



Small business voices: OMS effects and business contribution to regional resiliency

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Setting the story

“I have been in business for [over 20] years. Things have been going badly. Metro Surge has had a significant effect due to fear. I can’t hire a front desk person. I really need one, but I can’t hire one.

One patient was grabbed. One of the workers from [the restaurant next door] was grabbed... People are anxious. Customers are sheltering in place. I can’t reassure people because [Metro Surge] is still going on... I carried my passport. I’m a U.S. citizen and I carried my passport. One of my patients was detained for a couple months.

My business is community based; we provide services in different languages. I feel targeted because of my background. My patients are targeted. I felt that hardworking people were detained for no reason... People were detained and weren’t even asked for their documents...

Unfortunately, people had to die for people to realize what was happening. Invest more in this area, clean it up, make it safe.”

Doctor, East Franklin

Presentation overview



Community Resources

Support During Federal Immigration Enforcement

The City of Burnsville is committed to supporting you with compassion now and always. We understand that federal immigration enforcement is affecting our community, and we want you to know resources that are available.

We are here to help

Emergency & Public Safety

📞 911

Always call 911 if you are in danger, witness a crime, or need emergency assistance. Burnsville Police are here to keep people safe and will respond to calls for help.

City Support & Services

📞 952-895-4400

City staff can answer questions about City services and help connect you with community partners for resources and support.

What you need to know

- Burnsville Police do not enforce federal immigration laws or check immigration status. Officers only enforce state and local laws and may be present at gatherings to help maintain safety and peace. City resources are not used for federal immigration enforcement except where required by law or a judicial warrant.
- If you are concerned about the actions of federal immigration enforcement, contact the United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) St. Paul Field office: 612-843-8600 or StPaul.Outreach@ice.dhs.gov
- If you believe a federal employee has acted improperly, complaints can be submitted to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Office of Inspector General: hotline.oig.dhs.gov



For a full list of resources and updates visit burnsvillemn.gov/communityupdates

Resources

Basic needs support

- Dakota County Housing Assistance
651-554-5751 (option 1)
bit.ly/DakotaCountyFoodPrograms
- Food Resources in Dakota County
651-554-5611
bit.ly/DakotaCountyHousing
- 360 Communities
(food, housing, crisis support)
952-985-5300
360communities.org
- The Open Door Pantry
Food support
651-686-0787
theopendoorpantry.org
- La Vina Community Church
Food and rent assistance
612-567-9777
iglesiavina.org

Immigration & Legal Information

- MN DHS Refugee and Immigrant Helpline
1-800-814-4806
mn.gov/dhs/resettlement/helpline/
- Dakota County Law Library
651-438-8080
co.dakota.mn.us/LawJustice/LawLibrary
- MN Attorney General Immigration Resources
651-296-3353
ag.state.mn.us/Immigration/

1. Rationale
2. Project overview & methodology
3. Preliminary research findings on Operation Metro Surge effects:
 - A. Social and emotional impact
 - B. Economic impact
 - C. Small businesses contribute to regional resiliency
 - D. What businesses need now

Rationale & Project Overview



Image source: Met Council

Rationale for Council research

Imagine 2050: Dynamic and Resilient Goal

Analyze impacts of an event that threatens the resilience of the region.

Collaborate with regional partners to identify regional strategies.

Understand trends affecting the workforce and examine how local governments can respond.

2025 Regional Economic Framework Commitment

Hold future convenings (as needed) that can help continue the conversation around the region's economy.

Small business voices research questions

1. What are the short and long-term **economic, psychological, and social effects of OMS on main street small businesses?**
2. What support do small businesses say they need at this time?
3. What role do “main street” small businesses play in fostering **dynamic and resilient communities?**

On-the-ground study highlights small business voices over time.



