

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

WEBINAR

STATE OF THE CAPITAL REGION 2020 -
A REGION IN DEMOGRAPHIC AND ECONOMIC TRANSITION

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MS. SCHUETZ: Hello, everyone. Welcome to our virtual event today, The State of the Capital Region 2020. My name is Jenny Schuetz. I'm a fellow at Brookings Metropolitan Policy Program. I'll be teeing off the program today.

We appreciate that all of you have carved out time in between your many, many Zoom meetings, and home schooling, and general stress over the state of the world.

Today we're going to have a discussion about what we hope will be an engaging discussion about something that's very concrete and close to home, and hopefully a little bit less depressing than much of the other news in the world today.

Specifically, today we're going to talk about some changes in demographics in the Capital Region, that have happened over the last 30 to 40 years.

Like most of the U.S., the Capital Region is getting older. The share of older adults has more than doubled since 1970, and at the same time the share of families with children has declined.

This has some profound implications for things like schools, demand for housing, labor markets. So, we're going to explore some of the trends in demographics over the last 30 years.

And then we're going to talk about what the policy implications are, and how local governments are addressing these challenges.

Today's program will start with a brief presentation by Leah Brooks. Leah is an associate professor at George Washington's Trachtenberg School, and she's the director of the Center for Washington Area Studies.

Leah's going to begin by giving us the results from a new report on the state of the Capital Region that focuses on trends and age, demographics, and income in the region. After Leah has finished her presentation, we're going to have a very lively and engaging conversation about the practical implications of this.

We have an all-star lineup of panelists. This is to be moderated by Debbie Truong of WAMU, and we have a terrific set of panelists who can speak to various implications of the program.

So, with that, I'm going to go ahead and turn it over to Leah who's going to kick it off with

some fun graphs and maps. So, everybody get set. We're going to have a terrific discussion.

You should have been able to submit questions in advance when you registered for the event, but if you have questions that you would like to pose to the panelists for later on, you're welcome to do that on Twitter #StateofCapRegion.

And please feel free to follow along and comment as we go. Thanks very much. Leah, over to you.

MS. BROOKS: Thank you, Jenny. And thank you so much to everyone who's logged on for joining us virtually.

We hoped this was going to be in person, but we're happy to still have this event and hope that you and yours are safe and well during these very unusual times.

Before I get started, I also want to say thank you to the Brookings team who do things behind the scenes to make everyone else who appears on the scene, or the screen, look good.

So, this report, The State of the Capital Region 2020, a region in economic and demographic transition, has five coauthors; Jackie Begley, a nonresident research associate at George Washington; me, Leah Brooks, an associate professor in the Trachtenberg School at George Washington; Brian McCabe, a professor of sociology at Georgetown; Jenny, who you just heard, a Brookings Fellow; and Stan Boiger (phonetic), a resident scholar at AEI.

Before getting into the meat of this discussion for today, I wanted to tell you a few words about the Center for Washington Area Studies, at George Washington University.

Our mission is to improve the lives of people in the Greater Washington Area by studying the neighborhoods and communities of our region.

We produce policy relevant research on the capital region, and host events for the public on topical issues. And once we're back to having in-person events, we look forward to having you. And please visit our webpage if you'd like to join our mailing list.

So, this year's report is titled, The State of the Capital Region - a Region in Economic and Demographic Transition.

We chose this topic because demography can be determinative. Demographics

determine the types of services jurisdiction should offer, and the revenues that jurisdiction can raise to provide those services.

So, in writing our report this year, we focus on three economic and demographic features: income, racial composition, and age structure and household composition.

In this presentation, I give highlights from income and age distribution. There's much, much more in the report, including a jurisdiction by jurisdiction breakdown or long-run demographic trends, if that's of interest to you.

And we also wrote an addendum with the likely regional impacts of COVID-19. You can find the link to this on our webpage.

Here are the definitions of urban, suburban, and ex-urban that we're going to use throughout.

In dark blue, you can see Washington D.C., Arlington, and Alexandria. These are what we call the urban jurisdictions.

In light blue, you see what we call suburban jurisdictions. These are Maryland, Montgomery, and Prince George's County, as well as Falls Church, Fairfax City, and Fairfax County in Virginia.

And then the green parts on the rest of the picture are what we define as the ex-urbs. Prince William and Loudoun Counties in Virginia are the largest of these jurisdictions, in population terms.

And now I'm turning to our first highlight describing how the income distribution in the Washington region has changed.

So, this picture shows the income distribution across neighborhoods in 1990. The median income in 1990 was about \$90,000 in 2018 dollars.

One quarter of households -- the section on the left of the graph -- earned less than \$70,000. The top earning one quarter of households earned more than \$120,000.

And now I'm going to move these numbers up to the top so you can keep 1990 in mind as I add 2018.

So, this is the income distribution in 2018. The median income in 2018 is just about

\$100,000. That means that the median income from 1990 to 2018 has grown by slightly more than \$10,000.

