

City Flourishing Report Envision Greater Green Bay

The City Flourishing Report and Envision Greater Green Bay

Together Green Bay publishes the annual City Flourishing Report, based on the six domains of the Harvard Flourishing Report. This year, Together Green Bay invited Envision Greater Green Bay to provide a futurist perspective to the content in the report, using strategic foresight analysis through which to view the report. While summary and condensed material is used in the published City Flourishing Report, what follows is the complete content that Envision Greater Green Bay provided to the project.

Strategic Foresight: A One-Page Summary

Envision Greater Green Bay is one of the only organizations in the United States applying Strategic Foresight systematically at the community-wide level. Envision's purpose is to embed Foresight thinking into our community to better prepare for the future. Some communities stagnate and fail, while others are vibrant and succeed in the future. We want the Greater Green Bay area to continue to be a vibrant community in the future.

Strategic Foresight is a disciplined way for organizations to anticipate change, prepare for disruption, and shape a better future rather than simply reacting to events after they happen. In a world where change is accelerating rapidly, organizations need to become more proactive, flexible, and forward-looking.

At its core, Strategic Foresight is a tool that helps leaders identify the major trends, events, and decisions that could influence organizations and communities over the next 10 to 15 years. Instead of assuming the future will look like the present, it encourages us to explore multiple plausible futures and prepare for them. This allows leaders to make smarter decisions today that improve their chances of success tomorrow.

A major value of Strategic Foresight is that it helps organizations and communities move beyond "business as usual." Many can become locked into a baseline assumption that current trends will continue. When the world begins moving in a different direction, they may fail to recognize the warning signs and can be seriously disrupted. Strategic Foresight monitors early signals of change so we can respond sooner and more effectively.

The Strategic Foresight process follows a logical sequence of seven steps. It begins with **framing**, where we clearly define the issue or future question we want to examine. Next is the current **assessment**, which looks at the present situation and how it developed over time. The third step, **scanning for signals**, identifies important trends, events, and choices that may shape the future. The signals are distilled into the identification of key **drivers** of the future. Scenarios of plausible futures are then developed.

After developing these scenarios, leaders examine the **implications** of each one, asking what each future would mean for their mission, operations, and stakeholders. Then they identify **strategic options and actions** to move toward their preferred future. Finally, they engage in **monitoring**, tracking the key indicators and drivers that reveal which future is beginning to unfold.

In sum, Strategic Foresight gives organizations a practical framework for thinking long-term, preparing for uncertainty, and making choices that influence the future in a positive direction.

Happiness and Life Satisfaction Domain:

Future Implications for Greater Green Bay (10–15 Years)

Over the next decade, happiness and life satisfaction in Greater Green Bay will likely become less about material stability alone and more about connection, meaning, and belonging. National research and local signals suggest that communities with strong relationships, trusted institutions, and shared purpose will outperform others in overall well-being, even when economic conditions are similar.

Greater Green Bay enters this period with important strengths: a young population, strong family networks, a culture of volunteerism, and a high level of participation in religious communities. These social foundations could become a major competitive advantage for flourishing if they are intentionally cultivated.

However, emerging pressures, including rising housing costs, substance use challenges, increasing loneliness, and rapid technological change, could erode life satisfaction if social connection weakens or if younger generations struggle to find meaning and belonging in work and community life.

The implication for the region is clear: happiness will increasingly be shaped by the quality of relationships and institutions that surround people, not just by economic growth. Communities that strengthen the four pathways to flourishing—family, work, education, and religious or civic community—will likely see higher well-being, stronger civic trust, and greater long-term resilience.

If Greater Green Bay invests in environments where people feel connected, purposeful, and hopeful about their future, the region could become a national model for community flourishing. If those connections weaken, however, life satisfaction may decline even in the presence of economic stability.

Future Takeaway (10–15 Years)

Happiness in Greater Green Bay will depend less on income and more on connection. Communities that strengthen relationships through family life, meaningful work, education, and faith or civic engagement will see higher life satisfaction. If these pathways weaken, through loneliness, addiction, or economic stress, well-being may decline even if the economy grows.

Provocative Question:

Will Greater Green Bay become a place where people merely live and work, or a place where people truly belong and flourish?