Image source: Met Council

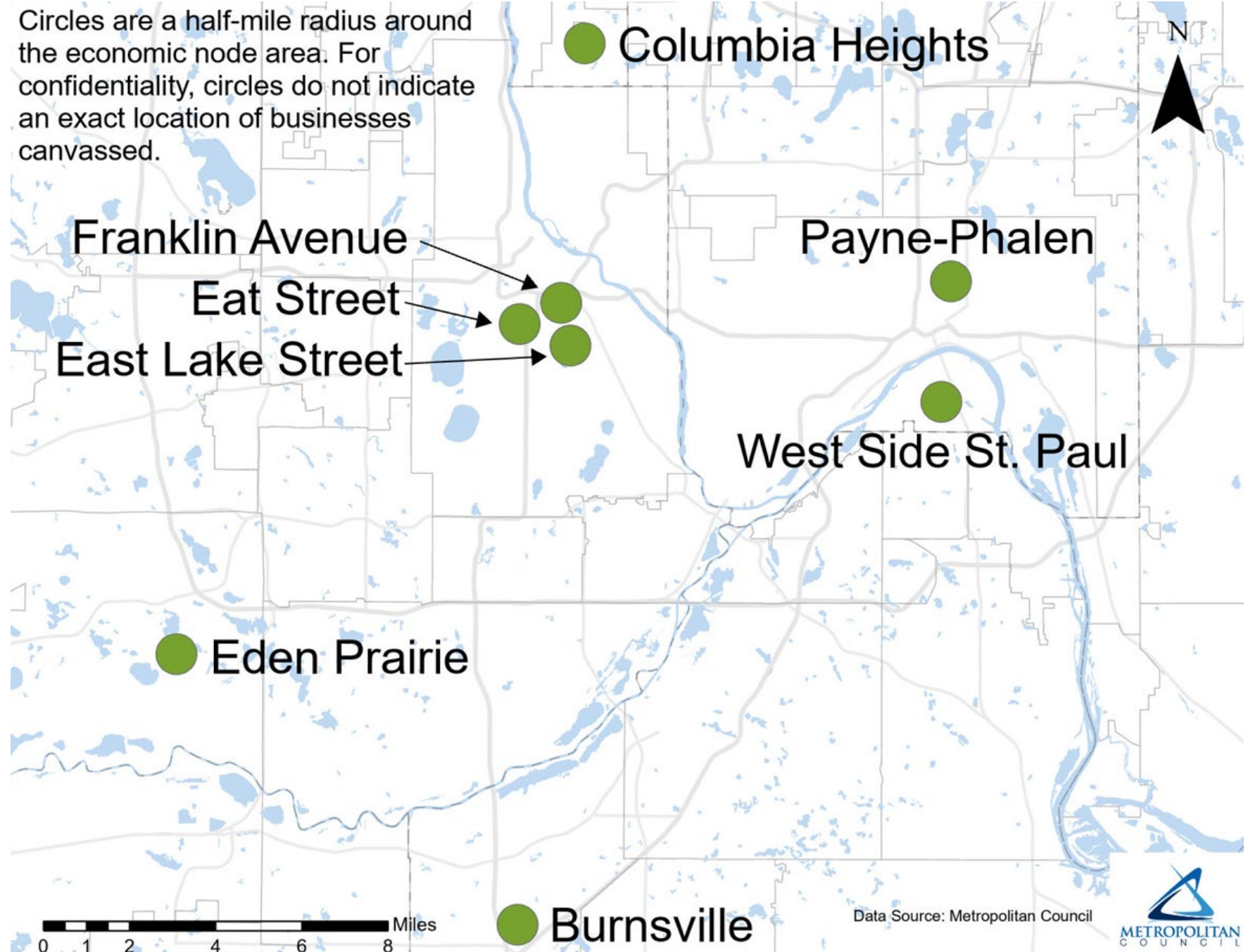
Methodology key points:

1. Study focuses on “main street” small businesses.
2. Semi-structured interviews and ethnographic observation (English, Mandarin, Somali, Spanish). Interviews lasted 5-45 minutes.
3. Businesses eager to share experiences

Research at eight economic nodes

Process designed to:

- Be representative of locations and experiences across the region
- Understand how economic, psychological, and sociological **factors interact on-the-ground**
- Understand the role small businesses play in fostering **community connections**
- Include **longitudinal check-in** with same geographic nodes, businesses for two years



Preliminary Research Findings



Image source: Sahan Journal

Economic impact of Operation Metro Surge

OMS enforcement triggered immediate, drastic loss of revenue. Businesses had to quickly adapt.

- Immediate revenue losses
- Workforce disruptions
- Owners took second jobs, borrowed money, and used savings
- Holiday sales were disrupted

"During ICE, I had to find another job [because revenue was down.]" "These clothes are from my other job. I had to get another job to pay bills."

Hair salon, Payne Ave. St. Paul

"It's been bad. Very bad. People are scared to come in. They are scared to walk on the street. We lost employees and customers during Metro Surge. Employees took time off because of fear. They were stopped by ICE agents. I had employee who lived across the street, and he was afraid to walk over here to work."

Grocery store, Columbia Heights

"Time alone won't fix this, because there's still fear. This has thrown off our plans to expand. [It's now April, and] some of our bills are still unpaid."

