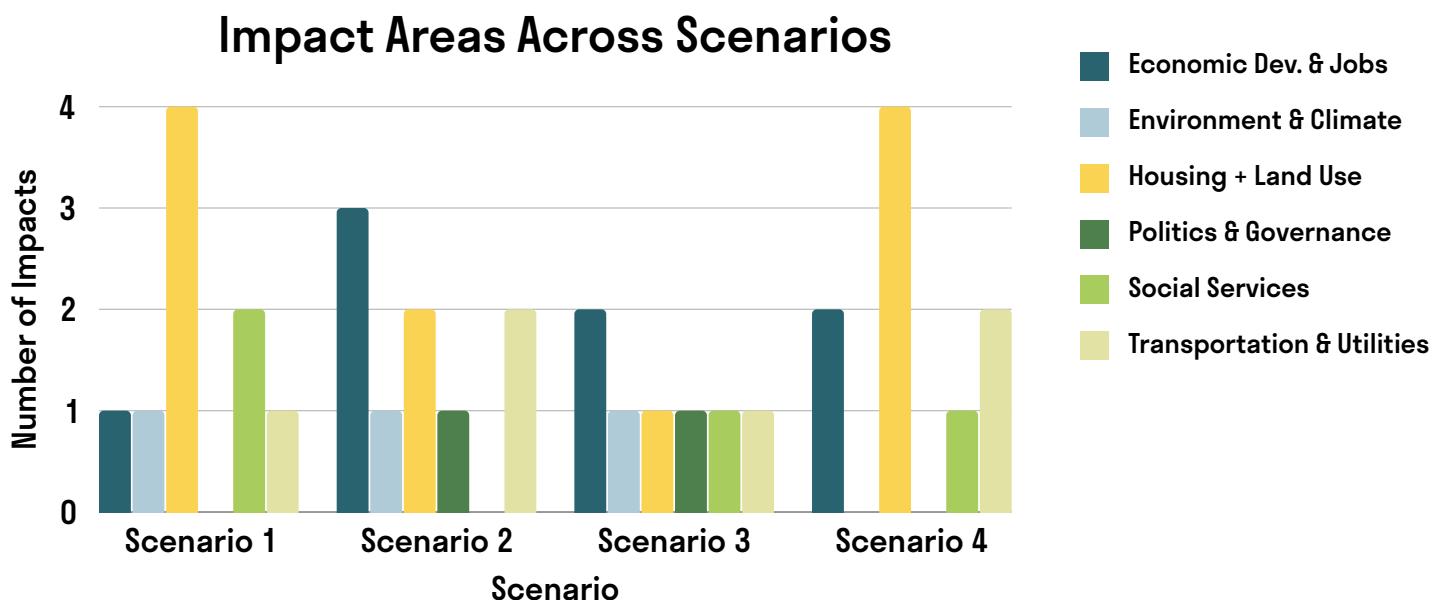
by workforce and economic transition challenges, with infrastructure reliability and social services emerging as secondary but critical concerns.

Regional collaboration consistently emerged as an essential lever for climate resilience and a powerful tool to manage both growth and decline. Workshop participants saw strong intergovernmental coordination as a way to improve transportation, utility reliability, and environmental outcomes, while fragmented governance leads to higher costs and lower performance.

Cross Scenario Strategies and Impact Analysis

This chart presents a cross-scenario analysis of key strategies and impacts. It highlights major themes based on how frequently they appeared across four different scenarios explored by workshop participants.

Figure 3 - Cross Scenario Strategies and Impact Analysis



Economic Development and Jobs

Across all scenarios, economic conditions diverge sharply by population trends. Scenarios 1 and 4 (those with population growth) see increased job diversity, market growth, and an expansion into emerging industries. This growth requires a forward-looking workforce strategy focused on upskilling and specialized training. Scenarios 2 and 3 (those with population decline) emphasize smaller-scale business opportunities, community-driven entrepreneurship, and the need for targeted job training. Workforce development remains a consistent priority, particularly in adapting to AI technology, economic trends, data centers, and green job sectors to sustain local economies.