Possible Signals to Monitor:

1. Will people find meaning in work, or disengage from it?
→ Signals purpose vs. emptiness in daily life
2. Will addiction shift from substances to behaviors (digital, gambling, dopamine)?
→ Signals how unmet needs are expressing themselves
3. Will communities rebuild, or lose, belonging infrastructure?
→ Signals strength or collapse of social connection

Mental & Physical Health Domain:

Future Implications for Greater Green Bay (10–15 Years)

Over the next 10–15 years, health outcomes in Greater Green Bay will likely be shaped less by medical care alone and more by social and environmental conditions. National and regional research increasingly shows that factors such as housing stability, neighborhood safety, access to healthy food, transportation, and social connection influence health outcomes more than clinical care.

The data already shows large differences in life expectancy tied to poverty. If housing costs, income inequality, and access to care continue to diverge across neighborhoods, health disparities could widen significantly within the region.

However, Greater Green Bay also has an important advantage: a strong culture of collaboration among health systems, nonprofits, schools, employers, and faith communities. Initiatives like Connections for Mental Health demonstrate how cross-sector partnerships can create coordinated responses to complex health challenges.

Looking ahead, the communities that flourish will likely be those that treat health as a community-wide responsibility, not just a healthcare issue. Investments in housing stability, mental health literacy, community belonging, and early childhood support may prove just as important as investments in hospitals or clinics.

If Greater Green Bay continues building collaborative systems of care while addressing the upstream causes of poor health, the region could become a model for community-centered health and well-being.

Future Takeaway (10-15 Years)

Health in the next decade will be shaped more by where people live than by where they receive care. Communities that address housing, poverty, and social connection will see better health outcomes than those relying on healthcare systems alone.

Provocative Question:

Will Greater Green Bay treat health primarily as a medical challenge—or as a community design challenge?

Possible Signals to Monitor:

1. Will healthcare dollars flow into housing?
→ Signals structural change
2. Will AI replace, augment, or fragment mental health care?
→ Signals system design shift
3. Will loneliness and social connection be treated like medical conditions?
→ Signals cultural + policy transformation

Meaning & Purpose Domain:

Future Implications for Greater Green Bay (10-15 Years)

In the coming decade, meaning and purpose may become one of the most important drivers of community flourishing. Younger generations increasingly seek work and community experiences that provide direction, contribution, and belonging, not just income.

The rise in youth disengagement from both school and work suggests an emerging challenge: without meaningful pathways into adulthood, more young people may struggle to find direction and connection. This can affect not only employment outcomes but also mental health, civic engagement, and long-term life satisfaction.

Greater Green Bay's strong employment base, active faith communities, and volunteer culture offer powerful opportunities to address this challenge. If employers, schools, and community organizations intentionally connect young people to meaningful roles, through apprenticeships, service opportunities, mentorship, and career pathways, the region could strengthen purpose across generations.

Faith communities, service organizations, and civic groups may also play an increasingly important role in helping people connect their everyday lives to a larger story of meaning and contribution.

The future implication is clear: communities that create pathways for purpose will attract and retain the next generation of leaders, workers, and families.

Future Takeaway (10-15 Year)

In the next 10–15 years, communities that help young people find purpose and direction will be more resilient than those that focus only on employment numbers.

Provocative Question:

Will Greater Green Bay simply create jobs, or will it create meaningful pathways for people to contribute and belong?

Possible Signals to Monitor:

1. Will young people engage, or disconnect, from work and education?
→ Signals future pipeline of purpose and societal participation
2. Will faith and community institutions decline, adapt, or be replaced?
→ Signals where people derive meaning, identity, and belonging
3. Will early education (especially reading proficiency) strengthen, or fracture life trajectories?
→ Signals long-term capacity for purpose, agency, and contribution

Character & Virtue Domain:

Future Implications for Greater Green Bay (10-15 Years)

Character and virtue, qualities such as integrity, compassion, courage, and fairness, may become increasingly important as communities navigate rising social complexity and diversity.

Greater Green Bay's large nonprofit sector and strong culture of volunteerism reflect a long tradition of civic responsibility and service. These institutions serve as training grounds where individuals learn how to work across differences, build trust, and address community challenges.

As the region becomes more culturally diverse, the ability to build trust across racial, cultural, and economic lines will become a defining factor in community flourishing. Data showing lower flourishing levels among non-white residents highlights the importance of intentional relationship-building and inclusive leadership.

Looking forward, communities that cultivate character through service, leadership development, and cross-cultural engagement will likely experience higher levels of social trust and civic participation.

