

Information Item

Community Development Committee



Meeting date: June 15, 2026

Topic

Immigrant Economic Contributions and Small Business Metro Surge Impact

District(s), member(s):	All
Policy/legal reference:	Minn. Stat. § 473.242, Imagine 2050 Regional Goals, 2025 Regional Economic Framework
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Division/department:	Community Development / Research

Background

Metropolitan Council staff are conducting research to document the contribution of immigrants to the regional economy as well as the long-term effects of Operation Metro Surge on small businesses and the residents who depend on them. This project will help the Council to:

1. Understand factors that may hinder economic growth and development in support of the strategies identified in the [2025 Regional Economic Framework](#)
2. Inform Council policy, program, and operational directions
3. Achieve the [Imagine 2050](#) goals of a region that is dynamic and resilient, healthy and safe, and equitable and inclusive.
 - Understand trends affecting the workforce and how local government can support small business success in response to these trends.

At the June 15 Community Development Committee (CDC) meeting, Council staff will provide an overview of the study design and research activities. Council staff will also solicit Committee input about recommended research audiences, stakeholders, and research analysis approaches.

Council staff are pursuing a three-part approach to assess the effects of Operation Metro Surge on the regional economy. First, a combination of existing research and new quantitative analyses will highlight immigrants' contributions to a dynamic and resilient regional economy. Second, qualitative research with small businesses will provide insight into how Operation Metro Surge has affected Main Street businesses across the region. Third, a stakeholder convening is proposed to identify strategies for strengthening long-term economic resilience.

Element 1: Immigrant Contributions to the Regional Economy

The Council has previously published quantitative research on the contributions of immigrants to the regional economy in the [2025 Regional Economic Framework](#). Council staff are building on this work through new analyses that provide a timely assessment of immigrant contributions, serving as context for evaluating the impact of Operation Metro Surge on small businesses. This research examines the role of immigrants in population and workforce growth, highlights their presence in the region's industrial and occupational structure, and quantifies their contributions to taxes, GDP, and employment.

Element 2: Small Businesses and the Effects of Metro Surge

The Qualitative Research Team in CD-Research is analyzing the long-term effects of Operation Metro Surge on the region's small businesses and the residents who depend on them throughout the seven-county region. Focusing on *main street businesses* (shops that serve everyday needs of residents, such as restaurants, grocery stores, retail, and local services), the research will identify the short and long-term effects of federal immigration enforcement. Observations and short interviews with all businesses within eight small geographic areas will bring the voices of small businesses into focus. These small areas, called economic nodes, are representative of affected businesses generally throughout the seven-county region. Interview topics include current conditions, experiences during Metro Surge, access to relief funds and overall advice from the businesses to policy makers.

Element 3: Convening stakeholders

Council staff are currently exploring the possibility of organizing a convening on this topic. A convening holds potential to bring together stakeholders to identify long-term resiliency strategies. The effort could bring together stakeholders from the public sector, community lenders, business organizations, and impacted entrepreneurs to identify gaps in existing support systems, improve coordination, and co-develop solutions. Through a series of listening sessions and working groups, the convening could surface on-the-ground challenges, ensure assistance is accessible and culturally responsive, and produce actionable recommendations to guide policy, funding, and long-term resilience strategies.

Requested advice from Committee Members

As Council staff continue to work on this project, the personal and professional expertise of Committee members is essential to direct future activities. Staff request feedback on the following topics:

- What long-term effects of Metro Surge are you seeing in your community?
- Based on your observations, how have small businesses contributed to Imagine 2050's vision for a dynamic and resilient region?
- Who are the audiences you anticipate for these research results?
- What key conversations and outcomes would you hope to see emerge from a post-Metro Surge small business resiliency convening?

