



MICHIGAN MUNICIPAL LEAGUE
CONVENTION2026



**M M L
CONV
2026**

The Michigan Oasis: Implications for Future Planning

Thursday, October 8th, 2026



MCKENNA



Presenters



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Outline

1. What is Climate Migration?
2. Climate Migration Trends
3. Midwest Case Studies
4. Planning Recommendations
5. Discussion

An aerial photograph of a coastline. On the left, a dense forest of trees with autumn-colored foliage (yellows, oranges, and browns) borders a body of water. The water is a deep blue-grey color. In the distance, a small white building is visible on the shoreline. The sky is overcast with soft, grey clouds. The overall scene suggests a coastal environment affected by climate change.

Climate Migration

Extreme Weather and Environmental Shifts

The consequences of climate change are manifesting across the U.S.:

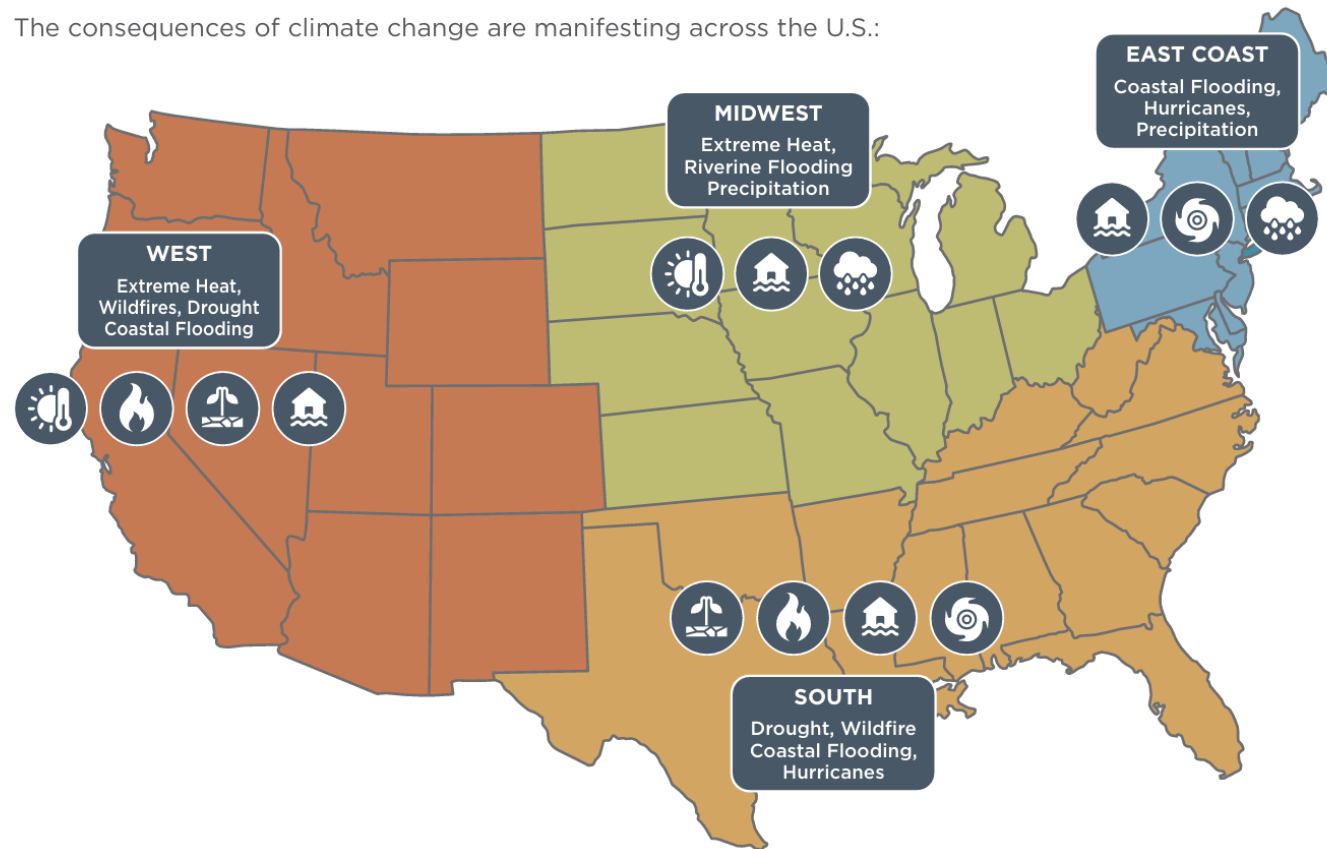


Image Source: City of Cincinnati, 2026.

What is Climate Migration?

“The movement of a person or groups of persons, who predominantly for **reasons of sudden or progressive change in the environment** due to climate change, are **obligated to leave** their habitual place of residence, or choose to do so, either temporarily or permanently, within a State or across an international border.”

(International Organization of Migration, 2019)

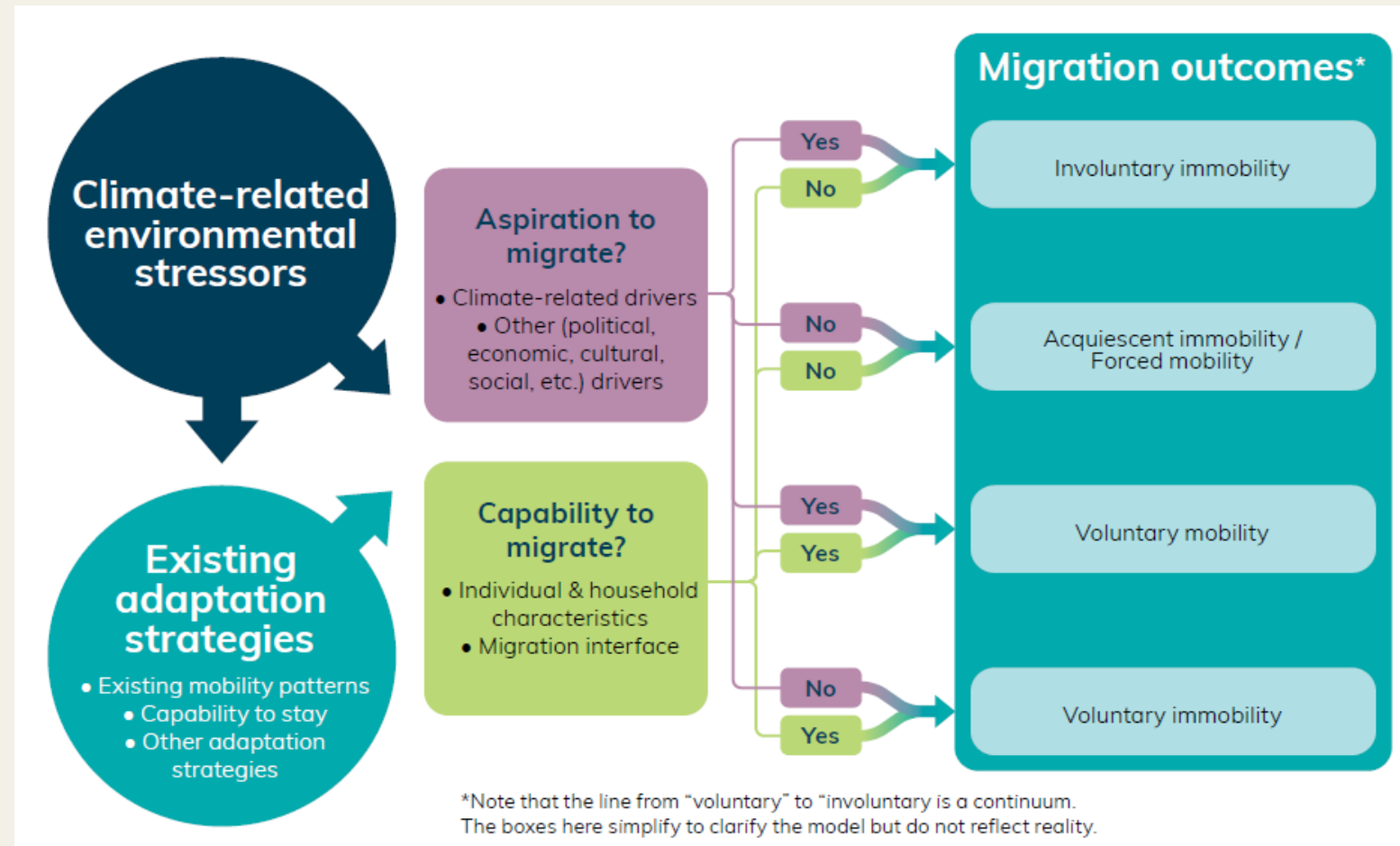


Image Source: Mixed Migration Center, 2022.

