

# I. INTRODUCTION

## A. Establishment and Purpose

The Millennial Task Force was established by Common Council File Number 191180, adopted November 26, 2019, to address the problem of “brain drain” from Milwaukee. The purpose of the Task Force was to make recommendations to the Common Council regarding proposals to attract and retain Millennials, who are individuals born between 1981 and 1996. During meetings, Task Force members clarified that their proposals specifically target three groupings: those in pre-college between ages 15 and 23, early workforce individuals between ages 23 and 30, and people between the ages of 30 and 38 with families.

The city and overall region’s difficulty in attracting and retaining young, talented individuals is well-documented. In “Evidence of Brain Drain in the City of Milwaukee & the State of Wisconsin,” the City of Milwaukee’s Office of Workforce Development highlights Milwaukee’s and Wisconsin’s brain drain, or the departure of educated and professional people from an area. In particular, data suggest that Milwaukee has an acute problem keeping students and luring new ones to the city to attend college. According to 2011-2015 Census figures, Milwaukee had an average net loss of 2,412 18- and 19-year-olds each year during that time period.<sup>i</sup> More recent figures spanning from 2010 to 2019 show Milwaukee’s population of 15- to 19-year-olds dropped from 50,460 to 43,302, a decrease of 14.2% over the decade. During that same time frame, the population of 20- to 24-year-olds declined from 56,785 to 48,119, a decrease of 15.3% while the number of 35- to 44-year-olds grew from 73,149 to 73,788, an increase of only 0.9%.<sup>ii</sup>

For all age ranges, Milwaukee’s overall net migration, which is the sum of all people who have migrated to and from the city, has gradually worsened over the last decade, amplifying the city’s need to bring in and keep young talent. Between 2010 and 2014, the city’s net migration stood at -5,113 people, between 2012 and 2016 it dropped to -7,808, and between 2014 and 2018 the net migration further fell to -9,425 people.<sup>iii</sup> In examining the broader metro area, Milwaukee ranks 370th out of 384 metro areas across the US in terms of net domestic migration.<sup>iv</sup>

Despite Milwaukee’s longstanding challenges of enticing Millennials to attend school, pursue careers, and settle in the city, there is reason to believe that Milwaukee has the right ingredients to become a thriving destination for young people. Members of the Millennial Task Force, representing nonprofit and for-profit organizations that do business in the city, met more than a

dozen times to brainstorm creative ways to develop Milwaukee into a prosperous place for Millennials. Members discussed measures that City government could implement and aspects of City services that could be re-thought and re-designed to improve residents' overall quality of life. To inform these ideas, members shared their personal and professional frustrations, experiences, and hopes for their community while delving into national, state, and local issues as inspiration for new concepts that Milwaukee could pursue.

In totality, the Task Force's discussion and research activities advance the recommendations it created for Milwaukee's leadership. These proposals concern issue areas such as education, employment, racial justice, health, and infrastructure, and their ideas range from small tweaks to drastic alterations that could spark excitement among the city's Millennial cohort, as well as young people considering moving to Milwaukee. In formulating recommendations, members sought to balance ambitious goals achievable in the long-term with relatively easy fixes they believe the Common Council could implement in a matter of weeks or months. The proposals set forth by the Task Force represent a mix of new and innovative solutions and support for initiatives that are already underway to underscore their importance.

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<sup>i</sup> US Census Bureau. "Metro Area-to-Metro Area Migration Flows: 2011-2015 American Community Survey." <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2015/demo/geographic-mobility/metro-to-metro-migration.html>

<sup>ii</sup> US Census Bureau. "ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates." <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=milwaukee%20city&tid=ACSDP1Y2019.DP05&hidePreview=true>

<sup>iii</sup> US Census Bureau. "Metro-to-Metro Migration Flows." <https://www.census.gov/topics/population/migration/guidance/metro-to-metro-migration-flows.html>

<sup>iv</sup> Milwaukee Journal Sentinel. "Milwaukee lagging its Midwestern peers in a key metric of economic vitality: population growth." <https://www.jsonline.com/story/news/solutions/2020/05/28/milwaukee-lags-midwestern-cities-key-metric-population-growth/5262045002/>