Now, the lowest earning one quarter of households earned less than about \$74,000. And that's a slight increase, as you can see, from 1990.

What's notable, though, is the top earning households. So, one quarter of households earned above \$140,000. That's about \$20,000 more dollars relative to that same group in 1990.

In other words, in 2018, relative to 1990, we see a smaller middle class -- so, that hump in the middle of the income distribution has fallen -- and we also see more wealthier households. And you can see that from the distribution line at the right lifting up.

At the bottom line here is that the region's income distribution is spreading out, not because regional residents are getting poorer, but because some residents -- not all residents -- are becoming wealthier.

So, let's turn to age. This graph shows the share of residents age 59 or over in urban, suburban, and ex-urban jurisdictions as we defined in the beginning.

So, in 1970 and 1980, urban jurisdictions has inarguably the largest share of the oldest residents, at about 15%. But when we look from 1980 through 2000, as we do in this picture, this ranking changes.

Suburban and ex-urban areas increased their share of the oldest residents, while urban areas decreased their share.

And now we follow these lines to the present. So, as of today, all regions have a substantially larger share of population in the 59+ age group, relative to 1970. The suburbs now have the largest share of those 59+ at just under 20%.

So, the bottom line here is that age distribution matters tremendously for the type of services jurisdictions may need to provide, and the type of housing they would like to incentivize. And our panel is going to speak to some of this today; to put some of these findings in context.

For our last highlight, we're showing the other end of the age spectrum: kids. This slide showing you a map of neighborhood colored by the share of children under 18, and the darkest purple

here are areas with the greatest share of children, as you can see by the legend at the bottom.

One feature that springs pretty immediately, visually, out of this graph is the Kid Belt that you can see outside the center of the region, for the most part. To get a better understanding of where that Kid Belt actually is, I'm going to zoom in to the urban and suburban jurisdictions that are outlined here in White. Those are going to appear here at the right.

The first thing to note from the zooming in, is that most of those areas with very high shares of children are outside of the urban and suburban jurisdictions; they're in the ex-urbs.

However, there are some areas in these urban and suburban jurisdictions with large shares of kids. And you can see them in southeast Washington D.C., southern Fairfax County, and northern Montgomery County.

But what you really want to know, and why you're here today, is what do these trends mean for policy? And that's what we have the panel to talk about.

But here are a few issues -- just to tee them up -- that are salient. And the demographic we discussed really lay the groundwork for policy.

First, a greater range of income -- like we have now in the Washington region -- may make political consensus more difficult.

Aging, which we also have in the Greater Washington Area, implies here entry-level workers, and demand for more accessible housing in neighborhoods.

And a declining share of children -- another feature we have in the Greater Washington Area -- and kids in different locations now than they used to be, also has implications for services.

So, we may have demand for schooling where there may be no schools, and less demand for schools where schools already exist.

In last year's report, we showed that the region is building predominantly single-family housing. And this graph here shows the nature of new housing units built, by the number of units in each housing structure.

What this graph is showing you is that both before and after 2000 the vast majority, the vast majority of housing units built in the region were, and are, single-family. That's that big bar at the

top.

The dark purple was built 2000 and after; lighter purple is built 2000 and before. But, regardless of the time period, those housing units are predominantly single-family.

We've seen some changes over time in the composition of multi-family units. So, a shift from smaller multi-family structures, those from 2 to 4 and 5 to 19, up to structures that have more than 50 units.

And households of different types and ages, demand different types of structures. So, it's important that what the region builds, and what the region's jurisdictions allow to be built, is aligned with demand.

To help us think about all of this, we are delighted to have a fantastic panel. Our moderator is Debbie Truong, from WAMU, where she covers education. She's also written for the Washington Post and the Richmond Times Dispatch.

And she is going to be moderating three fantastic panelists, Jackie Begley, one of our coauthors, a nonresident senior fellow at the Center for Washington Area Studies at George Washington University.

Jackie is a researcher who has done quite a bit of work on the housing needs of Americans over 65, as well as analysis on housing and demography more generally.

Our second panelist is Angie Rodgers. Angie is just recently the deputy chief administrative officer for economic development in Prince George's County. But she has worn almost every hat in the housing planning world.

She's been on the ground providing housing at United Way. She's worked as a consultant on housing issues. And she most recently served as the chief of staff in Washington D.C.'s Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development.

And last but not least, we're getting a perspective on urban education from Dr. Gregory Hutchings, Jr., the superintendent of schools for the city of Alexandria.

Gregory has had virtually every possible education job, starting with teacher and ending with superintendent. He is also a true local, not just a graduate of Alexandria's T.C. Williams High

School, but also the prom king. And if any of the rest of you had anything half as exciting on your bios, I would have put that in as well.

So, we are thrilled to have all of you come together to talk about what these long-run trends in income, age, and racial composition mean for the Washington area. Go forth.