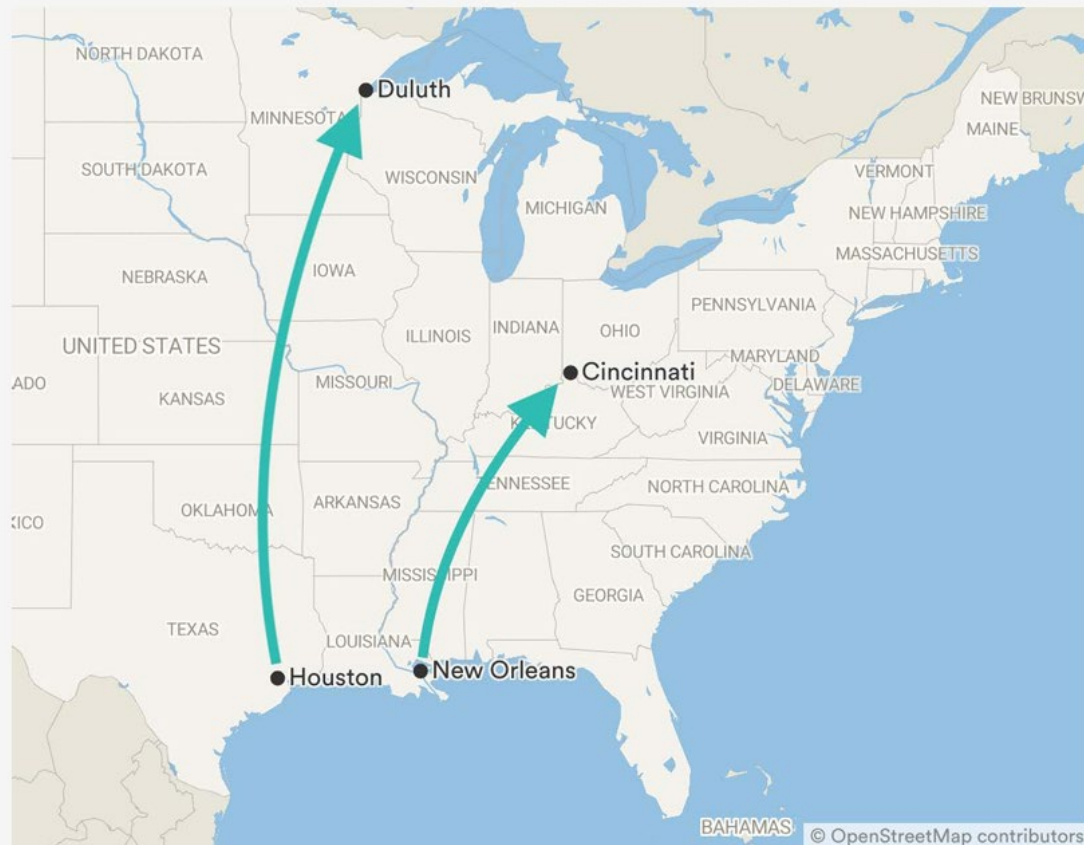
Who will migrate?

- **High-Income Households**
 - Most likely to adapt to vulnerable locations
- **Middle-Income Households**
 - Most likely to plan long-term relocation
- **Low-Income Households and Vulnerable Populations**
 - Most likely to experience worsening quality of life, have little to no ability to relocate

...which can lead to **gentrification, housing insecurity, and overwhelmed services and infrastructure**, if unprepared.

Migration is Regional

Example of Future Population Movements to Climate Havens



Example of Future Population Movements to Safe Harbors



Image Source: New America, 2024.

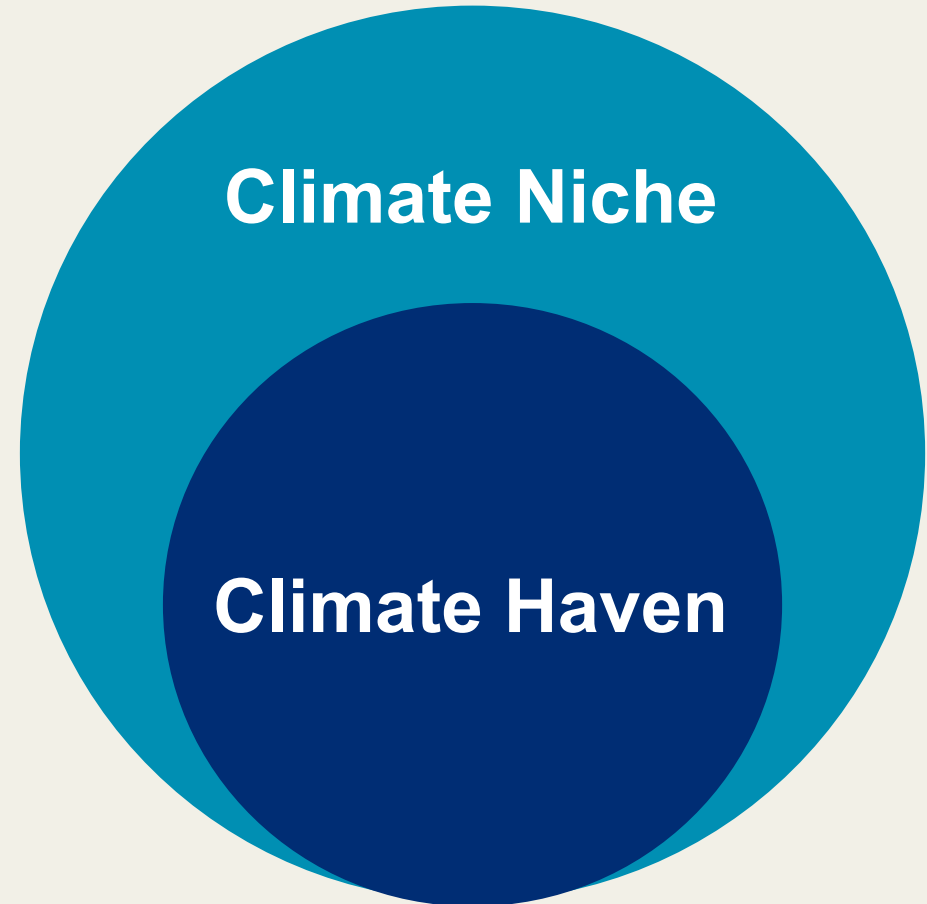
Where will People Go?

Climate Niche

- Environmental conditions that are suitable for human residence and economic advantage including:
 - Strategic geographic location
 - Freshwater resources

