

President's Message

May 2020

The Coronavirus pandemic will bring significant changes to the future of the greater Green Bay area. As a community, it is important to be thinking now about the short and the long-term effects that are likely to transpire. The short-term impacts and our responses to them may set the stage for how we as a community address the long-term effects. The long-term effects will produce significant opportunities and raise challenges for our community.

Foresight as a strategy to discern plausible futures is impacted by **trends, events and choices**. The COVID pandemic captures all three of these critical elements of foresight. The pandemic is an event of epic proportions and has significant power in changing the direction and/or accelerating current trends. Two trends that appear to be accelerating and have long-term potential effects on the greater Green Bay area are:

- significant expansion of the remote workforce
- increasing numbers of individuals, especially the Millennial and Gen Z generations, deciding to move away from large urban centers to smaller urban areas.

The advancement of technology and connectivity have given rise to remote workers, those who have the capability to work from any location, but mostly are working from their homes. This shift to employees doing more of their work from a remote location has been trending for the last several years. The onslaught of the COVID pandemic is likely to accelerate this trend by a substantial margin.

[Global Workplace Analytics estimates](#) that 56 percent of the U.S. workforce holds a job that is compatible with working remotely and that by the end of 2021, 25-30 percent of the workforce could be working remotely. The *New York Times* [recently reported](#) that Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg anticipates that half of his 48,000 employees will be working remotely in the next decade. Other major companies making moves in a similar direction are Google, Capital One, Amazon and Nationwide Insurance. Rich McGhee, in "[With the Sudden Shift to WFH, Attracting Talent Will Never be the Same](#)," provided advice to employers on attracting high quality workers in our high work from home climate.

Accelerating this trend will bring a sea change in the workplace and brings with it some obvious benefits for employees such as flexibility, ability to work from home, increasing time with family and being able to work from any location. It also poses several challenges for employees and employers: inability to "unplug" from work, loneliness, distractions, motivation, performance management, onboarding and shifting organizational cultures. The [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#) (BLS) and the [American Community Survey](#) (ACS) are two good sources of data on this trend.

The second trend that may accelerate in the face of the pandemic is movement of individuals from our largest urban centers to smaller urban areas. William H. Frey, senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution's Metropolitan Policy Program has documented this trend in a [recent report](#). Frey argues that the decade from 2010 to 2020 looked like it was going to be the decade of the large urban city. The decade started

out that way with population growth rates at high levels in most of the large urban centers. But across the decade changes took place at different rates for many of the large cities. The three largest urban centers, New York, Los Angeles and Chicago saw a steady decline that turned negative by the middle of the decade. As Frey noted, “Not all 53 major metro areas followed this exact pattern. Many experienced in-migration at different levels over the course of the decade, and others experienced out-migration at different levels. But the broad patterns show large numbers of migrants relocating into smaller-sized metropolitan areas.” While many of the large urban centers continued to have positive growth rates through the decade, most saw their growth rate decline.

The search for talent is a major focus for many organizations in the greater Green Bay area and northeast Wisconsin. What do these trends mean for the greater Green Bay area? How can we capitalize on these two trends? Are we positioned correctly to take advantage of these trends? Do these trends pose any risks for Green Bay. For example, will it heighten the competition for local talent? If some of our local talent lives in Green Bay but works for firms in Seattle, Austin, Boston, and San Francisco, is that a benefit or a loss to our community?

What do you think will be the impact of these two converging trends?