MS. TRUONG: Thank you, Jenny. I'm just waiting for everyone to come on. Thank you all, again, for taking the time to log on to our panel today. As Leah and Jenny mentioned, my name is Debbie Truong. I'm with WAMU.

Our panel discussion today will focus specifically on the aging population and what that means for policy. And then later on in our program we'll move on to audience questions.

Jackie, do you mind starting off by talking about what's really driving the aging population, what factors our older residents who've lived here for quite a long time, and raised families simply staying put, or are there other factors at play.

MS. BEGLEY: Yes, I think your hypothesis is right that we have an aging population in the U.S. in general, and most households typically stay in places they age, right.

AARP has shown that older adults want to age in place, mobility in the U.S. is declining across all age groups, and older adults are much less likely to move than other age groups.

What we're seeing is just a natural aging of the population and people staying put. Homeowners are much less likely to move than renters.

And in a lot of these areas where we're seeing the aging population increase, particularly in our suburbs, are predominantly homeowners apprised. So, that's a big a part of it.

MS. TRUONG: And as the population gets older, what types of services and housing will jurisdictions need to accommodate the older population.

MS. BEGLEY: So, I think about this in a number of ways. The AARP basically lays out eight categories of things that communities need to think about. I'll make it more brief and just talk about 4 or 5 more generally.

The first is thinking about the accessibility and age friendly factors within the housing stock.

So, whether or not specific units are age friendly, and then whether or not there's more options in the community for people who want to downsize. So, if an individual housing unit isn't accessible, maybe there are other options in the community for them to downsize into that may be accessible and age friendly.

And then the other factors are things like the infrastructure in the communities.

So, whether or not the community is pedestrian friendly, there's public transportation options, what the healthcare resources are like, the community groups, community services geared towards older adults.

And then also really important in this is affordability.

So, is the housing stock affordable? Does the community provide programs that allow for property tax relief? Or utility costs relief? Does the community or the state offer incentives, or subsidies that allow you to maintain your home, put in the improvements and modifications that would allow you to have an age friendly home, basically.

MS. TRUONG: Sure, and we saw in one of those slides that the region mostly has single-family homes. Is that the type of housing that is suitable or favorable for older residents? And if not, what type of housing is and does the region have a large enough supply of that?

MS. BEGLEY: It depends. Single-family homes may be great for aging in place, but things that most universal design guidelines tell you to look for are things like no-step entries, whether or not there's a bedroom and a bathroom on one floor so you don't have to go up stairs within your home, whether or not the bathrooms, the hallways, the kitchen is modifiable so that you could use a wheelchair, if you need to, what does the lighting look like? Things like that.

So you could be in a single-family home and be fine, but other places that would be great would be an apartment building with an elevator, denser housing in pedestrian friendly communities are also typically, you know, the neighborhood and the housing tends to be more age friendly.

Unfortunately, though, across the U.S. most housing is not aging accessible. So, just last week the census put out a study looking at the age friendly factors within the U.S. housing stock, and they found that only 10% of housing right now has enough features, including things like a no-step entry, and a

bedroom and a bathroom on the first floor that allow someone to be basically age in place.

And they did break it up by region, and they showed the MidAtlantic region is even worse with only 6% of housing units actually appropriate for aging in place right now.

And then on top of that there was a study a few years ago from NYU that showed that the new housing that's built since 1990 is no more likely to be accessible than older housing.

So, we haven't really been modifying what we build, as we start to build and become more aware of these issues. We're not really changing what we build so it's time for us to start thinking about this more critically.

MS. TRUONG: Okay, Angie, the report says that the population is aging most rapidly in the suburbs, can you talk a little bit about what this looks like in Prince George's County and how the county is planning for the aging population?

MS. RODGERS: Sure, Prince George's has, for many years, been the sort of bedroom community, considered to be a bedroom community for Washington D.C., mostly single-family homes, townhomes.

But there's been, I think, sort of three major pieces of work over the past few years that are really going to set us up to meet these demographic changes that we've been talking about, and that will have many benefits that will be familiar to all those smart-growthers out there, but will also serve to make us more age friendly.

We did something that's called the Prince George's 2035 plan, which set five priority areas for transformation around five of our metro sites/metro stations. So, Largo Town Center, New Carrollton, Prince George's Plaza, Branch Avenue Suitland, and the vision for those stations, and eventually others, is for us to have more dense development around those metro stations.

So, more of those apartment buildings, elevator buildings, that will be more accessible housing types than housing that we have spread throughout the rest of the county.

Also, the other big piece of work has been the county's zoning rewrite, which is setting the stage for us to actually produce that more dense housing in certain areas of the county.

And then the last big piece that we just finished at the end of last year has been the

county's new comprehensive housing strategy. One of the interesting things that the strategy highlighted was the need for Prince George's to diversify its housing types.