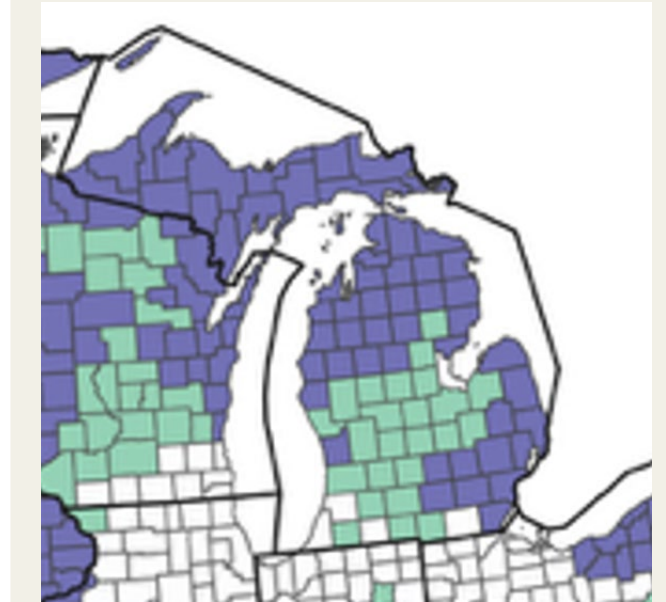
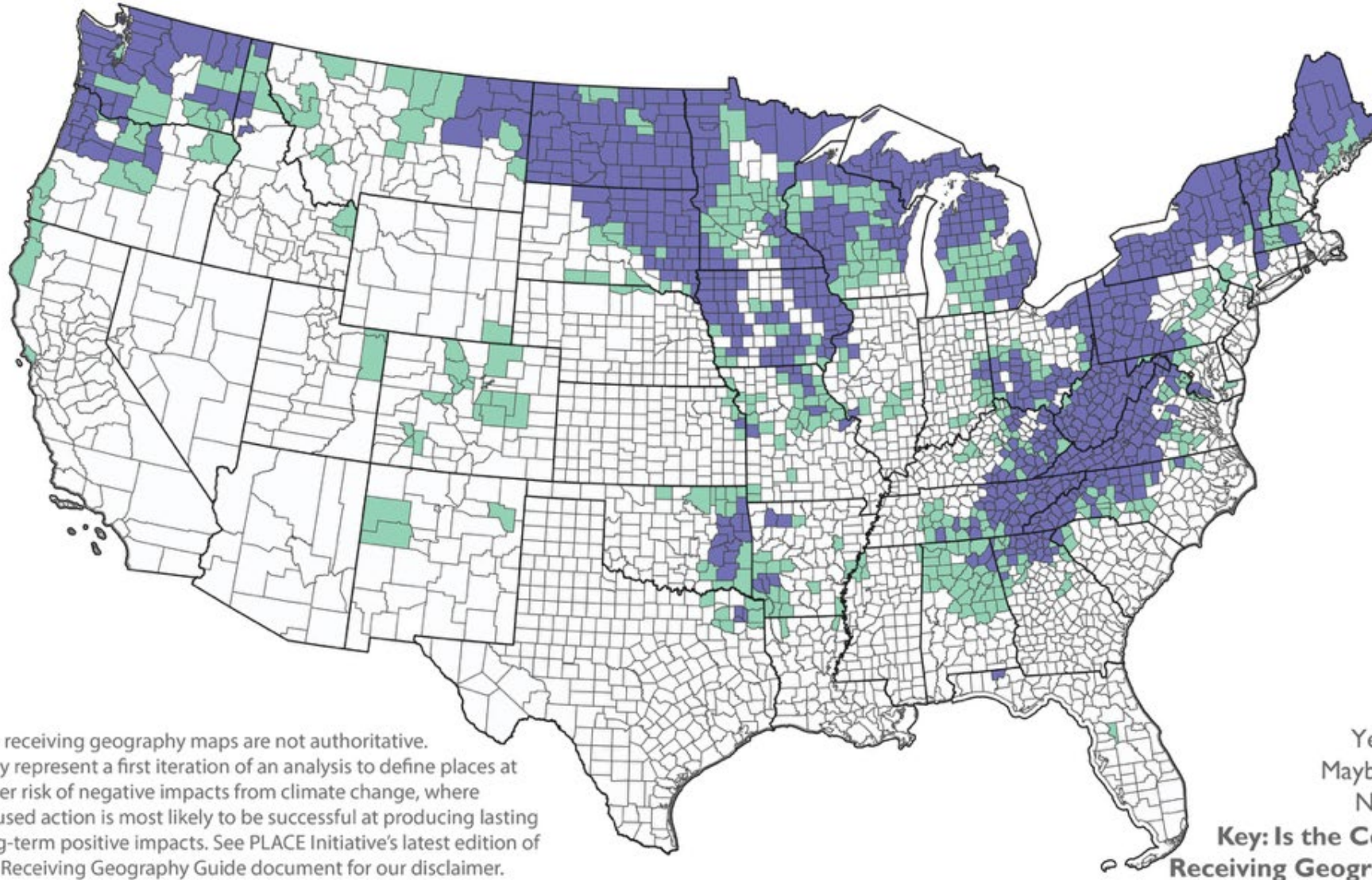
Climate Haven

- Situated in a climate niche with functioning infrastructure for all present and future residents including:
 - Available housing
 - Infrastructural capacity
 - Economic prosperity



Climate Receiver Counties

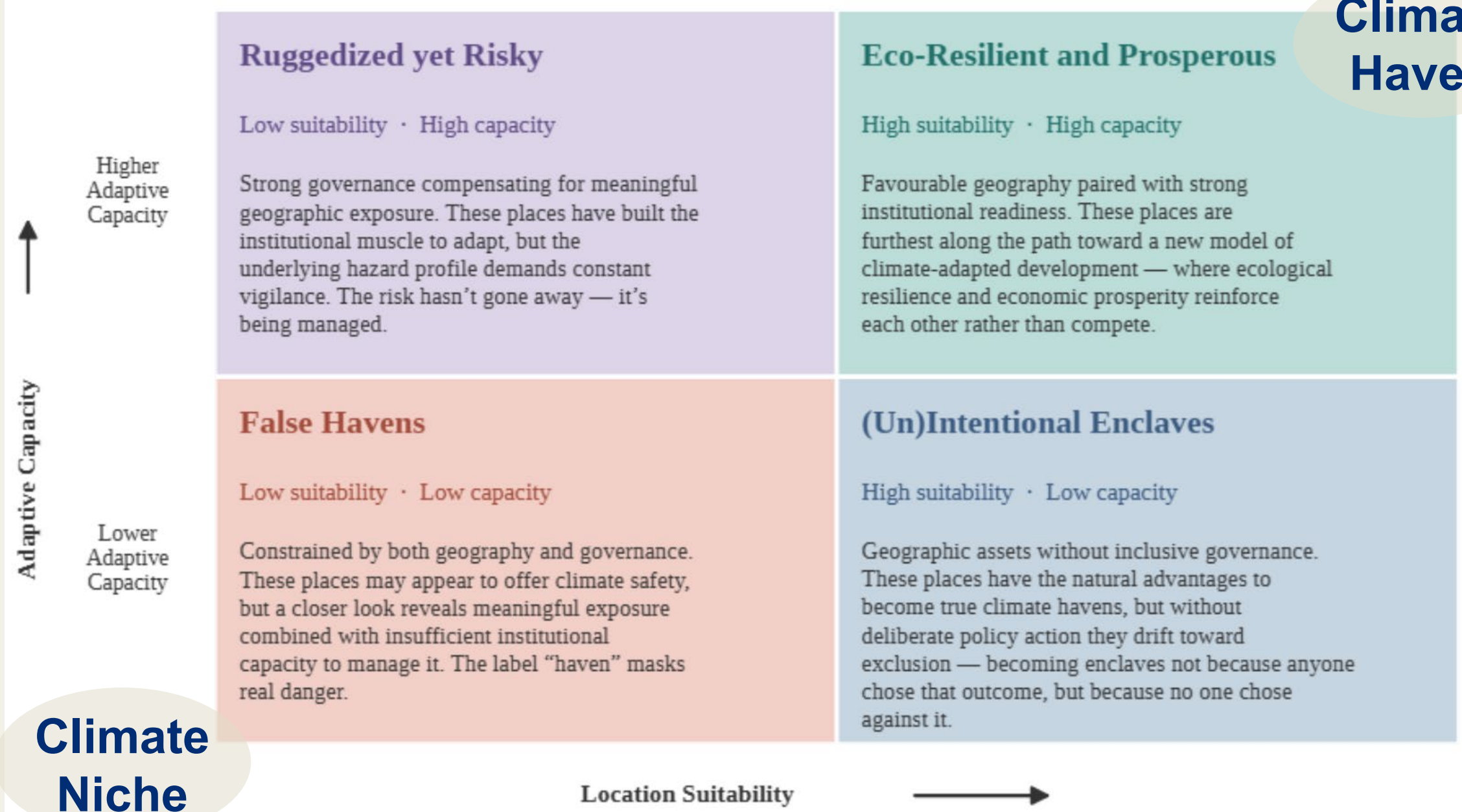
Climate Receiver Places Project at PLACE Initiative



Map Version 2.0. Meta-analysis based on data from Four Twenty Seven and ProPublica, July 2022. This map displays receiver places selected by PLACE Initiative. Places are color coded based on county-level climate risk score on a scale of 0-14 (14 being the highest risk), and sized based on municipal population. Greyed out counties follow the receiving geographies outlined in the County Map of Receiving Geography. Risk score does not include local flood risk.

Image Source: PLACE Initiative, 2022.

