

**From:** Julie Ritter  
**To:** Planning; City Council  
**Subject:** Demographics And The Land Use Plan  
**Date:** Monday, May 18, 2026 1:58:54 PM  
**Attachments:** [Michigan's population equation is upside down Det News 5-16-26.pdf](#)

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Hello People Planning for the Future of Ann Arbor,

Attached is an article that clearly lays out the fact that your unsupported projections of 40,000 new residents in Ann Arbor in the near future is an aspirational vision. You all know the rigorously researched and supported Ann Arbor Community Foundation report that states the entire county will only need 15,000 units by 2045 (<https://www.aaacf.org/news/housing-study>).

Per this very professional report, no systemic housing crisis or housing shortage exists, but we do have a housing mismatch with real need for affordable rental housing (esp. single-earner households without a college degree) and affordable housing for elderly/aging. Public funds would be better used at the lower part of the market (i.e., land trusts, co-ops, etc.--not Arbor South!). The missing middle is very hard to see unless you squint and use your imagination.

Your are punishing the current citizens in hopes of attracting people who will not come. You were all ecstatic pushing through this unfinished plan. I could list the familiar names that massaged this process along to deliver what you are celebrating as the be all end all of municipal fundraising. Now that you have experienced this thrilling event, what follows?

Again, as last year, we spent Mother's Day driving around the hinterlands of Ann Arbor. Once again we were impressed by the number of new housing developments and individual houses, on various sized lots, with various sized residences, with porches and decks and landscaping. And the smaller and/or older houses that are still charming and attractive. The surrounding municipalities have also kept up pace as far as providing substantial and meaningful services and amenities. Chelsea, for example, is outpacing Ann Arbor in terms of concentrated cultural richness. The education systems in these outlying towns are equal to Ann Arbor's in many ways. The real estate is less expensive than Ann Arbor. And the taxes are much lower.

It will be interesting to see things unfold. Ann Arbor city council has been poor mouthing

our city in an effort to pass the CLUP, yet seems to have all kinds of extra money for favorite projects like helping people buy electric vehicles and building parking decks for favorite supporters. How about helping people buy houses or pay rent?

I know there is a marketing effort afoot to entice as many of the almost 700,000 living alumni of the University of Michigan to move to Ann Arbor as possible. Is this what you are counting on? I have looked at the demographics of the alumni and it seems like a stretch. Even if you succeed only partially, what will a city of wealthy elders mean for the four values you espoused in the CLUP: diversity, sustainability, equity and dynamicism? Especially wealthy elders who are only part time residents?

I really would love to understand your reasoning. What kind of a city do you really want Ann Arbor to become? For decades I have listened to Regents of the University of Michigan say they wanted to make Ann Arbor like Palo Alto. Palo Alto is half the size of Ann Arbor, and is on San Francisco Bay, between San Jose and San Francisco. People living in Ann Arbor will have to make do with rolling farmland, miles of exurbs and Detroit. Detroit is certainly rebounding, but it is still limited in its offerings. And Chicago in the other direction, 4 or 5 hours away. Other than expensive housing, it is hard to imagine how Ann Arbor can compete with Palo Alto. And how do 40,000 more people bring this aspiration closer to life?

Respectfully,

Julie Ritter

Attachment

## Michigan's population equation is upside down. Economists are worried

[Beth LeBlanc](#)

The Detroit News

Updated May 16, 2026, 12:08 p.m. ET

*Lansing* — Michigan's population is expected to decline or slow in growth through 2030 after the Great Lakes State recorded its fifth consecutive year of more people dying than being born.

The population phenomenon of "natural decrease" — where deaths exceeded births — that began in 2020 has continued annually through 2024, even as migration to Michigan helped boost the overall population, said state demographer Jaclyn Butler.

"Population growth in the long term would require consistent and higher migration to offset steepening natural decrease," said Butler on Friday at a gathering of economists, budget experts and lawmakers.

The continued trend, which economists warn could have negative consequences for the state's future, is particularly perplexing given that 2020 marked the first time in Michigan's recorded history [since at least 1900](#) that the state experienced a natural decrease. During the first year of the trend, Michigan was ravaged by thousands of coronavirus-related deaths during the height of the pandemic.

Michigan was trending toward a natural decrease prior to the pandemic, but didn't break the threshold of deaths outpacing births until 2020, according to the state demographer. The death and birth rates through 2024 are the most recent state data available. But [U.S. Census Bureau estimates](#) indicate deaths continued to outpace births in Michigan during the first six months of 2025.

