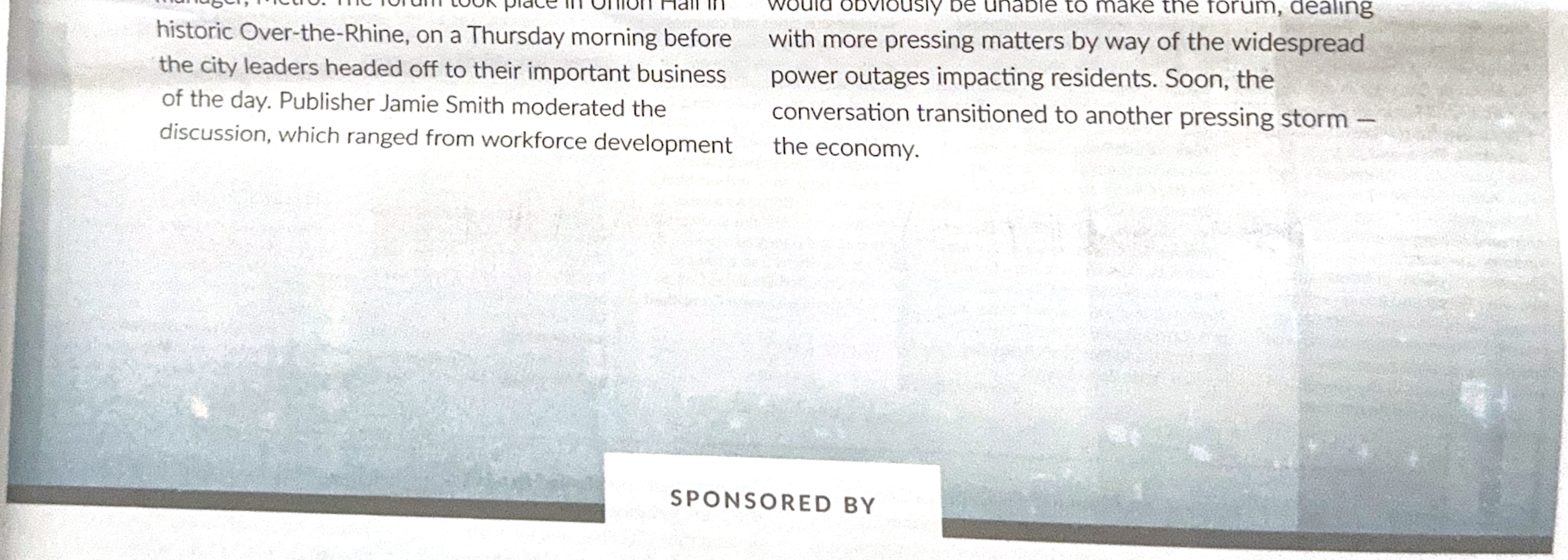
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THE FUTURE OF GREATER CINCINNATI

ON APRIL 3, The Courier asked top leaders in business and development to share their projections for the cities in our region, including current and future projects and opportunities. The panel featured: Moira Weir, president and CEO, United Way of Greater Cincinnati; Kimm Lauterbach, president and CEO, REDI Cincinnati; Lisha Morlan, community and economic development, City of Middletown; and Andy Aiello, deputy general manager, Metro. The forum took place in Union Hall in historic Over-the-Rhine, on a Thursday morning before the city leaders headed off to their important business of the day. Publisher Jamie Smith moderated the discussion, which ranged from workforce development strategies to population growth, and the secret sauce that makes Cincinnati one of the most competitive and innovative cities in the U.S. Here's what they shared.

The forum began the morning after massive storms swept through the greater tri-state area, so Smith kicked off the discussion by sharing that Amy Spiller, state president - Ohio and Kentucky, Duke Energy, would obviously be unable to make the forum, dealing with more pressing matters by way of the widespread power outages impacting residents. Soon, the conversation transitioned to another pressing storm — the economy.