Restaurant, Eden Prairie

Emotional and social impact of OMS

Fear and hypervigilance reshaped daily activities

Business owners and staff describe feeling:

- Feeling emotionally overwhelmed, sad, grief
- Worrying about long-term business sustainability.
- Carrying emotional responsibility for employees, customers, family and community members.

“They were very scared. Customers weren't coming out, and they were afraid of ICE. They [ICE] were in the parking lot. For those three months, it was very bad. Even if people were citizens, they were afraid to come out; they didn't want to risk their lives... Everybody was feeling down. It was surreal to witness.

As a Black woman in my 50s, I was only told stories about injustices that happened to Black folks. To watch it, to see it being done to others because they're different nationalities, I never thought I would see that for myself. People were afraid of coming to work. Witnessing it was unbelievable.”

Salon, Lake Street Minneapolis

*“We know clients feel many things. When it was very tense, no one wanted to go out. They were depressed, fearful, and couldn't work. Any money available, they pay rent. There's no money to eat or anything. **You carry the stress [from hearing the stories].** Now [after peak OMS] people feel, “They took my family, or ‘a coworker died in detention.’”*

Restaurant, West Side St. Paul

Small businesses were essential to regional resiliency during OMS.

"People who have documents were even scared and stayed home. Some customers would say, 'look out the window for us, please'."