So, just sort of making the point that most of the housing in the county was single-family housing, and townhouse style housing, and that we needed more multi-family housing to meet the types of households that the county wants to attract, and the households that are growing in the county.

And so, all of these things together I think is going to set the county up to really meet the demand of the aging households that this report shows that we're going to see.

MS. TRUONG: And in Prince George's, are you seeing that there are larger concentrations of older residents living in certain parts of county versus younger residents?

MS. RODGERS: I think that that is true to an extent because Prince George's has, you know, as I said, a lot of single-family townhomes really concentrated on home ownership. A bigger percentage of homeowners than renters that I think, naturally, that sort of tends toward older homeowners. And then as Jackie said, once those folks tend to stay put longer, and tend to try to grow in their homes.

And I think what we haven't had necessarily in the county, if you live in a townhouse like mine, I live in a townhouse in Prince George's County that is three levels and I am very aware that I will get to a point where I might need to try and sell this townhouse and move to a condo, move to an elevator building. But there isn't a lot of that product in the county if I wanted to stay in Prince George's County, to move into.

And so that's what I think this sort of next phase of development and what our planning is focused on. Sort of giving that other type of product that will help us serve the aging population, but also serves lots others -- the smart growth goals for the county.

MS. TRUONG: Okay. I want to move the conversation a little bit to schools. Superintendent Hutchings, have you seen in Alexandria the shifts in the population effect where you're seeing families with school-age children settling down and living?

DR. HUTCHINGS JR.: Yes, actually, I'm glad that you brought the school division to the table for this discussion because a lot of times schools are left out of the conversation and we're in a lot of

cases, most impacted by demographics.

And what we're seeing in the city of Alexandria is we're seeing a greater number of singles and young people who are in their late twenties, early thirties. And we're also seeing a growth in our younger families, and over time that's going to have an impact on our enrollments.

What we've been seeing in just the past 10 years in Alexandria is a huge increase in our student population. We're over capacity in almost all of our schools at this time. We're building schools over the next 10 years to accommodate the growth that's happening at a very rapid pace.

And I think what we're seeing, or experiencing, is that more families are choosing to stay in Alexandria after their children get older where we used to see more of our families -- we would see a decline.

I don't know if they actually left the city of Alexandria or not -- we would see a decline in our middle school enrollment. So, a student would be consistent from kindergarten through fifth grade, and then we would see a drop in our student enrollment in middle school. And now we're starting to see that that's remaining constant which is contributing to our growing numbers, at the elementary and secondary level.

MS. TRUONG: And I think I saw in the report that unlike the region as a whole, Alexandria saw a slight growth in families with children since 1980 while the population of older residents has also grown. Does the fact that both of these things are happening at the same time the population is getting older, and that there are more families with school-age children, make it even more challenging to plan for schools?

DR. HUTCHINGS JR.: Yes, it does. It makes it a lot more complicated. You know, in some cases it does give us a good tax base, which is helpful to the school division, but it does bring some complications along.

A lot of the people you'll see in Alexandria -- I mean, right now our population as a whole, as a city, is 160-something thousand, but our school division, we only have 16,000 students. People would expect for our school division to be a lot larger with the population that we have in our city, but we haven't had a history of having a lot of school-age children in the city, but that trend is changing and it's

changing pretty rapidly. As a superintendent, I get to feel it every day.

MS. TRUONG: Okay, and has this created any sort of challenges for building schools, or finding the real estate to build schools?

DR. HUTCHINGS JR.: Yeah. You know, I think one of our biggest challenges in the city of Alexandria is that we're not like the suburbs even though, you know, we call ourselves like a suburban-urban feel, right? But we're not like the suburbs with a lot of land, so we don't have a lot of places to grow.

We've had to be very innovating to our approaches to our growth. For example, we opened an elementary school last year that used to be an office building that was converted into an elementary school because we didn't really have any land to go build a full elementary school. So, now we have a six-story building where the first four floors are an elementary, and the fifth and sixth floors are going to be spaces for our central office.

And also, with our high school, you know, we're one of the largest high schools in the Commonwealth of Virginia, and probably one of the largest in the country -- at least in the top 10. We have 4 thousand students in our high school right now.

We're projected to have 5 thousand over the next several years and we're embarking on what we're calling a connected high school network where we keep one high school, but we're going to have multiple campuses to provide services for our students throughout the city of Alexandria.

MS. RODGERS: Debbie, if I could just break in and say, even though we don't have the problems of space that Dr. Hutchings referred to, we are still looking at some of the same opportunities of co-locations. And so the point for us is to try and have some of our TOD areas act more like, and look more like the inner rings, so, look more like TOD areas in D.C./Arlington/Alexandria, that some of those same things also apply to us even though we have the space further out to kind of spread out a little bit more, we're focused on maximizing density on co-location in TOD areas.