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MEET THE EXPERTS



ANDY AIELLO
Deputy General Manager
Metro

Andy Aiello serves as Deputy General Manager for Metro. He serves as the CEO/GM's principal aide and oversees the Operations and Human Resources functions of the organization. Prior to joining Metro in 2022, Mr. Aiello served as General Manager of the Transit Authority of Northern Kentucky (TANK), a role he held since 2010, overseeing the daily operations and strategic direction of the regional transit system. His extensive transportation background also includes leadership roles of Deputy General Manager and Assistant Director of Communications at TANK, as well as prior planning roles with the Atlanta Regional Commission and the Georgia Department of Transportation. Mr. Aiello holds Bachelor of Arts degrees in Urban and Regional Planning and Philosophy from Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, and an MBA from the University of Cincinnati's Carl H. Lindner College of Business. He is a member of Leadership Cincinnati Class 48, immediate past Chair of the Northern Kentucky University, College of Informatics Advisory Board and has served on many boards throughout his career related to transportation, workforce development, and community impact. He resides in the City of Cincinnati with his wife and two teenage sons.



KIMM LAUTERBACH
President & CEO
REDI Cincinnati

As a founding member of REDI Cincinnati's leadership team, Kimm engineers strategies and tactics that strengthen the three-state, 15-county Cincinnati region to compete globally. Kimm took the helm of REDI Cincinnati in September 2018, following five successful years as vice president of business development and project management for the organization. In that role, she changed the face of economic development in the Cincinnati region, leading all aspects of the deal for companies locating to or expanding in the region. Throughout her 20-year career, she has played a pivotal role in Ohio's economic development across multiple cities and counties in both the public and private sectors, aligning diverse stakeholder interests with the needs of business communities across long-term regional economic goals. Kimm serves on the board of directors for the Cincinnati USA Regional Chamber, Cincinnati Experience, BE NKY Growth Partnership, the Federal Reserve Southwest Ohio & Northern Kentucky Business Advisory Council and the University of Cincinnati Research Institute, as well as having previously served on the Greater Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky Foreign Trade Zone boards.



LISHA MORLAN
Economic Development Director
City of Middletown

Lisha Morlan is a dynamic leader in community and economic development with over 30 years of experience spanning the public and private sectors. Currently serving as the Director of Community & Economic Development for the City of Middletown, Ohio, Lisha engineers strategies and tactics that empower businesses and communities to compete and thrive—both regionally and nationally. She is known for taking the helm in high-impact initiatives that revitalize cities, attract investment, and drive innovation across industries. Her leadership has helped transform the face of economic development in numerous cities and counties by aligning long-term community goals with the evolving needs of business and industry. Lisha leads pivotal aspects of deal-making for businesses locating to or expanding within the region, facilitating strategic partnerships, business retention programs, and workforce development efforts. As a serial entrepreneur, Lisha has successfully launched and operated seven businesses. She is also an award-winning Certified Business Coach and Certified Behavioral Consultant



AMY SPILLER
State President - Ohio & Kentucky
Duke Energy

Amy Spiller is president of Duke Energy's utility operations in Ohio and Kentucky, which serve approximately 900,000 electric customers and 557,000 natural gas customers. She is accountable for advancing the company's rate and regulatory initiatives and managing the government relations, community affairs and stakeholder engagement functions throughout the region.

Prior to assuming her current role in June 2018, Amy was vice president of government and community affairs for Duke Energy Ohio. In this role, she was responsible for state government and regulatory policies, strategies and relationships impacting Duke Energy Ohio's interests and those of its electric and natural gas customers. Amy also led the company's local community relations efforts with key stakeholders in southwest Ohio.

Amy previously spent 10 years as deputy general counsel, where she helped shape and guide Duke Energy's regulatory strategic planning in Ohio and Kentucky. She was also responsible for advancing the company's rate and regulatory initiatives before the Kentucky Public Service Commission and Public Utilities Commission of Ohio. Amy joined Cinergy, a predecessor to Duke Energy, in 2003 as an associate general counsel focused on litigation.



