



Creating Better Futures

POLICY BRIEF SERIES 2024

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About the Series

The Michigan Municipal League's **Creating Better Futures** policy brief series provides focused research summaries and recommendations on some of the most pressing issues facing Michigan communities now and in the coming years. Research by Citizens Research Council of Michigan and Altarum (2023) shows troubling trends for Michigan's population and economy. Stagnating to declining population by 2035, a decreasing number of working-age people, and a continued shift in the global economy away from Michigan's historic economic stronghold—the auto industry—all pose significant challenges for the state's economic and social well-being.

With limits on their ability to fund the type of services and community infrastructure needed to retain and attract businesses and workforce, municipal leaders have not been able to fully invest in the elements needed to create thriving communities. Add to this the increasing need for communities to address climate change and disaster resilience, a rapidly accelerating pace of technology change, and increasing social discord, and it is clear that local leaders need tools and additional resources if Michigan is going to shift the gloomy projections for our population and economic growth.

This short policy brief series will help communities plan for current and future conditions by providing some essential background information and exploring local policy options on topics related to these challenges, including:

- Housing
- Climate resilience
- Local economies and small business support

The series builds on the League's long-time work helping municipalities create thriving places that drive local and statewide prosperity. We have convened our members and partners to dive into the challenges posed by accelerating changes in our communities, whether those are economic, demographic, technological, or environmental. All these efforts have emphasized the need for resilient local systems—for communities that can learn, innovate, adapt, and prosper even in the face of adversity.

These policy briefs are informed by this work and highlight relevant research and models that local communities can use to tackle solutions to evolving needs and opportunities.

About the League

The Michigan Municipal League (the League) is the premier statewide association representing more than 500 full-service cities, villages, and urban townships. We are dedicated to making Michigan's communities better by thoughtfully innovating programs, energetically connecting ideas and people, actively serving members with resources and services, and passionately inspiring positive change for Michigan's greatest centers of potential: its communities.

And because every industry needs research and development (R&D) to grow and find new solutions, our Policy Research Labs team serves that role for Michigan's municipalities. Through a deep bench of expertise, including local government scientists and policy wonks, the Labs team does research on, tests, and develops innovative approaches to local governance and community vitality. Our work enables local leaders to engage in forward-thinking action on big or emerging issues. We focus on the latest trends in planning and community development with an eye on helping Michigan cities and villages become more economically, socially, and physically resilient and adaptable.

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