Urban Growth Report Roundtable
February 23, 2024
Meeting Notes
By Georgia Langer, Council Office Support Intern

<u>Introduction</u>
- Catherine Ciarlo introduced the discussion and called for introductions.
- The people in the room shared their names and their roles.
- Malu Wilkinson introduced the forecast, noting that that the forecast is just data, and it is not a plan.

<u>PowerPoint</u>
Staff discussed how the regional forecasts fit into the urban growth report assessment. They shared context that the forecast is not a plan, but rather it is a forecast. The forecast is updated every 6 years, there have been multiple peer reviews, and these projections are not the only factor in the UGM decision. The presenters acknowledged the uncertainty of the forecast. They also shared the regional forecast geography.

Due to technical difficulties, the recording of this roundtable started around slide two of the presentation

Staff introduced Dennis Yee and Josh Harwood, the Metro economists.

<u>Discussion - Economic Forecasts with Josh Harwood and Dennis Yee</u>
Comment: Remarked that data comes from somewhere, and there are lenses and frames put onto data, which changes how the data is seen. The commenter shared that there are humans that collect the data, and they should be transparent about that.

Presenters shared the population growth components. They discussed the MSA net change and migration rates and fertility assumptions. Dennis Yee shared that economists are generally in agreement with the MSA fertility and mortality assumptions. He shared that birth rates are expected to fall, and they have seen a decline over the years.

Question: Why are we using fertility when we are talking about birth rate?

Response: They are the same thing on an economic standpoint, and the presenters will change the language in the future.

The presenters discussed the natural change, which is births minus deaths. The presenters shared that the declining birth rates are the biggest factor that makes this forecast different than other forecasts.

Question: Do you think that the recession and COVID, as well as the financial stressors that relate to that, impact whether people decide to have children?

Response: Wealthier countries have fewer children. When our cost of living has risen as it has, people who cannot afford to live here move. We want to figure out how people can be able to afford to live here. Also, some of these are just national trends, and as an urban region, we look a lot like the nation in terms of natural change.

Question: Having kids, owning a home, and buying a home is a huge cost. What would the relationship be between affordable housing and the natural rate?

Response: There are implications to housing prices going down that are very bad. The thing that would be concerning is that people would be like "why would I buy housing if it will be cheaper next year?"
Response 2: Housing affordability and the economy translates into the migration part rather than natural change.

Comment: Affordability is a policy choice around the urban growth boundary, manufacturing, housing supply. It is a policy choice that the people here get to make, and that should be noted.

Question: Is regional migration the same as in-migration?

Response: Yes, there is migration within the metro area – that is not reflected as "in-migration". There have been stark differences from what they have seen in the past.

Presenters discussed net migration, noting that they think that they will have migration overall, and they expect quality of life to continue attracting migrants. They shared that affordability and cost of living are factors for moving. They also shared that climate refugees are something they are thinking about.

Comment: We are in a recession.

Response: Yee responded that he does not think that they are not in a recession; rather they are quite possibly in a "soft landing".

Response 2: When we look at how people are behaving, people are spending money on travel now, and the supply of services is not unbalanced.

Presenters shared that the other input to affordability is wealth, so it is important to discuss how we can improve wealth. They also discussed that there is increasing diversity. Yee shared that while they may imagine that race and ethnicity impact housing, he cannot determine what the driving factor is to drive future changes. The government data is lacking in race and ethnicity breakdowns.

Question: Is Hispanic its own category that also double counts more than one box?

Response: If a Hispanic person checked Hispanic, as well as another race, they just put them into the Hispanic category and not the race category.

Question: What is the influence of remote work? Also, are undocumented people are counted, and if not, how could we help with that?

Response: Before the pandemic, we had the second highest rate of work-from-home. Work-from-home presents a difficulty for taxes. For example, everyone at Metro can work from home in Vancouver and pay lower taxes. What they thought was going to happen in 15 years surrounding remote work happened within 18 months.
Response 2: The census data likely does not count undocumented people because of self-reporting limitations

Response 3: We recognize the limitations there.

Comment: We should look at the ways that we support communities that have not historically had access to homeownership and how that ties into affordability and education.

The presenters shared the regional demographic outlook. They shared the employment-population ratio in terms of labor force participation. They shared the MSA employment outlook.

Comment: It would be important to see us compared to the national average.

Response: We have a higher labor force participation than the US average.

Request: Please share comparisons in the future. In places of higher employment population ratios, it is often in higher cost of living areas

Presenters shared the amount of employment growth sector. They also shared the sector-specific forecast, which highlights the changes in jobs forecast from 2024-2044.

Comment: We are not looking at the fact that we have an overly educated population and it would be interesting to see specific modeling for the quality of our workforce.

Question: For farm and forestry, do you divide it up into working in the field versus packaging jobs?

Response: The employment forecast does not include farm workers. These are government data sources and the Bureau of Labor statistics and other government categories. They are not counting the lumberjacks and farm workers because they do not have that category in the data. There are sources that count these, but they only do annual statistics.

Question: Is there data to represent the nonprofits as they ebb and flow, based on funding? What do you have based on nonprofit work.?

Response: We cannot forecast every single employer because there would be a lot of biases. However, we do have more nonprofits than other places.

Presenters shared that manufacturing will be better here than most of the country. Presenters shared that the key takeaways are not that this is a plan, but this is simply a look of where they are today. This is the picture that they are seeing ad they are trying to do that without judgement and recognizing that this is not a perfect model. This is not something that they are married to, and they are open to discussion.