MS. BEGLEY: Can I add something too, I wanted to just point out like from a universal design standpoint, and from an age friendly community standpoint, oftentimes the things that parents with kids want are the same things that older adults want as far as denser areas, better transit, sidewalks,

parks.

You know, a lot of the things that make a community livable are universal, and not just for older people. Everyone wants them, so it's complimentary to use them across both ends of the demographic spectrum.

MS. TRUONG: Okay, can you think of any places in the Washington region that have done this particularly well, provided that density that's appropriate for older residents and families too?

MS. BEGLEY: There are a number of communities in D.C., the D.C. region, that have age friendly -- AARP, WHO, the global network, their partner, or part of it -- I'm not sure exactly what -- they're certified as part of it, and those are Alexandria, Arlington, D.C., I think Montgomery County.

We talk about this a little bit in the report, the AARP sort of ranks communities based on a number of things like housing affordability and transit and community networks. And those communities all tend to have good scores.

And so, they're doing things really well, but then the flip side of it is they're less affordable than other areas. So, it's really hard to get every piece of the puzzle right, and I think it's a good sign that a lot of communities are working towards this.

MS. RODGERS: And Jackie, I'm glad you brought up the affordability issue because that is the big piece of it for us too.

I think, as we think about how to transform some of our communities in Prince George's to look more like those in D.C., Alexandria, Arlington, the sort of affordability of the areas, the continued affordability of those areas remains a concern. And the need to get good tools in place to be able to preserve that affordability for all families, but particularly for elderly households, households that have an adult with disabilities.

When we think about our housing programs, when we think about public housing, when we think about folks who consume vouchers, we know that if the head of household is elderly or has a disability, they are likely to need that subsidy long-term, if not permanently.

So, along with sort of rethinking our physical spaces, Prince George's has really got to think about the tools that we have in terms of preserving affordability, preventing displacement, as we

look for our areas to grow in the ways that other areas in the region have grown, which is going to make them more desirable, and is going to make them more unaffordable if we don't have the right tools in place.

DR. HUTCHINGS JR.: I want to add onto what Angie was saying, just a quick comment. I think that is it very complicated to try to continue to be attractive, and then to also have that affordable housing component, mixed income properties, and things of that nature, and that also has an impact on our school, and our demographics, and our dynamics within the school system.

And I know in the city of Alexandria, our city managers, as well as our city council, they have been very adamant on trying to have affordable housing options so that we could still attract all different types of incomes in the city of Alexandria. But also, to maintain those families may have low-income at this time so that we're not forcing them out or gentrifying certain neighborhoods throughout our city.

MS. TRUONG: One of the things that stood out to me in the report is the share of younger families is larger in the Ex-Urbs, and I wonder how much does that have to do with this issue of affordability.

And as a follow-up to that, you know, are there policies that jurisdictions could put in place to reverse some of that and bring those families closer into the cities? And is there the political will, and also the desire, in some of these communities to do that? That can go to anyone.

MS. RODGERS: I'm certainly not the expert on this, from a housing perspective, I have longed believe that those families choose the ex-urbs for a number of reasons and affordability is certainly one of them, but I think that's relative. Like, it's affordability plus housing quality, and size of housing that you can get.

I think that some of our jurisdictions closer in, for a long time had issues with the quality of the schools in their communities, or the perception of quality. And so, I think there's been probably a number of things sort of driving families to the ex-urbs.

But families are now coming back, also for a variety of reasons. I think the quality of life - - if I think about, you know, where I was in D.C., the quality of life in a lot of D.C. neighborhoods has

changed over the years. And so that draws families back in.

So, I think there are a number of reasons that maybe sort of was driving folks out to the ex-urbs, and then a range of reasons that are driving people back in.

I think the challenge for us who do the planning in jurisdictions for how we construct communities, how we plan services, is -- you know, going back to what Dr. Hutchings said -- can we provide a range of resources, housing types, school choice, etc., etc., that meets households across the income spectrum to give people that choice of where they want to live.

When we think about low-income households and what we're trying to offer them, often we position it in terms of mobility. Do you have enough resources to be able to make a choice about where you want to be? And what's the best atmosphere for your family?

And so, for me, it's trying to make sure that we're offering families that so that they get to make a choice.

MS. TRUONG: Another thing that stood out to me in the report is that it said that as the share of families with younger children goes down, the demand for schools will be less. I'm wondering if you're already seeing that in parts of the Washington region. And if so, where? And what that could mean for the future of these school buildings? Could we see school consolidations, things like that?

DR. HUTCHINGS JR.: Well, I wish we were having that problem in Alexandria, but that's not the case (laughter). We're growing rapidly. I think we are an anomaly in this area because our student growth is just happening so quickly that we can't even keep up with the amount of growth that's occurring. We can't build fast enough to accommodate the growth.

But in my former job as superintendent of Shaker Heights, the enrollment was actually declining and we were having tough discussions around consolidation of elementary schools just to make sure that we were providing the appropriate educational experience, but also being fiscally responsible and not having these large buildings that were built to accommodate like 600 students, but they're at 200 students.