MOIRA WEIR
President & CEO
United Way of Greater Cincinnati

Moira Weir became the first female President and CEO of United Way of Greater Cincinnati in March 2020. She has guided the organization through transformative change designed to help all people achieve economic well-being within its nine-county service area in Ohio, Kentucky and Indiana.

Her vision for United Way centers on its role as a community catalyst uniquely positioned to drive change through investments, influence and filling gaps in service. She's led efforts to amplify community voices and innovate solutions that help families build lasting foundations.

Before joining United Way, Weir was the Director of Hamilton County Job & Family Services for 12 of her 26 years with the department.

In 2020, national philanthropist MacKenzie Scott chose to invest in Weir's leadership, presenting United Way of Greater Cincinnati with a $25 million grant. Weir's recognitions include: 2022 Lighthouse Youth and Family Services Beacon of Light Award; named to the Cincinnati Business Courier's 2021 Women Who Mean Business list; the 2020 Vistage Member Excellence Award for Leadership; named one of Cincinnati's Most Influential Women by Venue Magazine in 2019; a 2016 YWCA Career Woman of Achievement.

The Economy

REDI Cincinnati's Lauterbach shared that during Presidential election years, companies may take a brief pause to allow the new administration time to formulate policy, but based on higher interest rates, tariff discussions, and other challenges, early insights show that companies are seeking clarity and additional information as they evaluate investment.

Yet, Cincinnati's main opportunity is its substantial diversity of economy, she adds, with widely differing industries all continuing to grow and lead in the tri-state. "I remain really excited about that opportunity — there are so many assets and so much potential to come," she says. "It will take getting stability in policy as we move forward."

Aiello shared Metro is facing a "generational opportunity" to rebuild the transportation system that needs to be adaptable, flexible, and innovative. Everyone from new graduates to seniors heading to medical appointments need to be able to rely on transportation, and technology is leading the way into a new frontier of Cincinnati bus transport.
If you travel a half hour north to Middletown, Lisha Morlan shares, the city planners are pushing for strategic change with transportation too but also housing and workforce development to support a population that "used to fall through the cracks," she shares. Now, as the lines blur between two bustling metropolises, Cincinnati and Dayton, that area is rife with opportunity.

Weir, President and CEO of United Way, talked about opportunity areas in the social services sector. She pointed



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out that half of children nationwide are growing up in households that struggle to afford necessities, such as reliable housing, utilities and childcare. In Ohio, 46% of children live in financially insecure households. These fundamental requirements for a thriving family trickle down to students, who are already suffering from pandemic-related learning loss and widespread absenteeism right now. Weir shares she is "a little nervous" about how federal funding cuts could impact local families.

The Vision

Each of the leaders at the forum came ready to share their vision — the projects they are working on to fight for a better tomorrow for Cincinnatians.

Morlan is working on infrastructure projects to route industrial truck traffic separate ways from vehicular traffic, as the area grows, and more workers head to Middletown for job opportunities. Density, she shares "is not a dirty word," and in fact helps the whole region — with proper management and oversight.

Meanwhile, you'll find both Aiello and his kids riding public transportation around the city, putting their bus passes to work to rebuild pre-pandemic ridership. And it's working — while the country is at 75% of pre-pandemic ridership, and cities like Pittsburgh are at around 60%, Cincinnati is boasting a 110% ridership rate. Why? Aiello and the leaders at Metro improved Sunday, weekend, late night service, and added 24-hour service. It's an integral aspect of a city working to grow jobs, ensuring people can get to work. "The network is 23% more efficient than 2019," he says, pointing to the "fundamentals" as the key components of continued improvement. When you have DHL and



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Amazon employees needing access to third shift jobs, those 7 routes now open for 24 hours become imperative for city infrastructure and productivity.

Morlan agrees, "shift work is huge." She calls it a chicken and the egg scenario — if you can't catch a bus to work, you can't hold a job. Yet, you need the route to get the riders. "Bussing is absolutely critical for the workforce," she adds.