Climate Haven





Let's Look at a Climate Haven



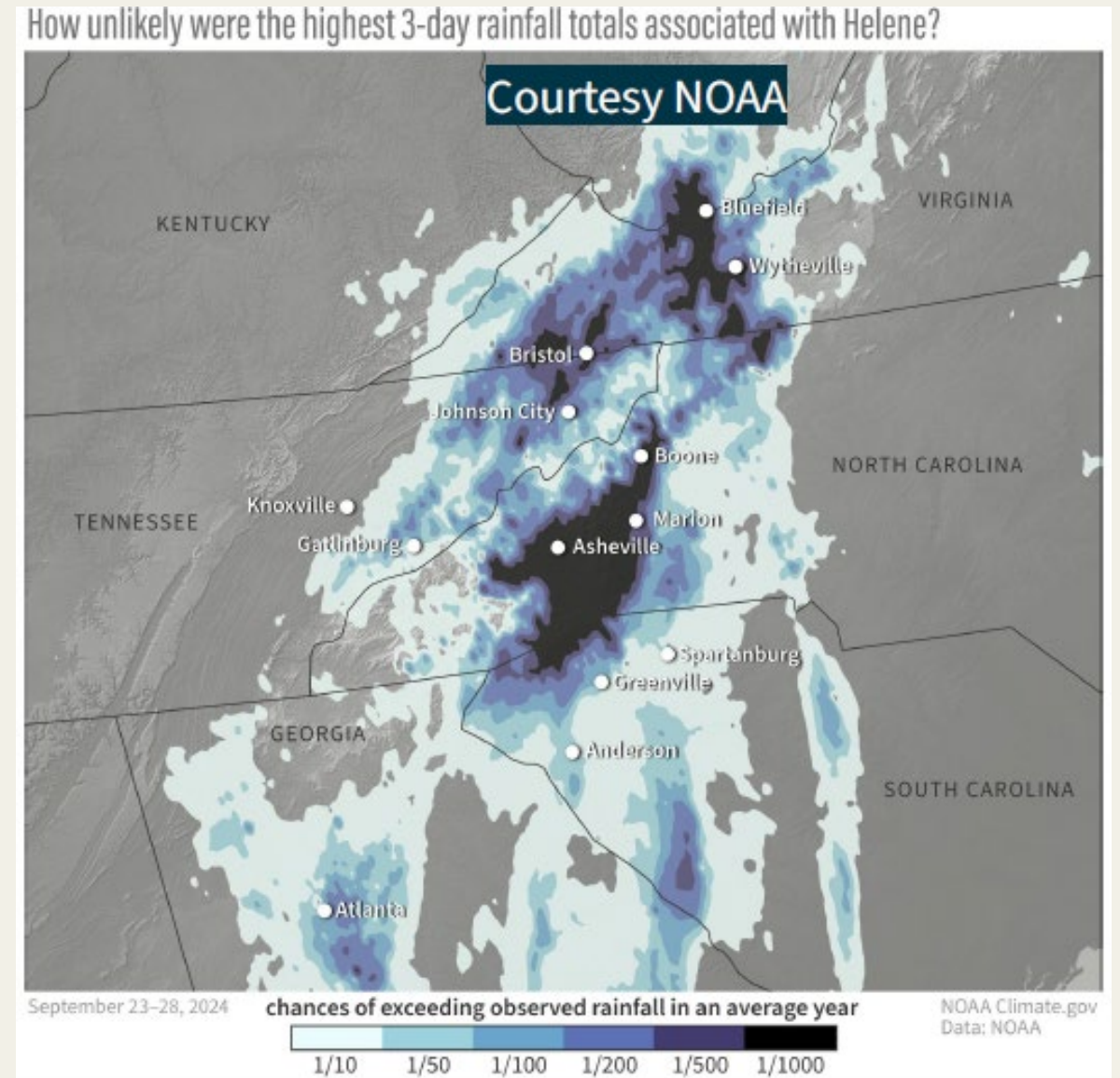
Asheville, North Carolina

Climate migrants had long been arriving in Asheville

- Rated No 1. Best Arts District in 2026
- Minor league baseball team “The Tourists”
- The Blue Ridge Parkway
- “Beer City”
- Social infrastructure
 - Community centers
 - Parks
 - Libraries
 - Schools
 - Theories of governance

Hurricane Helene

- Category 4 Hurricane
- More than 30 inches of rain on the state
- Storm's devastation spanned more than 600 miles
- Historic river arts district destroyed
- Extensive damage to water treatment infrastructure resulted in clean water not being restored for 53 days
- Power outages for up to 2 weeks
- \$53 billion in damages across North Carolina



Source: *Planning for Catastrophe*, 2026 National Planning Conference Presentation by City of Asheville Planners Sam Starr-Baum and Clay Mitchell.



Source: Planning for Catastrophe, 2026 National Planning Conference Presentation by City of Asheville Planners Sam Starr-Baum and Clay Mitchell.



Biltmore Village

Source: Planning for Catastrophe, 2026 National Planning Conference Presentation by City of Asheville Planners Sam Starr-Baum and Clay Mitchell.

Lessons from Asheville

Immediate (0-30 days)

- Missing people, infrastructure, and resources
- Water delivery
- Mapping / Data Generation

Recovering (31-365 days)

- Enhanced regulatory support (Board of Adjustment)
- Housing data/displacement triage
- Permitting with empathy

Long term (2026 and beyond)

- Recovery/Permitting process
 - Inventory, Assessment, Communication, and Empathy
- Data Into Action
 - UDO Threshold and Parking Amendments
 - Grants
- Vision to Reality
 - Upgrading the Comprehensive Plan
 - Revising the Unified Development Ordinance

Source: Planning for Catastrophe, 2026 National Planning Conference Presentation by City of Asheville Planners Sam Starr-Baum and Clay Mitchell.



Michigan... Oasis?

What's behind Michigan's record-breaking, deadly tornado seasons?

Updated: Aug. 14, 2026, 11:30 a.m. | Published: Aug. 12, 2026, 3:10 p.m.



Michigan gets \$15.8M in FEMA aid for 2025 ice storm damage

Updated: Jul. 22, 2026, 5:29 p.m. | Published: Jul. 21, 2026, 3:38 p.m.



Health

Michigan had \$6.6 billion in economic loss from Canadian wildfire smoke

Michigan Public | By Tracy Samilton
Published August 13, 2026 at 7:36 PM EDT



WEATHER

Gov. Whitmer puts Michigan under energy emergency amid flooding



Max Reinhart
The Detroit News

Updated April 14, 2026, 11:41 p.m. ET

Thus far in 2026...

- Wildfire Smoke
- Tornadoes
- Flooding
- Ice storms
- Temperature
 - ✓ Extreme heat
 - ✓ Extreme cold

Systemic / Slow-Onset Events

- Extreme heat
- Extreme cold
- Coastal erosion
- Systemic flooding and stormwater issues
- Water and power insecurity

Heatwave threatens to shatter high-temperature records across eastern US

Intense heat in cities like New York, Philadelphia and Washington DC is unusual for April, weather experts say



People enjoy the afternoon at Brooklyn Bridge Park in New York City on Tuesday as temperatures reached the mid-80s. Photograph: Spencer Platt/Getty Images

More than 277K without power in Michigan as more storms expected

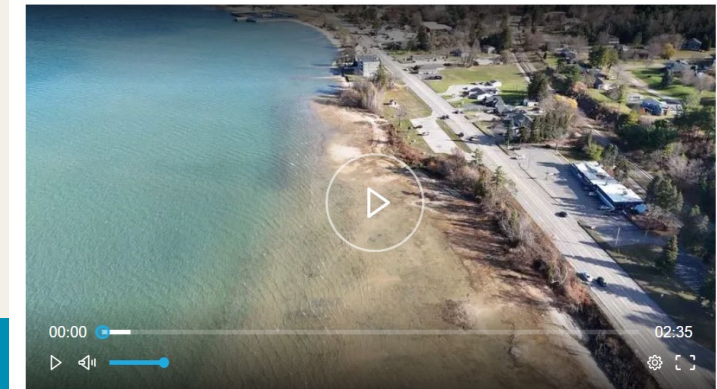
Tanya Wildt and Sarah Moore Detroit Free Press

Updated Sept. 4, 2026, 12:53 p.m. ET



Lake Michigan's water levels drop rapidly, raising concerns about climate impact

by Ethan Foreman | Mon, November 24, 2025 at 1:09 PM



East Grand Traverse Bay near Acme Township in November 2025. (WPBN)

Image Source: Corey Morse, MLive.