Environment and Climate

Scenarios 1 through 3 show progress in protecting natural resources, suggesting growing environmental awareness and stronger regulatory frameworks. These protections are key to long-term climate resilience and sustainable growth, and help mitigate stress on ecosystems in scenarios of economic or population decline.

Housing and Land Use

Population growth in Scenarios 1 and 4 drives sprawl, strains housing supply, raises prices, and increases demand for affordable and diverse housing types. In contrast, Scenarios 2 and 3 reflect cheaper housing but weaker demand due to population decline, potentially risking neighborhood disinvestment. Both pathways require proactive land-use strategies, either to manage rapid growth responsibly or to stabilize declining neighborhoods.

Politics and Governance

Decreasing population in Scenarios 2 and 3 results in reduced tax revenue, which could constrain public services, investment capacity, and long-term planning. This scenario could reduce governments' ability to fund essential services, forcing political leaders to make tough trade-offs that could reshape governance priorities and power dynamics. Scenarios with increasing population, 1 and 4, do not anticipate reductions in tax revenue, but diverge because of the differing collaboration levels. Scenario 4, with limited regional collaboration, anticipates a competition for resources that creates tension and mistrust between municipalities. On the opposite side of the collaboration spectrum, Scenario 1 is seen as a future with pooled resources, shared decision-making, and improved service delivery.

Social Services

Rapidly growing populations in Scenarios 1 and 4 heighten pressure on schools and healthcare systems, reinforcing the need for equitable access and investment in community infrastructure. Growth increases service demand, especially for schools, healthcare, and social programs, requiring governments to scale equitably and maintain quality. Scenario 2 and 3, with decreasing population, also see a strain on social services, although mainly caused by the shrinking supply of tax dollars to fund services instead of increased demand.

Transportation and Utilities

Scenarios with declining collaboration, 3 and 4, anticipate higher utility costs and potential lapses in service quality, while Scenarios 1 and 2 show greater regional coordination, improving system efficiency and resilience.

Scenario Analysis Summation

Population change is the central driver shaping economic, environmental, and social outcomes. Growth scenarios bring opportunity but strain infrastructure and affordability, while decline scenarios risk reduced revenue and service quality. By planning for uncertainty, strengthening regional collaboration, sustainable land use, and workforce adaptation are key levers for resilience and welcoming across all futures.

Recommendations from Workshop Participants

Workshop participants suggested the following strategies to create a resilient and welcoming region:

Business Growth, Attraction, and Retention	
<p><i>Actions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small business incubator • Green job creation • Low barriers to market entry • Business attraction and retention strategy 	<p><i>Infrastructure</i> Hard Soft</p>
<p><i>Partners</i> Chamber of Commerce, Economic Development Orgs, Multi-national B2B Support, Utilities, Faith communities, Real estate community, Developers</p>	<p><i>Time Frame</i> Short Term Medium Term</p>
<p><i>Applicable to</i> Scenario 1 Scenario 2 Scenario 3 Scenario 4</p>	<p><i>Cost</i> \$\$</p>

Improved Regional Transit System	
<p><i>Actions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional collaboration and consolidation of public transit • Transit-oriented development • Pedestrian and bike-friendly infrastructure • Focus public transit along key corridors 	<p><i>Infrastructure</i> Hard</p>
<p><i>Partners</i> ODOT, ORDA, Rail operators, Local Development orgs, Planning departments, Libraries, Community centers, Transportation leaders, Climate Resilience/Sustainability planners, Transit agencies like METRO/TANK, Local government, Zoning department, CMHA</p>	<p><i>Time Frame</i> Medium Term Long Term</p>
<p><i>Applicable to</i> Scenario 1 Scenario 2 Scenario 3 Scenario 4</p>	<p><i>Cost</i> \$\$\$</p>