It's a waste of some of that space, so we were working through how do we take these old structures and either sell them, or repurpose them, or use them and lease them out to generate some

income into the school division.

I know in the city of Alexandria we had that challenge many years ago when our enrollment was declining and I wish that we would not have sold so many of our schools, because now we need them, right.

So, the unfortunate thing is that they're ebbs and flows in regards to enrollment and population and you can be at a point where you're seeing a decline in your base, or in your population, and then over a period of time you see people now more attracted to your city and it's growing and you've given up some of those resources that you now need and you're in a dilemma like we are in the city of Alexandria. I'm just speaking from my perspective and the work that I've done.

MS. TRUONG: Jackie, have you seen any places in the region that have really sort of suffered from a decline in school enrollment?

MS. BEGLEY: I'm not the expert on that. I'm not sure.

MS. TRUONG: Okay. And I also wanted to talk about labor. The report also made mention the fact that you have older folks, there will be less of a supply for entry-level jobs, in particular. Is there concern that an aging population will affect the labor force and cause a decline in supply?

MS. BEGLEY: You mean as far as worker supply in general, right. I think there is some concern about that.

I think there's also a concern about people wanting to work as they age, and sort of age discrimination in the work force. Or people who don't have enough money to retire on and who want to find a bridge job and work potentially in a different field, maybe in an entry-level field, but they just don't have the resources or the marketing is not done the right way to help people transition across their careers.

And I know there's a lot of emphasis on trying to help like this mismatch between entry-level workers, and people who want to potentially work after retirement.

I don't know enough about all the programs that are out there, but I know this is definitely top-of-mind for some people who focus on aging and workforce development.

MS. RODGERS: I would just add to that, Jackie and Debbie, obviously in my cluster in

Prince George's we spend a lot of time looking at how the workforce is going to grow in our county, and in what areas it's going to grow in.

And so, particularly for older adults who might be looking to sort of make a late career change, or that sort of thing, either because of unemployment -- which is a big issue now given COVID-19. I think there's already a disconnect between how our workforce is going to grow and the skill set of the folks who are just coming out of high school and college, much less our older adults.

So, we're looking at the areas that we are going to grow are in healthcare and biotech, and other tech related jobs. I think the sort of prospect of having older adults be prepared to take that on, I think, will be a big question.

I just wanted to say to your last question about communities that experienced a decline in school population and then a jump back up, and just acknowledge I'm not an expert on it either, but obviously worked for a long time in D.C. where those dynamics existed and sort of watched this play out in communities that I was working in.

And so, I just want to acknowledge that it's a difficult conversation and situation that I don't know if anybody has the right answer to, as communities are transitioning, and sometimes as fast as they are.

D.C. obviously went through this whole period of closing down schools and repurposing them, redeveloping them, and that was horribly dividing for some communities to the extent that when I was in D.C. and ran a program that was seeking to redevelop an old elementary school that has closed down 10 years earlier. I mean, the vitriol over whether we were going to come and redevelop this parcel that hadn't held a school for 10 years was very high.

So, I just want to acknowledge that that's a different conversation for communities. I don't know if there are good answers for it.

I know as someone who was on the inside we try to track and sort of make the best decisions that we can, but communities change, dynamics change. I've seen communities completely transform in the space of five years, and so sometimes it's hard to get it right.

DR. HUTCHINGS JR.: I think that's what makes it a little complicated because nobody

has that crystal ball to show what the future holds, and one thing could happen.

I mean, think about what we're in right now -- COVID-19, our global pandemic -- who would have ever predicted that we would be in this situation where we're practicing social distancing, and social gathering guidelines, and being kept at home, and not being able to go into our offices, and out into our communities.

And that can have an impact on our populations, especially our over populated areas because people may now be concerned about being in an overly populated city or community, and they may migrate to a more rural area which we might see as a trend over time just from this pandemic. So, these are things that we're going to have to really be prepared for.

I also just wanted to put in a quick comment in regard to how we are preparing the next generation of workers. I think Angie touched on this a little, in regard to trying to prepare this next generation with biotechnology and the healthcare.

In the Alexandria City Public Schools, with our high school project, one thing that we are really focused on is multiple pathways for our students to become the next generation of workers.

You know, they are going to be the next generation of keeping a stable economy in this country, and we're going to have to make sure they're equipped to have the appropriate skills to go out to do things that we don't even know about, that don't even exist today, which is very challenging when you're trying to sell, for me as a superintendent, or at least talk about these careers that really don't exist.

The parents are like, "Well, I never heard of that. And how much money are they going to make doing that?" But 10, 20 years ago, we didn't know about iPhones, right, and look at it now. Everybody is going out to get their iPhone 11. I just think these are things that we are going to have to just trust some of our futurists who are talking about what the world could be in the future and take it into consideration when we're making these major decisions about whether it's neighborhood planning, or talking about what the future of our education is going to be.

