

Climate Migration and the Opportunity of Transformational Adaptation

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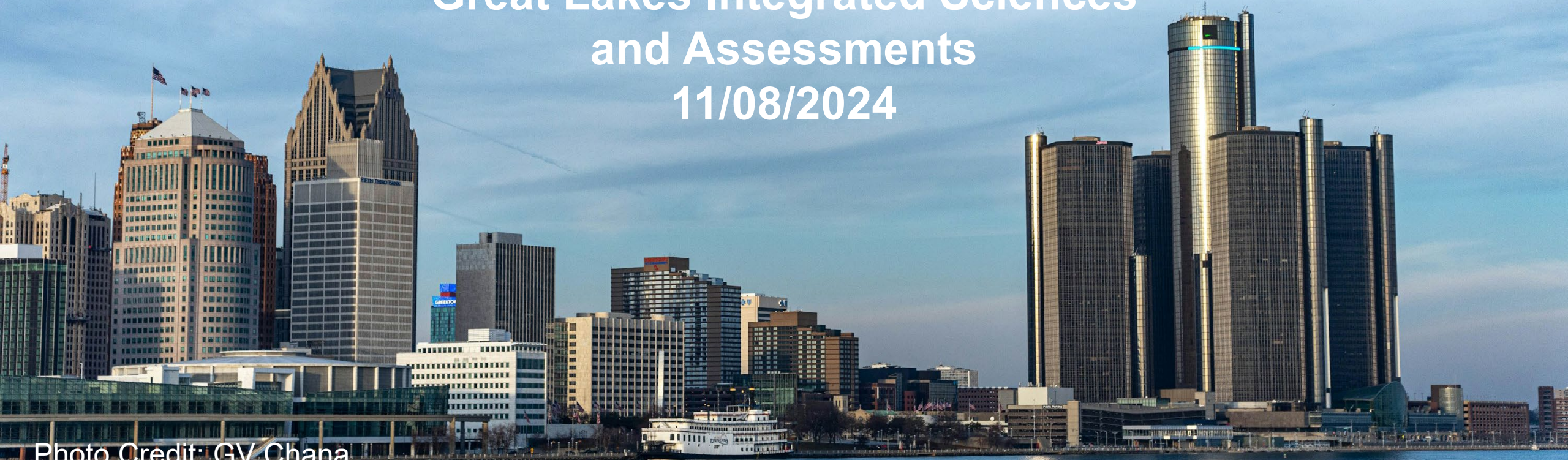


Photo Credit: GV Chana
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**You probably have seen prominent
media coverage about regional climate
havens and climate migration...**



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“It's inevitable that people will find their way back to a place frankly that can absorb that migration because we were built for bigger populations way back when. Around these great five lakes will be the sustainable global future.”

**-- Cuyahoga County Executive Chris Ronayne
as quoted by News5 Cleveland***



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“This is something that I don’t think scientists anticipated would draw so much public interest. It’s something that was really kind of a groundswell of interest from the masses. And that’s caught the attention of a lot of climatologists.”

**-- Steve Vavrus, Wisconsin State Climatologist
as quoted by PBS Wisconsin***



Photo Credit: Josh Sorenson
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But how widespread is this thinking?



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Officials Survey



Population

- **Cities/boroughs in 8 Great Lakes states**
- **Populations 5,000 and larger**
- **1,065 possible**

Qualtrics survey less than 10 minutes long

Officials Survey



Potential respondents:

- **City council clerks**
- **Planners/community development**
- **City Manager/Administrator**
- **Councilmembers/Mayors**

434 responses

- **Response rate of 41%**

In the last two years, **how frequently have those in your city government raised the possibility** that more people might move to your city in the future due to climate change?

	Count	%
Very often	15	(3)
Often	30	(7)
Sometimes	72	(17)
Rarely	122	(28)
Never	195	(45)
Total	434	

Regardless of whether or not they have raised this issue, **how do you think those in your city government would generally view the possibility** that more people might want to move to your city in the future due to climate change?

	Count	%
Very positively	44	(10)
Positively	166	(38)
Neither positively nor negatively	204	(47)
Negatively	17	(4)
Very negatively	3	(1)
Total	434	

Public Survey



By Devin Gill Brant, PhD Candidate,
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- 1,016 Great Lakes region residents
- Crowdsourcing platform
- Representative sample
- Awareness, support/opposition, policy response preferences



Public Survey



- **67% of respondents unaware of climate migration before taking the survey**
- **57% at least supportive of climate migration**
- **Exploring what informs awareness and attitudes**

An aerial photograph of a city waterfront. A wide river flows from the left towards the background. On the right bank, a long, modern promenade with a wooden deck runs along the water. A large, diverse crowd of people is gathered on this promenade. Several boats, including sailboats and motorboats, are docked at a series of piers along the waterfront. Behind the promenade are several multi-story buildings, some with distinctive orange and yellow facades. In the background, a bridge with two tall towers spans the river, and the city continues with more buildings and greenery under a clear blue sky.

**Telling the
Story...**

Transformative Adaptation



- **Large-scale climate migration a kind of transformative adaptation**
 - **Significantly alters system structure or function**
 - **Changes status quo**
- **Proactive transformative adaptation is rare**

Managed Retreat



- **Managed retreat a transformative adaptation that has received growing attention**
 - **Abandoning existing development due to climate hazards**
 - **The other side of climate migration...**
- **Very politically fraught and unpopular**
 - **Yet more and more examples are emerging**

Managed Retreat



- **More successful when framed as reimagining a future community more aligned with its environment**
 - **A collective re-envisioning that reinforces connections between community and place**
 - **Renewed vibrancy instead of loss**
- **Often heavily emphasizes public engagement and input on imagining new futures**
 - **Lean into and leverage place attachment**

Climate Migration



- **Climate migration an easier sell**
 - **If framed as migration being reflective of enhanced vibrancy in a changing climate**
- **There's a great story we can tell in the Great Lakes that people are still receptive to**
 - **But many people haven't heard it yet!**
 - **We need to tell this story**
 - **Frame positive narratives about climate migration before negative ones get established**

Thank you!



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