Additionally, the state's aging population, experts said Friday, has contributed to the state's shrinking labor force, as more and more baby boomers retire from the workforce with fewer younger people to replace them. Michigan's labor force has decreased every month since January 2025, said Wayne Rourke, director of labor market information for the Michigan Center for Data and Analytics.

"Historically, Michigan's labor force rises and falls slowly with the long economic cycles," Rourke said. "But this recent drop of more than 90,000 workers in one year is one of the steepest declines we've seen outside of a major event."

The population and labor force trends were presented Friday to state lawmakers and budget forecasters as they held their biannual Consensus Revenue Estimating Conference, a meeting held at the Capitol to predict future tax revenues around which the state budget is built.

The meeting concluded with fiscal experts revising their state tax revenue predictions upward for the coming fiscal year, predicting overall revenue of \$33.58 billion. Despite steady growth in state tax dollars, Michigan officials expressed concern Friday about an expected \$1 billion shortfall, largely due to federal cuts baked into last year's One Big Beautiful Bill Act.

"It's going to require tough decisions to come into balance," State Budget Director Jenn Flood said Friday.

## **Population, older workforce trends put pressure on state revenue**

But experts warned — aside from any federal policy impacts to the state budget — the state's aging workforce could eventually present its own challenges to Michigan's bottom line, potentially depleting the state's income tax revenue.

"If we, in the long term, have fewer working-age people, particularly as their share remains flat or declines, that could mean fewer people paying income tax and less revenue from payroll jobs," Butler said.

While Michigan's aging workforce is not unique to the nation, it is among the states with some of the largest shares of older individuals, Butler noted. Michigan's median age of 40.1 years is the 13th highest in the nation, she said, and Michigan is among the top 15 states for its number of baby boomers.

Rourke noted that roughly a third of the state's population was over the age of 55 as of 2024.

At the same time, the state's population of residents ages 5 to 17 years old is expected to continue declining by about 280,000, or 18%, through 2050, Butler said.

State Rep. Ann Bollin, a Brighton Township Republican who chairs the House Appropriations Committee, said the population issues plaguing the state are "serious long-term challenges Michigan cannot ignore."

"Our school-aged population is declining, and workforce participation is being impacted by lower birth rates and an aging population," Bollin said in a statement. "If we want long-term economic strength, Michigan must do more to attract job creators, families and workers to our state and create an environment where people want to build their future here."

## **Retirees keep 'lid' on Michigan's unemployment rate**

It's the state's aging population and the resultant increase in workers aging out of the labor force that appear to have kept a cap on the state's ongoing 5% unemployment rate, said Gabriel Ehrlich, an economic forecaster and director of the University of Michigan's Research Seminar in Quantitative Economics.

"You have to be officially a part of the labor force to be counted as unemployed," Ehrlich said. "So the decline in the participation rate kept the lid on the unemployment rate even as the household employment count was falling. We expect the decline in Michigan's labor force participation rate to continue as demographics work against us."

That 5% unemployment rate, according to UM economists, is likely to remain steady through 2028 in part because of those retiring from the labor force.

The changes in workforce participation haven't had immediate effects on this year's tax revenue. State tax revenue overall grew slightly, despite decreases in the sales tax revenue due to the elimination of the sales tax on gas as part of a [larger road funding deal](#).

In January, experts predicted state-level taxes for the 2026 fiscal year would bring in about \$33.27 billion. But on Friday, they revised their estimates upward to \$33.58 billion.

"Michigan's revenues remain stable in the shadow of federal uncertainty," state Treasurer Rachel Eubanks said.

At the federal level, real domestic product growth or inflation-adjusted economic output is expected to come in at about 2.2% in 2026, 2.1% in 2027 and 2% in 2028, according to economists.

Core inflation at the national level should ease through 2026 and return to a normal range in 2027, according to UM's RSQE. Even with higher oil prices putting pressure on those rates, the geopolitical supply chain disruptions are expected to stay "relatively contained."

Ehrlich noted the nation started at a "pretty low inflation-adjusted oil price" ahead of the Iran war-related spike when looking at historical trends, and that oil price is expected to decrease moving forward. The Brent price of oil was \$109.11 per barrel later Friday afternoon, the world benchmark price.

Those predictions, said UM senior economist Yinou Zhang, are based on the expectation that tensions in Iran will not escalate further and that the [Strait of Hormuz](#) will open within the next few months.

Other risks that could affect the national predictions are policy decisions related to trade and fiscal policy and the impact of artificial intelligence, Zhang said.

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