A scenic sunset over a lake. In the foreground, a wooden dock extends into the water from a grassy shore with some yellow flowers. The water is calm, reflecting the vibrant orange and pink colors of the sunset sky. In the background, several houses are visible along the shoreline, and a few boats are docked. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and serene.

Midwest Capacity-Building Case Studies

Building Local Capacity to Receive

- Planning
- Hazard Resilience
- Physical and Social Infrastructure
- External Support

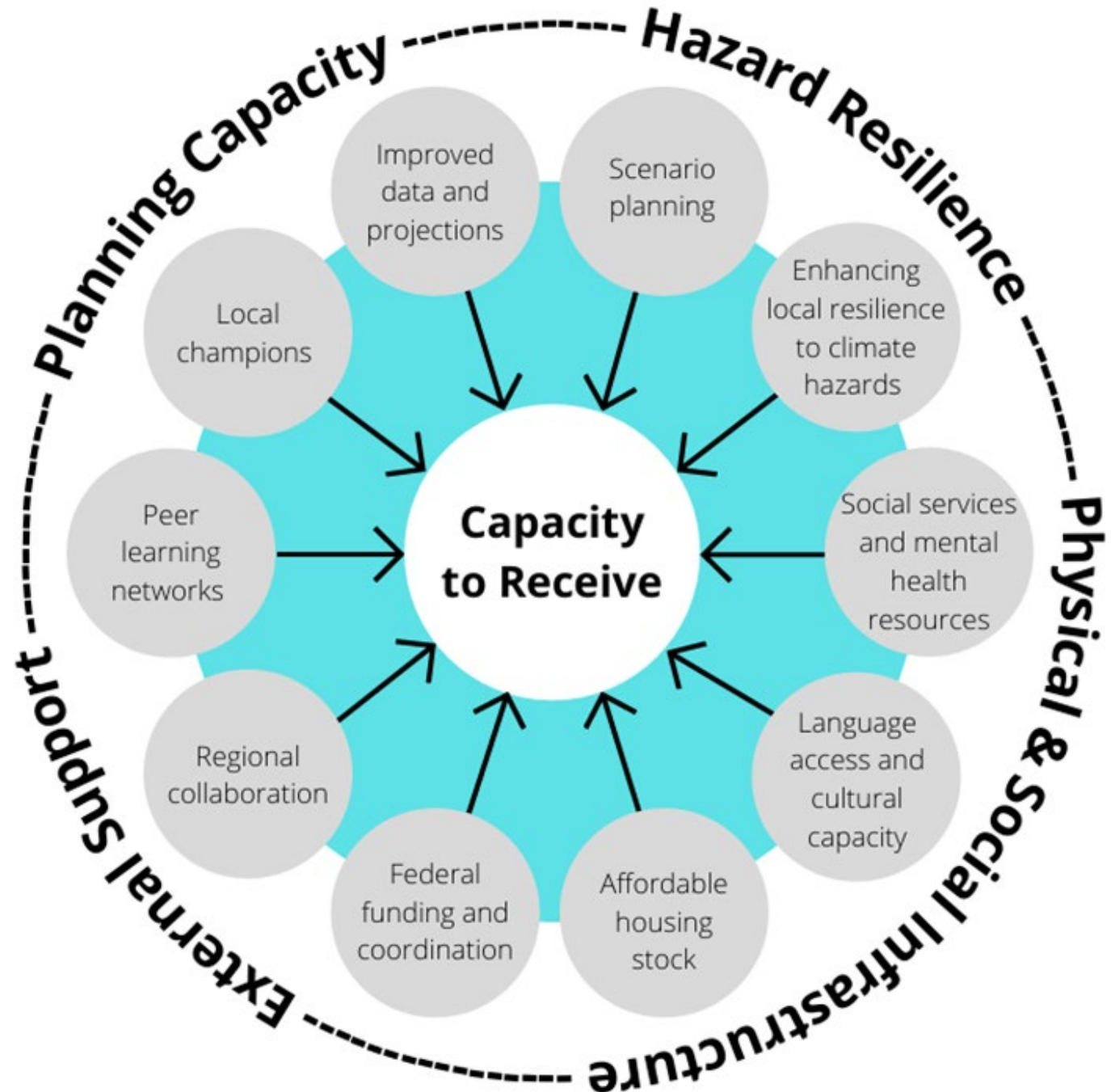
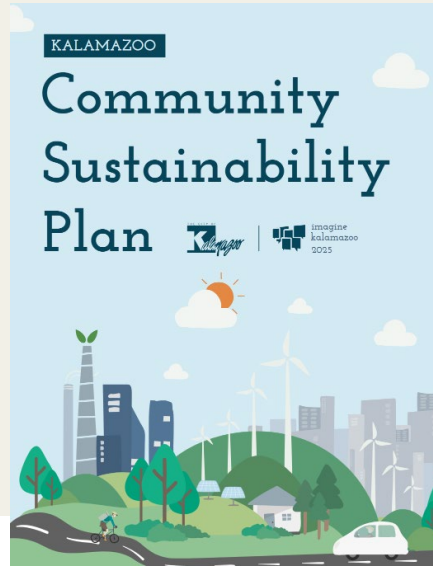


Image Source: Building Capacity to Receive: How Four Communities in the U.S. are Preparing for Climate Driven In-Migration, 2022.

Kalamazoo, MI

- Declared climate emergency in 2019
- Natural Features Protection Review Board
- Environmental Concern Committee
- Stormwater Management Plan
- Community Sustainability Plan