MS. TRUONG: Thank you for bringing up the impacts of COVID-19. Superintendent Hutchings, how will this pandemic affect planning schools in Alexandria for the future, for the fall, in terms of anything from remote learning to building needs and things like that.

DR. HUTCHINGS JR.: So, it's going to have significant impact on our school division. I really think that it's going to have an impact on public education in general, and I've been saying this time and time again.

We didn't have it right in public education prior to this global pandemic. Many students' needs were not being met across this country. There are several inequities in regard to schools. So, it is our responsible to use this pandemic so that once we get through this, that we don't go back to how things were because we were missing a lot of children.

And now we know that it is possible to do this distance learning, which I have to say in Alexandria, we've been able to transition really quickly from our traditional learning environment to a distance learning environment.

We were one of the first school divisions in the Commonwealth of Virginia to have one-to-one technology devices for our kids, so all of our students in grades 3 through 12 already had devices, teachers were already used to doing online learning through Canvas, which is a platform that we use to communicate with our students.

So, it was a smooth transition for us, however, it's still not replicating what they were getting in a face-to-face instructional environment. Academic locks (phonetic) comes from that.

Even our kids who have both parents earn high incomes and have all the support that they need are experiencing some form of loss because they're not having their opportunities to be in a classroom and the interactions that they were accustomed to having prior to the pandemic.

You know, as we move into this new fall year, there are several things that we are going to have to keep into consideration.

If we're going to have to live up to the social gathering guidelines, and the social distancing guidelines, that is going to have an impact on our transportation, and how many students are going to be able to be at a bus stop, or on a bus. How many students could be in a classroom, or in the cafeteria, or transitioning in our halls.

So, it is going to have a significant impact on what our schools look like in regard to operating. And we're looking at four specific models for the fall.

One is a traditional opening of school which most likely will not happen. I'm optimistic. I'm hopeful. I'm not a believer that in the fall we're going to be able to go back to things as normal. I just don't think that's going to be possible.

Two, we're going to have to look at two specific hybrid scenarios. One being 50% of our students returning back in some capacity on any given day. So that means half of kids in a building. At a time, we would have to work through what that hybrid approach will look like, and what those staggered schedules and distance learning plans will look like.

And then also, another hybrid approach that looks at about a 25% student population in our buildings, and what that approach could look like in our schools.

And then the fourth area, the fourth model that we're going to be looking at, is continuing to be 100% online, so these are some specific things that we are going to have to work through in this region.

I work closely with our region superintendents. We meet every week, and we're having collaborative discussions around how we can work through the opening of school together versus having individual openings because our employees live all over the DMV. A decision I make can have an impact on Fairfax or Arlington, so we're trying to be more collective and collaborative with this fall planning. But to come really soon.

MS. TRUONG: When it comes to planning, not only for the fall and for learning, how closely do you work with folks in your areas, in the cities; you know, housing department, what are those conversations look like?

DR. HUTCHINGS JR.: We work really closely with our housing department for a number of reasons. It helps us to do our enrollment projections and to determine what projects will need to be included in our capital improvement program.

We also work with them on incentives to get our future employees into the city of Alexandria. The cost of living here is very expensive for some, especially people coming into the field of education, where we are not millionaires in this field (laughter), even though we deserve a million bucks and a salary.

But we are working with our housing department just to ensure that we have incentives, whether it is free months for certain apartment complexes within or city, or some really special financing if you're trying to purchase a home in the city of Alexandria. So, we work with our housing department in that area as well.

MS. TRUONG: Angie, how closely do you work with schools when you're thinking through planning?

MS. RODGERS: I think the same thing, very closely, I think particularly as we are thinking about how we use space in our jurisdictions, that the joint conversation there is important. And how we use space in relationship to housing our population, educating our population, but also then providing recreational opportunities for kids, and then for people of all ages.

I will say that the sort of glue for us in Prince George's -- and it was the same when I was in the D.C. Deputy Mayor's Office -- is a good, strong planning department that is drawing the links between all of these different needs that a jurisdiction has.

And so we really depend on our planning department to be the glue between schools and housing, between schools and recreation, etc. etc., to help us plan for what it takes to create vibrant communities that are meeting our residents' needs, and really depending on them to sort of weigh that path out for us. So, check with the planners (laughter).

MS. TRUONG: Sure. I'm going to run to some questions that were submitted online. Given the region is aging, but there is higher mortality, is the region planning for measures that would bolster care for elderly residents, like more training for home healthcare providers, things of that nature?

DR. HUTCHINGS JR.: I would say absolutely in that area. And I know Angie touched on this earlier when she talked about the healthcare professionals as well as biotechnology.

Right now, we are really preparing the next generation by offering all of those certification programs through our career technical education Alexandria City Public Schools, and many of the other school divisions are doing it across this country because we know that there is going to be a need for more nurses, especially as we are looking at this pandemic.