Workforce Development	
<p><i>Actions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • K-12 STEM workforce training • Green/agricultural workforce training • Attract green businesses • Job matching programs • Pipeline of specialized jobs 	<p><i>Infrastructure</i> Soft</p>
<p><i>Partners</i></p> <p>Government officials, Career/technical trainers, Work-based learning partners, Manufacturing Alliance, Career counselors, Universities, Philanthropic partners, Green businesses, Schools</p>	<p><i>Time Frame</i> Short Term Medium Term</p>
<p><i>Applicable to</i></p> <p>Scenario 1 Scenario 2 Scenario 3 Scenario 4</p>	<p><i>Cost</i> \$</p>

Housing & Zoning Reform	
<p><i>Actions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritizing housing development along transit corridors • Building high-density housing • Inclusionary Zoning to secure affordable housing 	<p><i>Infrastructure</i> Hard</p>
<p><i>Partners</i></p> <p>REDI, NPO, Conservation advocates, Residents, Business owners, Local governments, Zoning Authorities Public Housing Authorities</p>	<p><i>Time Frame</i> Short Term Medium Term</p>
<p><i>Applicable to</i></p> <p>Scenario 1 Scenario 2 Scenario 3 Scenario 4</p>	<p><i>Cost</i> \$\$\$</p>

Regional Collaboration & Alignment	
<p><i>Actions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consolidate utilities and services like water, electricity, and transit • Align regional policies, especially zoning 	<p><i>Infrastructure</i> Soft</p>
<p><i>Partners</i></p> <p>Transit Agencies, Elected Officials, Chamber of Commerce, Community leaders, MSDGC, Regional counties or townships, OWDA, Ohio EPA, City managers, Local government staff</p>	<p><i>Time Frame</i> Medium Term</p>
<p><i>Applicable to</i></p> <p>Scenario 1 Scenario 2 Scenario 3</p>	<p><i>Cost</i> \$\$</p>

Improved Resident Interface with Government	
<p><i>Actions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase civic engagement and outreach • Offer multilingual government communications • Center neighborhood priorities in decision-making 	<p><i>Infrastructure</i> Soft</p>
<p><i>Partners</i> City managers, Local government staff</p>	<p><i>Time Frame</i> Short Term Medium Term Long Term</p>
<p><i>Applicable to</i> Scenario 1 Scenario 2 Scenario 3 Scenario 4</p>	<p><i>Cost</i> \$\$</p>

For the Workshop Sliddeck, see Resource B in the appendix. For Scenario Planning Data, see Resource D.

Conclusion

Three major takeaways from the 2025 Climate Migration Project emerged:

1

Planning early creates an opportunity to equitably support population changes rather than repeat past mistakes.

The Resilient & Welcoming Region Workshop reinforced that proactive, intentional policies can help the region prepare for climate-induced migration in ways that strengthen communities, prevent sprawl and displacement, and improve quality of life for both current and future residents. Importantly, preparing for climate in-migration and future residents mirrors addressing the needs of existing residents in Greater Cincinnati.

2

Regional collaboration emerged as the single most important lever for climate resilience.

Throughout the project, participants consistently identified coordinated regional action as essential to improving housing affordability, infrastructure performance, transportation systems, and environmental outcomes. Housing was the primary issue elevated through the engagement.

3

Scenario-based planning is helpful to move our region from abstract climate migration concepts to actionable strategies.

By grounding discussions in data-driven population projections and structured scenarios, participants in the Resilient & Welcoming Region Workshop were able to identify concrete impacts and develop policy recommendations that apply across multiple possible futures.

Looking Ahead

As climate-driven human migration is projected to increase over the coming decades, now is the time to prepare communities to receive newcomers and support existing community needs through strategically aligned planning and implementation.

In Greater Cincinnati, project partners will leverage the connections and learnings from the 2025 Climate Migration Project to implement the following phases in collaboration with communities in 2026.