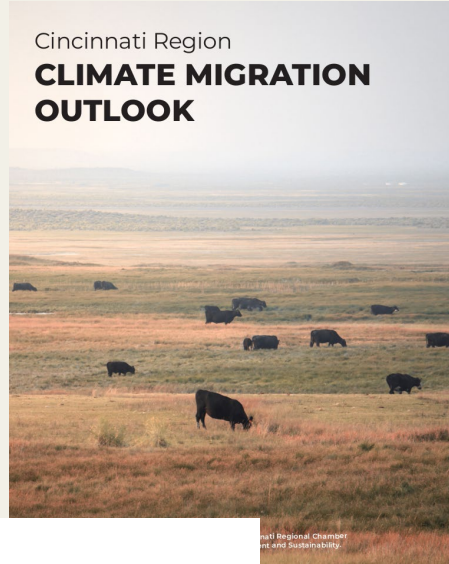


Where we're going: System Goals



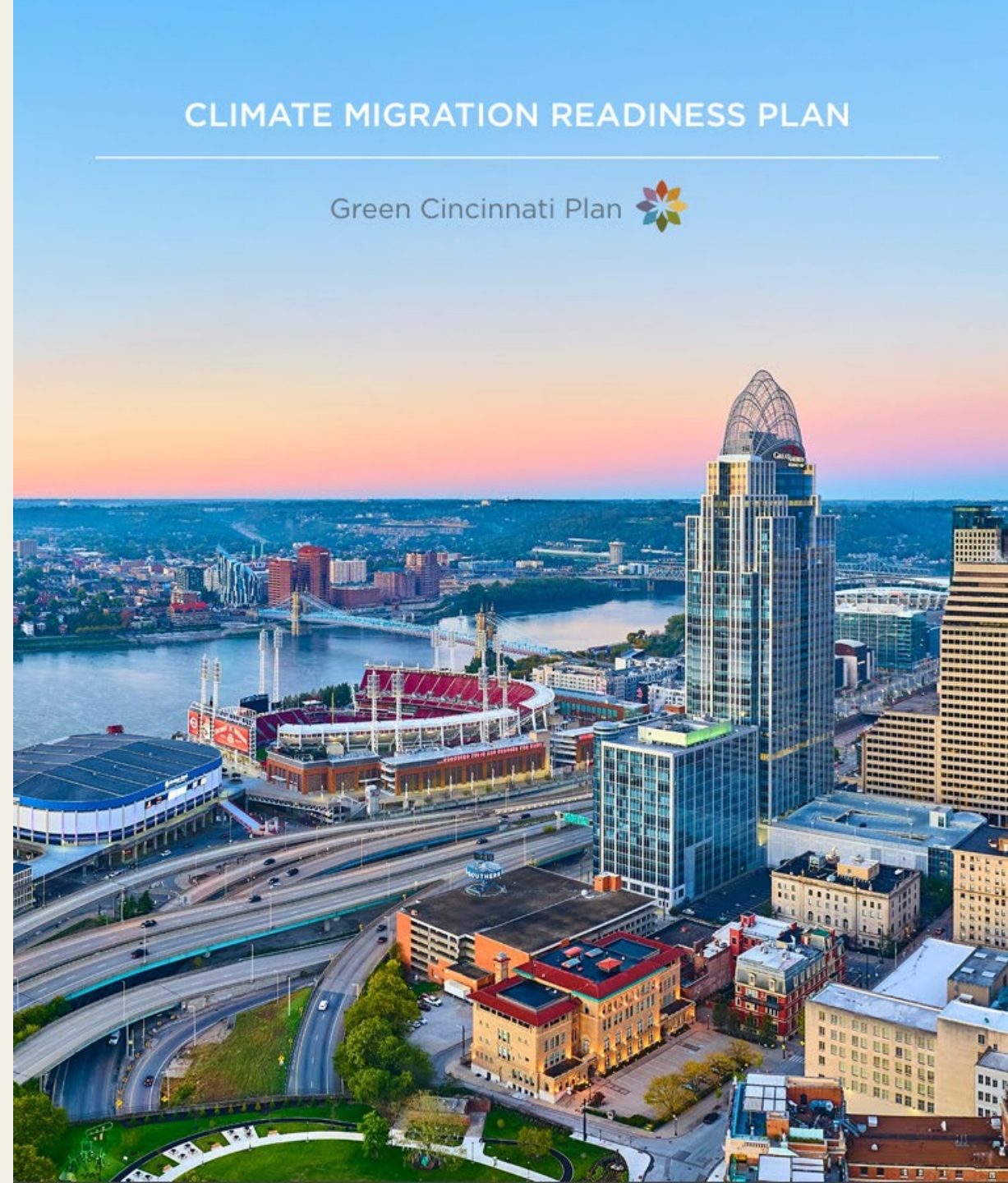
Cincinnati, OH

- Population decline over last 70 years
- Affordable housing, ample freshwater and resources
- The Green Cincinnati Plan (2023)
- Cincinnati Region Climate Migration Outlook (2025)
- Climate Migration Readiness Plan (2026)



CLIMATE MIGRATION READINESS PLAN

Green Cincinnati Plan 





Planning Recommendations

Integrate Migration and Resiliency Into Planning Efforts

Actions:

1. Include climate migration in comprehensive plan updates.
2. Conduct housing and infrastructure capacity assessments with several growth scenarios.
3. Establish dedicated resilience or climate adaptation staff roles.
4. Create advisory committees involving community organizations, businesses, and residents.
5. Update codes and regulations accordingly.

Tactics:

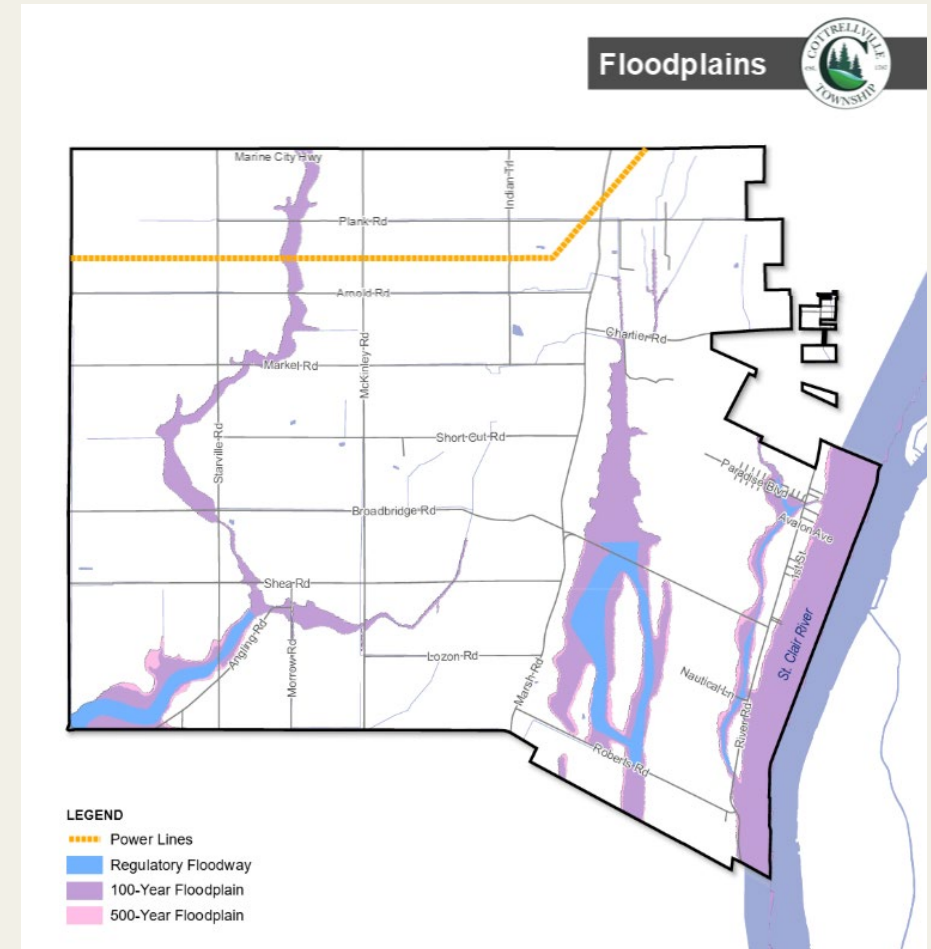
- Scenario planning
- Vulnerability assessments
- Weather and climate pattern benchmarking

- Master/Comprehensive plans
- Housing strategies
- Capital improvement programs
- Emergency Preparedness
- Natural Hazard Mitigation
- Migration Readiness
- Regional Plans and Coordination

Benchmark Hazard-Prone Areas in Your Community

Actions:

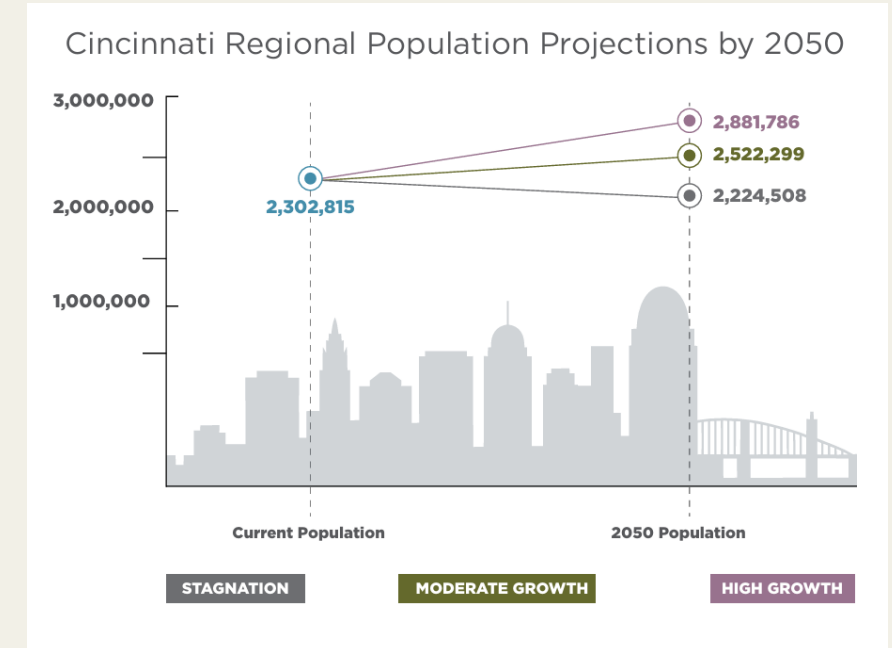
1. Restrict development in floodplains and high-risk locations.
2. If a waterfront community, review shoreline regulations, restrict armoring and incentivize natural erosion prevention techniques.
3. Direct growth toward safer areas through zoning and infrastructure investments (i.e. density bonuses).
4. Consider buyout and relocation programs for residents in vulnerable areas in extreme cases.



Expand Housing Supply and Preserve Affordability

Actions:

1. Update zoning to:
 1. Allow more housing types and densities while maintaining character and compatibility.
 2. Encourage infill and mixed-use development.
 3. Permit accessory dwelling units (ADUs) and smaller unit sizes.
 4. Incentivize density in appropriate areas, transit-oriented development, and sustainable/green development practices.
2. Redevelop vacant and underutilized properties.
3. Establish land banks, community land trusts, and affordable housing trust funds.
4. Provide incentives for affordable and workforce housing development.