I mean, we're really going to need nurses, doctors, and I just hope that people now have

a passion to go into this work. Yes, we're experiencing this global pandemic; it probably won't be our last. So, need to be prepared to deal with what the future may hold, as well as what some of the implications from what we're going through right now with our global pandemic will have to offer.

But in Alexandria City Public Schools, we are definitely providing multiple opportunities for the healthcare profession and we have a partnership, actually, with the George Washington University to make sure that we're bringing some of the best and brightest health professionals into the world in the next 10 years.

MS. RODGERS: And I will just add to all of that that it's the same for us as well. I'll add sort of from a resources' perspective.

One of the things that we knew we needed already -- and this is also the same in the jurisdiction that I just came from -- is the need for more assisted living, more opportunities for folks to age in place, whatever that means, in terms of programs and funding that could support them to do that.

So that had already been identified as a need for us and something that we need to focus on in the future.

The thing that I think that COVID also has highlighted for us, maybe something that I wouldn't have experienced when I was on the D.C. side, was the amount of attention that we, as a county, pay to assisted living and nursing homes, as opposed to sort of what gets done at the state level.

And I think one of the things that COVID has highlighted for us is the need and the desire for us to be closer to the quality and availability of those places going forward in the future.

And so, I can imagine that that is something that also we'll want to pay attention to, make sure that we've got the right workforce there to serve those places, to Dr. Hutchings point. But that's definitely going to be a focus for us going forward.

MS. TRUONG: Okay, and I think this is an interesting question. As the population ages, is it safe to assume that instances of ageism will also increase, and what can jurisdictions do to pare or combat that?

DR. HUTCHINGS JR.: Well, I'm not an expert in that area, but what I will just say -- and this is just from an educator's point of view -- you know, age is wisdom, age brings wisdom and I think

that it is important for us TO definitely provide opportunities for us to bring some of that wisdom into whether it's organizations, or jobs in the profession.

You know, people today, and I think of my mom and other family members who are older than I am, they're working well into their 60s and 70s and they're loving it, right. They are living their best life. I know my mom is living her best life right now in her 60s.

And I think it's wonderful that we're seeing this next generation of what we call our senior citizen, which, you know, my mom says, "I'm not a senior citizen, I'm just an older person with a lot of wisdom," that they have a totally different perspective on life and what they want for themselves.

It's not like many years ago, your age 60 and you're ready to retire and kind of like go into the sunset and move to Florida, and that type of thing. Now, people are still having careers or starting new careers, and new businesses, and taking on new debt; they're buying new homes and cars and things of that nature. That just didn't happen previously.

So, I'm very hopeful in regard to ageism, that we are realizing age is wisdom and we must embrace and bring forth that wisdom in order for us to get to the next level that we all deserve and want to be.

MS. BEGLEY: I will echo that, and I think that I hope ageism doesn't increase. I think that people are healthier, living longer, more active today than they were in the past. I think our definition of "old" has changed over time.

In addition to that the fact that the AARP, and the World's Health Organization, and the New York Academy of Medicine, and all these groups are really focused on strategic plans for aging, and sort of focusing on all age communities and making sure that stakeholders and community support is there, and that peoples' voices are being heard. I think that will really help

So, sort of making sure that people aren't isolated or marginalized as the population ages, and I'm really hopeful that a diversity of ages within a population and planning can address the needs of all populations, and sort of not make one group stigmatized, as we all age.

MS. RODGERS: I want to add something also, just from the perspective of I think I can be an old person talking to other old people. I think I'm old enough for that now (laughter).

One of the things that I think about a lot is that as aging workers, we've got to challenge ourselves to keep up because at some point it isn't acceptable to sort of be in positions of responsibility, or be in leadership positions and not sort of know the new technology.

Or know there are some things that employers need to be able to take for granted, which means that we've got to continuously sharpen ourselves.

So, we're in this sort of environment now, perfect example, where everybody is getting accustomed to Zoom, and some folks are on this kind of platform for the first time during this period and thinking that it's just a thing.

And it's like, no. The same platform through different companies has existed for years, definitely more than a decade.

And so, I think that's the kind of thing. When I hear older leaders say, "Well, I don't understand Twitter, I don't know what that is." You know, at some point we've got to challenge ourselves also to keep up because there's going to be an expectation of the workplace to perform on a certain level.

And the same that we expect of young people right, telling them to step up, we've got to do it for ourselves as well.

MS. TRUONG: Okay, I think that's our time. Thank you, everyone, for taking the time out of your day to talk with us.

MS. SCHUETZ: Thank you everybody for joining us. Debbie, thanks for moderating, Jackie, Angie, Dr. Hutchings, we really appreciate you guys taking the time to share your wisdom even though none of you are old.

And thanks to all of our audience members for joining us. Feel free to check out the full report and stay tuned for future events. Thanks everybody.

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