Phase I: Finalize Cincinnati Climate Migration Action Plan

- Conduct readiness assessment on physical and social infrastructure with City of Cincinnati staff
- Draft plan and conduct reviews with key partners in sectors such as housing, social services, and more
- Publish City of Cincinnati Climate Migration Action Plan

Phase II: Further Socialize Ideas and Train Leaders

- Develop and implement training about climate migration and welcoming that will be applicable to regional governments, businesses, nonprofits, and schools.
- Complete additional focus groups that fill gaps of previous engagement and elevate the issues of welcoming and resilience up the ranks in major and anchor institutions

Phase III: Planning with Regional Communities

- Develop and implement a Climate Migration/Welcoming Planning module for regional governments and institutions via Green Umbrella's local government and cross-sector programming
- Host a relevant session at the 2026 Midwest Regional Sustainability Summit, an annual conference hosted by Green Umbrella with more than 650 attendees

Phase IV: Regionally Scale Action

- Host a half-day summit to bring together regional leaders to share best practices and workshop next steps
- Work with partners to develop relevant chapter (goals + recommendations) into regional climate action playbook
- Establish a working group dedicated to climate resilience and welcoming work
- Final report on project activities and identified next steps

Moving Forward, Together

The 2025 Climate Migration Project reinforced that preparing for climate migration is not the job of a single sector. Overall, building resilience depends on strategic planning that addresses demographic changes, fosters coordinated action, and accelerates investments in climate-aligned economic and community systems. It will require collaboration among local jurisdictions across the metro Cincinnati region, the private and nonprofit sectors, and in conjunction with community leaders and residents to build strategies that are equitable, sustainable, and future-focused.

By starting the conversation now and bringing a wide swathe of voices to the table, Greater Cincinnati can position itself not only to manage change but to thrive in an era when climate migration will be a defining force for regions across the country.



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- ICLEI-USA: David Lubell
- Lincoln Institute of Land Policy: Patrick Welch, Amy Cotter

We would also like to thank the following:

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- The guest facilitators who supported the scenario planning exercise, Beth Gibbons, Resiliency Director for Washtenaw County, MI and Terry Schwarz, Director of Cleveland Urban Design Collaborative.

Appendix

Resource A

[!\[\]\(8992432513afb96f45a69bb5f0f74668_img.jpg\) Sector-Based Focus Groups: Envisioning Sustainable Growth in Greater Cincinnati](#)

This linked document details the Green Umbrella and HDR focus group engagement series from Stage I of the 2025 Climate Migration Project with support from the City of Cincinnati and the Cincinnati Regional Chamber.

Resource B

[!\[\]\(dfd2df6cc884969130953c94dfde9751_img.jpg\) Webinar Slide Deck](#)

These linked slides are from public climate migration webinar on August 6, 2025.

Resource C

[!\[\]\(160149d571be8bd3cba5ec8751b9d167_img.jpg\) Planning for Climate Migration in Cincinnati - Cincinnati Region Climate Migration Outlook](#)

This report, composed by the Cincinnati Regional Chamber's Center for Research & Data, examines and analyzes Cincinnati's position in the national and global migration shift.

Resource D

[!\[\]\(d6ac313375c532b36cba9ed9067a1449_img.jpg\) Full Scenario Planning Data](#)

This spreadsheet details the data in Figures 2 & 3, illustrating how participants in the Resilient & Welcoming Region Workshop anticipated and prioritized impacts.

Resource E

Resilient & Welcoming Region Workshop agenda

- 9:00 AM – Welcome
 - Welcome (Green Umbrella)
 - Cincinnati Context (City of Cincinnati)
- 9:30 AM – Background: HDR Inc. - Summary of stakeholder engagement feedback themes; Chamber - Migration Data, forces, scenarios
- 10:05 AM – Small Group Discussions
- 10:15 AM – Plenary Panel with Mayor Aftab Pureval (City of Cincinnati); Kristen Baker (Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC)); Melissa Bertolo (Welcoming America); David Lubell (moderator) (ICLEI)
- 11:15 AM – Break
- 11:30 AM – Session: Scenario Planning I
- 12:30 PM – Lunch
- 1:15 PM – Session: Scenario Planning II
- 2:30 PM – Session: Actionable Strategies