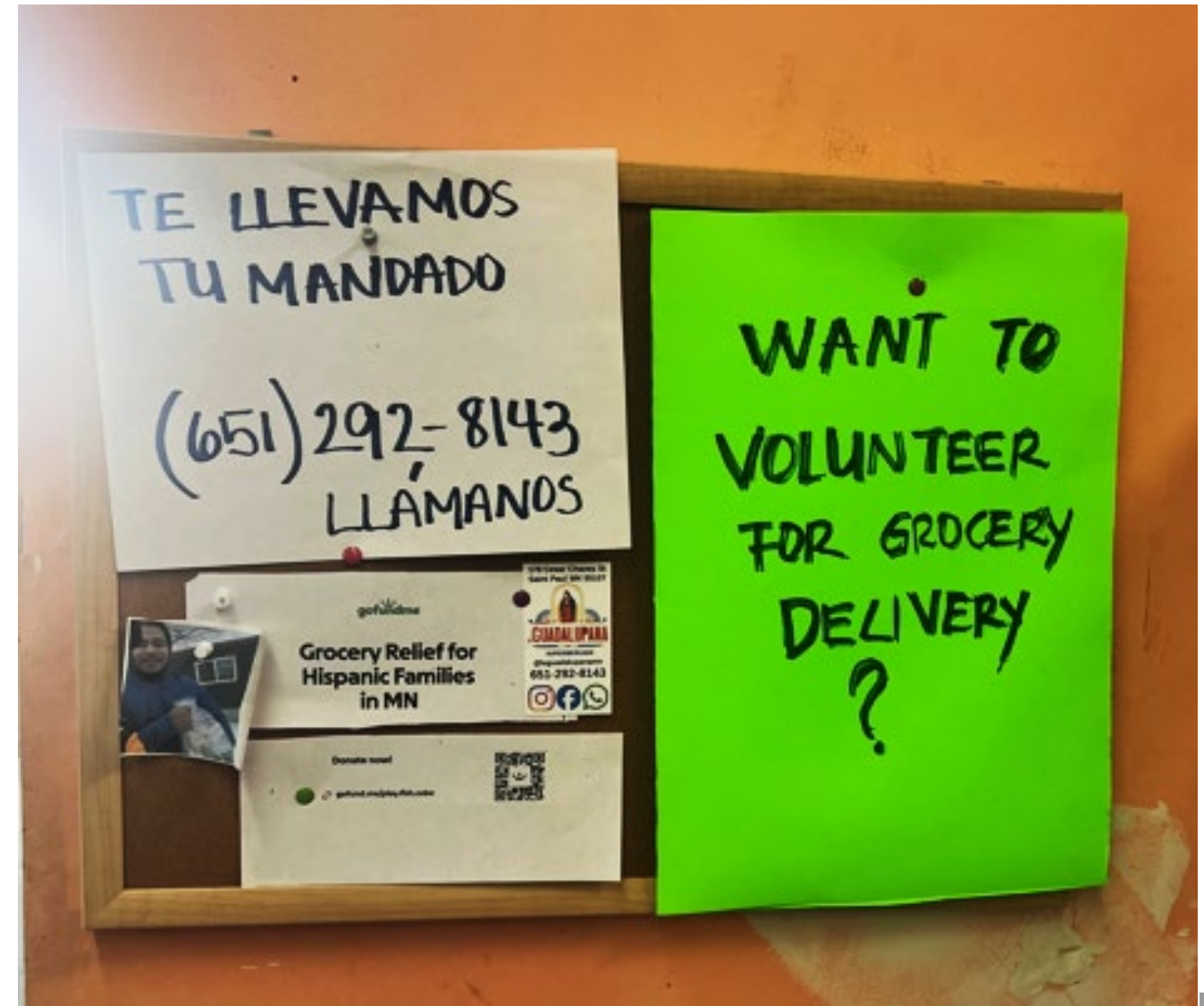
Grocery store, Lake Street

"We had to work harder to stay open and protect our customers. ICE was here constantly. We were hiding people from outside in the back of the store. People were afraid, people with passports, people who were legal."

Liquor store, Columbia Heights

"I have brought and taken home my employees for the past three months. I'm still doing it [in March]. They don't feel safe."

Restaurant, Payne Ave



Small businesses filled important gaps in community support

Businesses did so much to support others during Operation Metro Surge:

- Informing clients of on the ground conditions to protect client safety.
- Organizing and providing deliveries for families who were afraid to leave their homes.
- Extending credit to customers.
- Buying gas and supplying food for patrollers.
- Providing shelter to residents during violence and severe cold.
- Distributing whistles and know-your-rights information.
- Coming together to discuss what was happening in their communities and offering emotional and financial support.

“Protect us! They came to take us and the government didn't do anything. I am so grateful to the gringos who loved us so much. They loved all of us and took care of us.

During the time in January and February, we were in groups helping each other.”
Pharmacy, Lake Street

“Businesses stepped up to fill the gap in time of crisis. Cities need to know that people will trust the coffee shop staff more than government staff. Community organizations also partnered with businesses. Small businesses were representing Minnesota during Metro Surge, for example on BBC. [Our café's] truck goes to pow wows so that [community] members know and trust them.”
Café, East Franklin

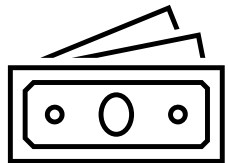
What businesses say they need is similar across time

Top answers to question, “What would help most right now”?:

Feb-March 2026



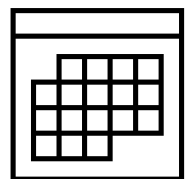
Help attracting customers



Financial assistance



Marketing

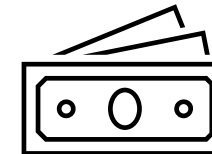


Time to recover

May-June 2026



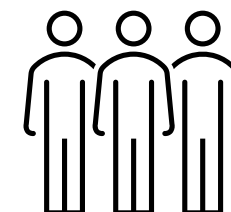
Help attracting customers



Financial assistance



Marketing



Help affording additional staff

Concerns remained months later

Metropolitan Council

Research results summary



OMS enforcement triggered immediate, drastic loss of revenue. Businesses had to quickly adapt.



Fear and hypervigilance reshaped daily activities.



Small businesses were essential to regional resiliency during OMS.



Together with residents, small businesses addressed essential gaps in community support.



Businesses report needing help attracting customers, financial assistance, marketing (digital), and help finding additional staff. These needs continue as of summer 2026

Discussion



Image source: Sahan Journal

Discussion questions

1. What other audiences do you think we should connect with about these research results?
2. How do you see the audiences using these findings?
3. What do you see as the Council's role in supporting small business resiliency?



Image source: Star Tribune

What Do You Do if You See ICE in Your Community?

1. Use the **SALUTE** acronym below to gather and share key information, then take photos and video if possible
2. If someone is being detained, use the phrases on the back to help them know their rights and get family contact information
3. Call the ICIRR hotline and report what you see:
1-855-HELP-MY-FAMILY
(1-855-435-7693)
4. Text **SALUTE** information to community members and local community organizations like the **Protect RP ICE Watch Signal**

Size:

How many people? "5-6 people"

Activity:

What are they doing? "Sitting in a marked Homeland Security SUV"

Location:

"At the corner of X&Y, east side of the street"

Uniform:

"Wearing vests saying POLICE ICE on the back"

Time & date of observation:

"January 21st at 12:05 PM"

Equipment & weapons:

"They have body armor & pepper spray"

Image source: Met Council

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