*PSA: Housing is now **required** to be addressed in master plans under the MPEA!*

Upgrade Infrastructure and Public Services

Actions:

1. Following growth scenario planning, discuss possible impacts with DPW and municipal engineers on the following:
 1. Water and sewer systems
 2. Stormwater systems
 3. Road and transportation networks
2. Collaborate with other local authorities to plan for anticipated growth:
 1. Schools
 2. Public health departments and healthcare providers
 3. Electric and gas utility providers
 4. Broadband and communications providers

Prepare for Emergency Events and Serve as a Model

Actions:

1. Make upgrades to publicly-owned properties to showcase how improvements can be made.
2. Invest in green stormwater infrastructure and plant street trees wherever possible.
3. Conduct an energy audit and review opportunities for improved efficiency
4. Identify your local emergency preparedness manager and coordinate with existing efforts.
5. Designate your municipal building(s) as reliable locations in emergencies
6. Identify key personnel and data, compile for ease of reference.
7. Define a clear method for communication and dissemination of information.

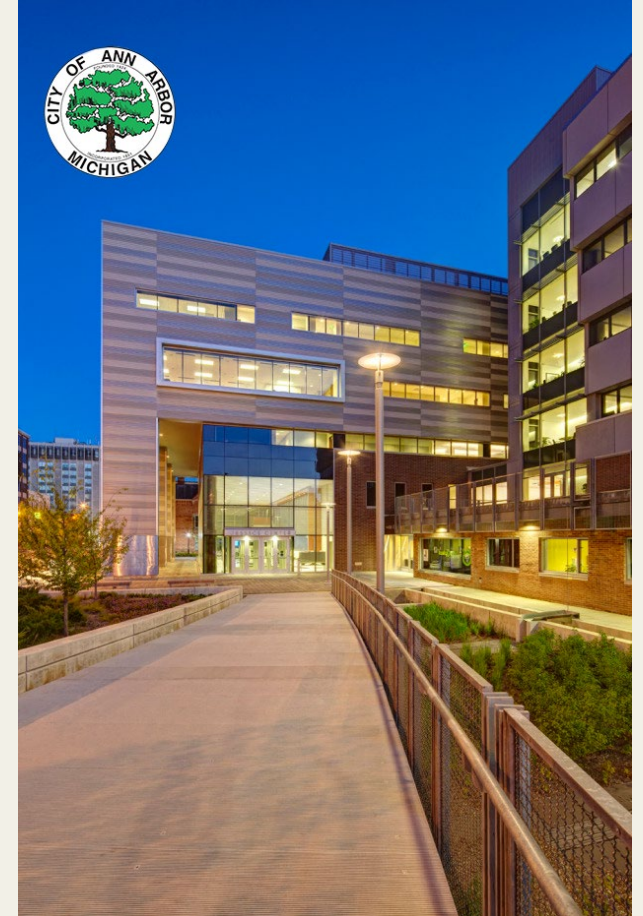


Image Source: City of Ann Arbor.

Support Economic and Workforce Development

Actions:

1. Partner with employers, universities, and workforce agencies to provide training and programs.
2. Support workforce retraining and reskilling programs.
3. Incentivize business development and entrepreneurship through small business support and programming.
4. Identify and focus on growth sectors for your region.

Engage Your Community and Collaborate Regionally

Actions:

1. Conduct engagement with existing residents and, when possible, newcomers and potential future residents.
2. Coordinate with neighboring jurisdictions.
3. Participate in regional housing and resilience planning efforts.
4. Share data on housing, infrastructure, and population trends.

Pursue Diverse Funding Sources

Actions:

1. Review statewide funding opportunities such as the Coastal Management Program from EGLE.
2. Leverage Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) funding.
3. Pursue Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) grants.
4. Utilize FEMA hazard mitigation programs.
5. Leverage tried and true sources such as municipal bonds and dedicated local revenue sources.

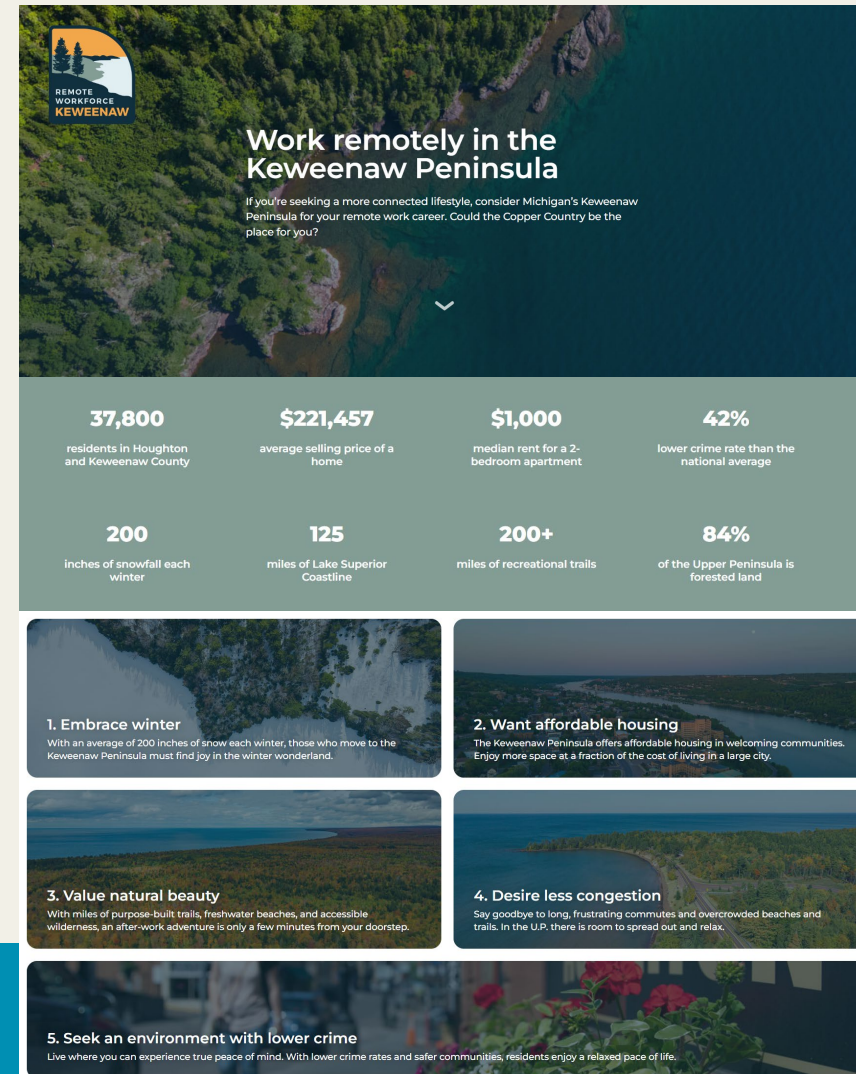
The top screenshot shows the MI Funding Hub website. The header includes the MI Funding Hub logo, navigation links for Tools & Resources, News & Events, Contact Helpdesk, and a Find Funding button. The main content area features a large 'Find Funding' heading, a brief description of the platform's purpose, and a 'Watch The Video Now' button. A sidebar on the right offers 'Need Help?' with a video tutorial and 'Apply with Confidence' with a link to explore Syncurrent services.

The bottom screenshot shows the U.S. Climate Resilience Toolkit website. The header includes the U.S. Climate Resilience Toolkit logo, navigation links for Case Studies, Tools, Funding, Steps to Resilience, and Contents. The main content area features a 'Funding Resources' section with a description of the funding opportunities and a list of results. The list includes 'Adaptation Clearinghouse Funding Library', 'Brookings Federal Infrastructure Hub', and 'Dept. of Energy: Federal Financial Assistance Programs for Resilience Activities'.

Position Your Community as a Receiver through Marketing

Actions:

1. Identify and collaborate with your local economic development entities and regional marketing efforts to leverage existing networks.
2. Ensure necessary information about moving to your community is easily accessible on the municipal website.
3. Showcase planning efforts to signal that your community is well-positioned for resiliency.
4. Start a welcoming committee that can serve as a one-stop-shop for newcomers who are looking for basic needs and services.