The implication is that flourishing communities are not just economically strong, they are morally and socially strong as well.

Future Takeaway (10-15 Years)

The next decade will test our community's ability to build trust across differences. Places that cultivate compassion, fairness, and civic responsibility will be better equipped to navigate change.

Provocative Question:

Will Greater Green Bay's growing diversity become a source of division, or a catalyst for deeper understanding and shared flourishing?

Possible Signals to Monitor:

1. Will civic engagement broaden, or concentrate among fewer people?
→ Signals depth vs. fragility of community responsibility and action
2. Will collaboration across differences increase, or remain siloed?
→ Signals equity, trust, and shared moral commitment
3. Will people feel responsible for the common good, or default to individualism?
→ Signals strength of collective character vs. self-focus

Close Social Relationships Domain:

Future Implications for Greater Green Bay (10-15 Years)

Across the United States, loneliness and social isolation are rising, even as digital connectivity increases. The U.S. Surgeon General has identified social isolation as a major public health concern, with impacts comparable to smoking or obesity.

Greater Green Bay's strong traditions of family life, community gatherings, and faith participation have historically provided protection against isolation. However, changes in work patterns, increased mobility, digital lifestyles, and the decline of traditional civic organizations could weaken these relational networks over time.

Communities that intentionally create spaces for belonging, through neighborhood initiatives, community groups, mentoring relationships, and inclusive civic organizations, will likely experience stronger well-being and resilience.

The region's growing cultural diversity also creates an opportunity to expand networks of friendship and belonging across communities.

In the coming decade, the most flourishing communities may be those that prioritize belonging as a key form of infrastructure, as important as roads, housing, or economic development.

Future Takeaway (10-15 Years)

Belonging may become one of the most important assets a community can cultivate. Strong relationships will increasingly determine whether people thrive or struggle.

Provocative Question:

Will Greater Green Bay remain a place where people know their neighbors, or become a place where people live side by side but remain strangers?

Possible Signals to Monitor:

1. Will people feel safe and included, or isolated and excluded?
→ Signals quality and accessibility of relationships across groups
2. Will relationships become more in-person, or shift further to digital/fragmented forms?
→ Signals depth vs. superficiality of social connection
3. Will everyday spaces (work, school, community) foster connection, or remain transactional?
→ Signals where relationships are actually being formed and sustained

Financial & Material Stability Domain:

Future Implications for Greater Green Bay (10-15 Years)

Greater Green Bay's economy has demonstrated strong growth and resilience over the past decade. However, economic growth does not automatically translate into financial stability for all residents.

Across the country, many communities are experiencing a growing gap between wages and the cost of housing, childcare, healthcare, and transportation. Even in regions with strong employment, many households continue to experience financial stress.

If these pressures increase, the region may face challenges related to housing affordability, workforce retention, and generational mobility.

At the same time, Greater Green Bay has a strong ecosystem of educational institutions, technical training programs, and workforce initiatives that can support upward mobility. Programs that help residents gain skills aligned with emerging industries, such as advanced manufacturing, healthcare, logistics, and technology, may play a critical role in strengthening financial stability.

In the coming decade, communities that connect education, workforce development, and economic opportunity will likely see the strongest outcomes in flourishing.

Future Takeaway (10-15 Years)

Economic growth alone does not guarantee flourishing. Communities must ensure that opportunity and stability are accessible across all neighborhoods and generations.

Provocative Question:

Will Greater Green Bay's economic growth translate into stability for families, or widen the gap between those thriving and those struggling?

Possible Signals to Monitor:

1. Will economic growth translate into household stability, or remain uneven?
→ Signals shared prosperity vs. hidden financial stress
2. Will pathways to living-wage careers expand, or leave segments behind?
→ Signals mobility vs. structural inequality
3. Will basic cost pressures (housing, food, childcare) stabilize, or outpace income?
→ Signals day-to-day financial security for families

Conclusion:

Across all six domains of flourishing, one pattern becomes clear: the future of well-being in Greater Green Bay will be shaped not only by economic strength but by the strength of relationships, institutions, and shared purpose.

Communities that intentionally invest in the pathways of family, work, education, and religious or civic community will likely see stronger outcomes across all domains of flourishing.

The opportunity before Greater Green Bay is not simply to grow, but to grow in ways that allow more people to truly flourish.