Lauterbach discussed REDI's enhanced 3x3 strategic plan launching in 2025, which focuses on three bold goals in the next three years, creating an enhanced focus on attracting businesses, amplifying the region as a globally competitive location for business, and elevating its efforts that diversify the region's economy and equitably connects companies with funding and services. "To optimize business attraction and marketing efforts, REDI is focusing on four key sectors where we believe our region has the right to win given our success: Life Sciences, Aerospace & Aviation, Food, Flavoring & Beverage, and Chemicals & Materials. This targeted approach ensures efficient use of resources and maximizes impact."

As jobs grow, so does the need for childcare. Morlan's out of the box thinking means that sometime in the near future we might see a bus route to a childcare center where parents can also access healthcare and grocery shopping, while their kids spend 2-3 hours at daycare, she says. "We've also had requests for a laundromat." Once these essential needs are met, people can focus on work, she says.

The Challenges

In spite of job growth, Weir hasn't seen families "bounce back" quite as quickly





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from the pandemic on a personal level. Financial concerns impact workforce productivity, with one study finding that 23% of workers spend an hour or more of their workday thinking about their finances.

Factors such as inflation and drastic changes in home values have affected housing stability, so United Way is innovating alongside partners to reduce evictions and preserve homeownership. One such program is modeled after a successful initiative in Boston. The Renew Collaborative works with tenants to create custom plans to stay in their homes while advocates negotiate with property owners to make payments toward back rent. The aim is to demonstrate to property owners the financial advantages of keeping families housed versus pursuing eviction. Ultimately, it also means fewer families finding their belongings on the street, and the associated trauma that comes with that too, she shares. Finally, they are working on untangling titles that can be a major barrier to transitioning homeownership between the generations — "a way to create wealth."

Smith pointed out that Weir is a connector of people — if you ask for a meeting with her, you can bet she's bringing someone with her, he joked. "You can't do it by yourself," she says.

Another great connector is United Way 211. Weir explained that, of course, people call 911 when they need help, but many of these calls could be handled by United Way 211 instead. 211 is a 24/7 helpline that connects callers to services and resources. There were 60,000 requests for assistance last year, she shares. "The top calls were for housing, transportation, food, and energy costs." United Way has invested in modernizing 211's infrastructure to enhance its capabilities. For example, staff in Cincinnati were recently able to help 211 LA respond to requests for assistance during the wildfires. The organization is also focused on building a streamlined, comprehensive referral system by coordinating follow-ups with callers and service providers.

With transportation as a major concern, Aiello shared the challenge of providing affordable, UBER-like services to Cincinnati residents through the metro system. Now, it's a reality with MetroNow! currently operating in two zones. "It's incredible," he says, of the on-demand service offering rides for only $2. "We have seen ridership increase every month Forest Park and Blue Ash are coming next," he says, pointing to specific strategies in selecting where those zones are most needed. Those are lower income but lower density areas, places with zero car households. "The number one destination has been the grocery store," he says.

Simple changes to increase accessibility have worked in other ways — a barrier to an $80 per month bus pass was never having $80 available for that at once, Aiello says. "Fare capping" is coming this summer, where you pay as you go, and once you hit $4 for a day pass, you don't pay again that day. Once you hit $80 per month, you don't pay again that month.

Taking Action

As the panel wrapped up, Weir shared how she's "always struck by the good heart we see in Cincinnati." Smith added that people here "Don't have a script — they talk from the heart." Weir encouraged open conversations driven by curiosity about those who are struggling and how we can help. "That's how you get closer to what's happening in the community. Get engaged with what you are passionate about."

Lauterbach shared a callout for business and economic leaders to get in touch with REDI Cincinnati. We would appreciate the opportunity to share our strategic plan and get your insights. Morlan pointed to the benefit of organic conversations that come through networking. "I've been told I could talk to a brick wall!" she joked. Aiello hopes to see everyone riding the bus, especially after getting the transit app. "You'll find a new system. You'll see the community getting to work and doing the things they need to do, and you'll feel pride in your system and your community," he says. Finally, Weir called for action from everyone — "These problems and opportunities run deep. I've seen people overcome these because people believed in them."