Adaptive Capacity Toolbox

Regulatory

- Permit and incentivize:
 - Infill development
 - Diverse housing options (ADU's, duplexes, modest subdivisions, etc.)
 - Renewable-energy at various scales
- Protect natural features:
 - Wetland setbacks
 - Floodplain restrictions

Planning

- Incorporate migration and growth scenarios into existing efforts (Master Plan, Capital Improvement Plan, etc.)
- Consider additional efforts (natural hazard mitigation, climate adaption/resilience, complete streets plans)
- Produce goals and implementation metrics to measure progress

Tactical

- Construct green infrastructure:
 - Urban forests
 - Rain gardens
 - Permeable pavers
- Increase shelter beds and food reserves
- Dedicate office or senior staff position

Building Local Capacity to Receive

- Planning
- Hazard Resilience
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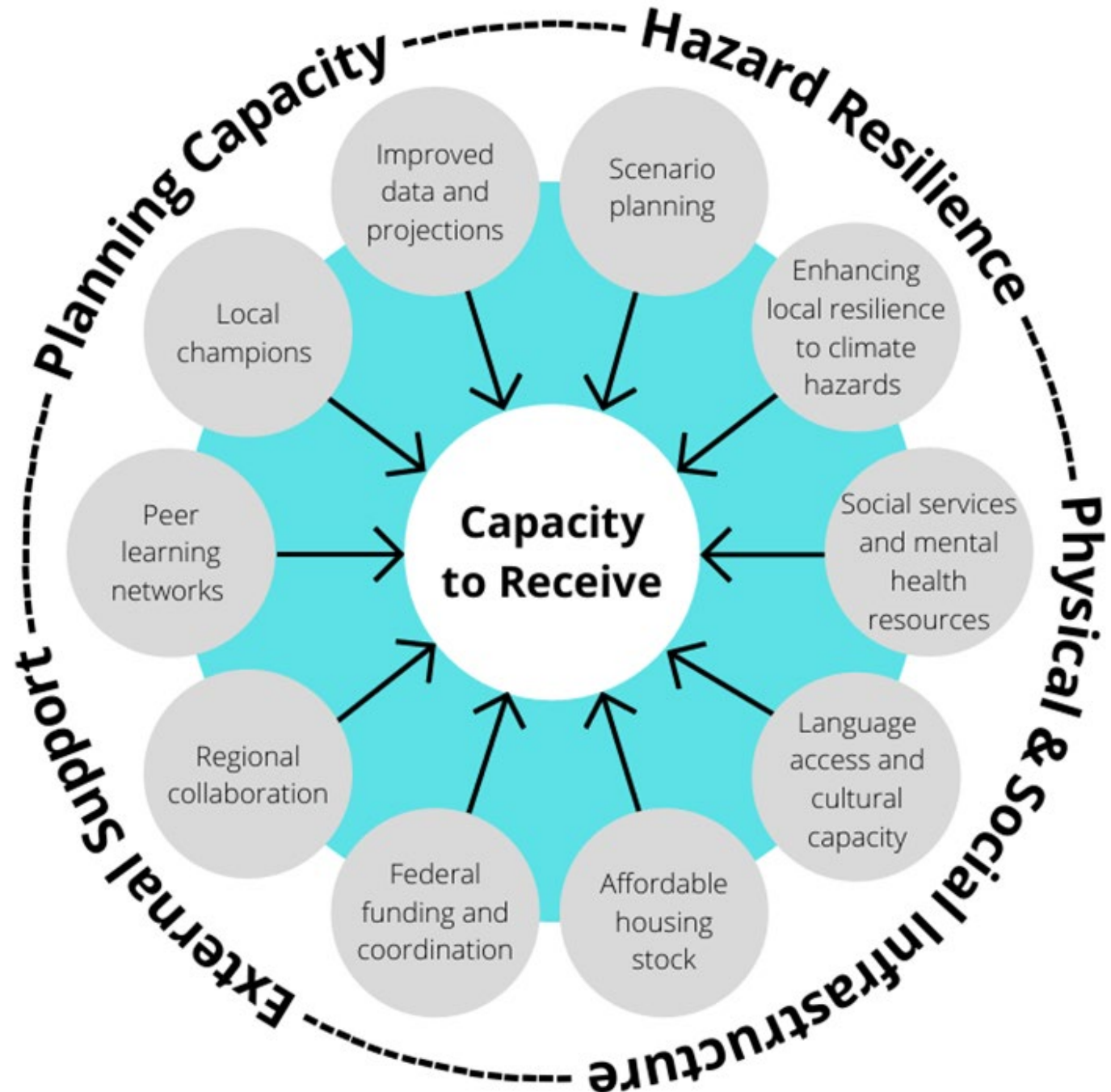


Image Source: Building Capacity to Receive: How Four Communities in the U.S. are Preparing for Climate Driven In-Migration, 2022.



**“Thirty seven million acres is all the
Michigan we will ever have”**

William G. Milliken

Visit us at the Vendor Reception!



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Selected Readings and Resources

1. **Building Capacity to Receive: How Four Communities in the U.S. are Preparing for Climate Driven In-Migration**, Hickey, (2022)
2. **Lead with Listening: A Guidebook For Community Conversations On Climate Migration**, Climigration Network
3. **Planning for Community Resilience in Michigan, A Comprehensive Handbook**, (2017)
4. **MI Funding Hub - Find Funding**
5. **U.S. Climate Resiliency Toolkit – Find Funding**
6. **Climate Zoning**, Christopher Serkin, (2024)
7. **The Great Lakes and Climate-Induced Human Migration**, Harder, (2022)
8. **Climate Migration’s Impact on Housing Security in the United States** Recommendations for Receiving Communities, Tim Robustelli, Helen Bonnyman, & Yuliya Panfil, (2024)
9. **Climate Havens as a form of Transformative Climate Adaptation: Definition, Evaluation Framework and Recommendations**, Yeom et al., (2026)

Sources and Further Reading

1. [What Is Climate Resilience And Why Does It Matter? Center for Climate and Energy Solutions, \(2019\)](#)
2. [National Hurricane Center Tropical Cyclone Report, Hurricane Helene \(2024\)](#)
3. [APA PAS Practical Guidance, Climate Mobility, Andrzejczak \(2026\)](#)
4. [Climate Change, Environmental Stressors, And Mixed Migration, Marland \(2022\)](#)
5. [The Climate Haven, Cinnamon Carlarne Hirokawa & Keith H. Hirokawa, \(2024\)](#)
6. [Climate Migration 101: An Explainer, Lawrence Huang \(2023\)](#)
7. [Climate Zoning, Christopher Serkin, \(2024\)](#)
8. [Climate Havens as a form of Transformative Climate Adaptation: Definition, Evaluation Framework and Recommendations, Yeom et al., \(2026\)](#)
9. [Climate Migration's Impact on Housing Security in the United States Recommendations for Receiving Communities, Tim Robustelli, Helen Bonnyman, & Yuliya Panfil, \(2024\)](#)
10. [Equitable Climate Migration Planning Requires New Evidence and Investments, Junod, \(2024\)](#)
11. [Exploring Climate Mobility Strategies Through Scenario Planning, Gorey, \(2026\)](#)
12. [MI Funding Hub - Find Funding](#)
13. [The Great Lakes and Climate-Induced Human Migration, Harder, \(2022\)](#)
14. [Building Capacity to Receive: How Four Communities in the U.S. are Preparing for Climate Driven In-Migration, Hickey, \(2022\)](#)
15. [Horizon Scanning: A Practitioner's Guide Produced by the Innovation Special Interest Group of the Institute of Risk Management](#)
16. [Lead with Listening: A Guidebook For Community Conversations On Climate Migration, Climigration Network](#)
17. [Madison, Wisconsin as a Climate Haven: Infrastructure, Environmental Justice, and Community Voice, Heffner, \(2026\)](#)
18. [Planning for Community Resilience in Michigan, A Comprehensive Handbook, \(2017\)](#)
19. [Mixed Migration Center, Climate Change, Environmental Stressors, And Mixed Migration, Linekar et al., \(2022\)](#)
20. [Modeling Climate-Driven Changes In U.S. Buildings Energy Demand, Brown et al., \(2014\)](#)
21. [Pas Quicknotes: Managed Retreat, Andrzejczak, \(2024\)](#)
22. [Value of Urban Forests, USDA Forest Service](#)
23. [Wayne County Resilience Hub Network](#)