

BUILDING IMMIGRANT-FRIENDLY CITIES

A GUIDE FOR CITY LEADERS
MAY 2018

INTRODUCTION

Over the last three decades, immigration has become a prominent political and policy issue. Throughout most of this period, the federal government has reacted to the changes in the magnitude and nature of immigration with increasingly hostile legislation. This approach changed somewhat under the Obama administration.¹ However, with the election of President Trump, who made immigration reform a top issue in his campaign,² the federal stance on immigration seems to have become tougher than ever.

Municipalities across the U.S. have to address on a daily basis a myriad of issues related to immigrants, who are overwhelmingly concentrated in metropolitan areas.³ With the notable absence of any comprehensive national policy to welcome immigrants into the broader urban community, cities are left to develop their own tools, policies and programs to address the influx of immigrants. The welcoming approach adopted by many cities across the U.S. puts them in direct conflict with the new federal administration. An example of the contrasting views of the federal and municipal levels can be seen in the executive order from January 25, 2017, which threatens to deny federal grants from “sanctuary jurisdictions”⁴ that refuse to comply or help enforce federal immigration policies.⁵

This report aims to help elected officials, policy-makers, activists, and community-based organizations to advocate for, design, and implement progressive policies toward immigrants at the city level. It provides a broad review of immigrant-friendly, city-level policies, which builds on the cumulative experience of local governments, as well as the knowledge and ideas of policy experts and activists. Given how rapidly policy changes are unfolding, we recommend pairing this report with up-to-date information from issue experts, such as the National Immigration Law Center.⁶ A list of resources is provided in the appendix of this document. Before presenting this menu of policies, we begin by offering an analysis of the socio-demographic trends that help explain why immigration issues have become so important.



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SUMMARY

As the federal government takes an increasingly hostile stance toward immigrants, cities play an increasingly important role.

Cities can take many actions to support immigrant populations:

Center your city's immigrant population in policymaking

Do not participate in the enforcement of federal civil immigration law,

Support immigrant communities with words and actions, create and implement plans to be immigrant-friendly.

Offer supportive services, such as an Office of Immigrant Affairs.

Ensure language access to all local government services.

Protect low wage workers, who are disproportionately immigrants, and support entrepreneurs and local small businesses, as immigrants are more likely to start business.

Improve access to the banking system and provide financial education.

Provide legal aid or advice on immigration status and citizenship issues.

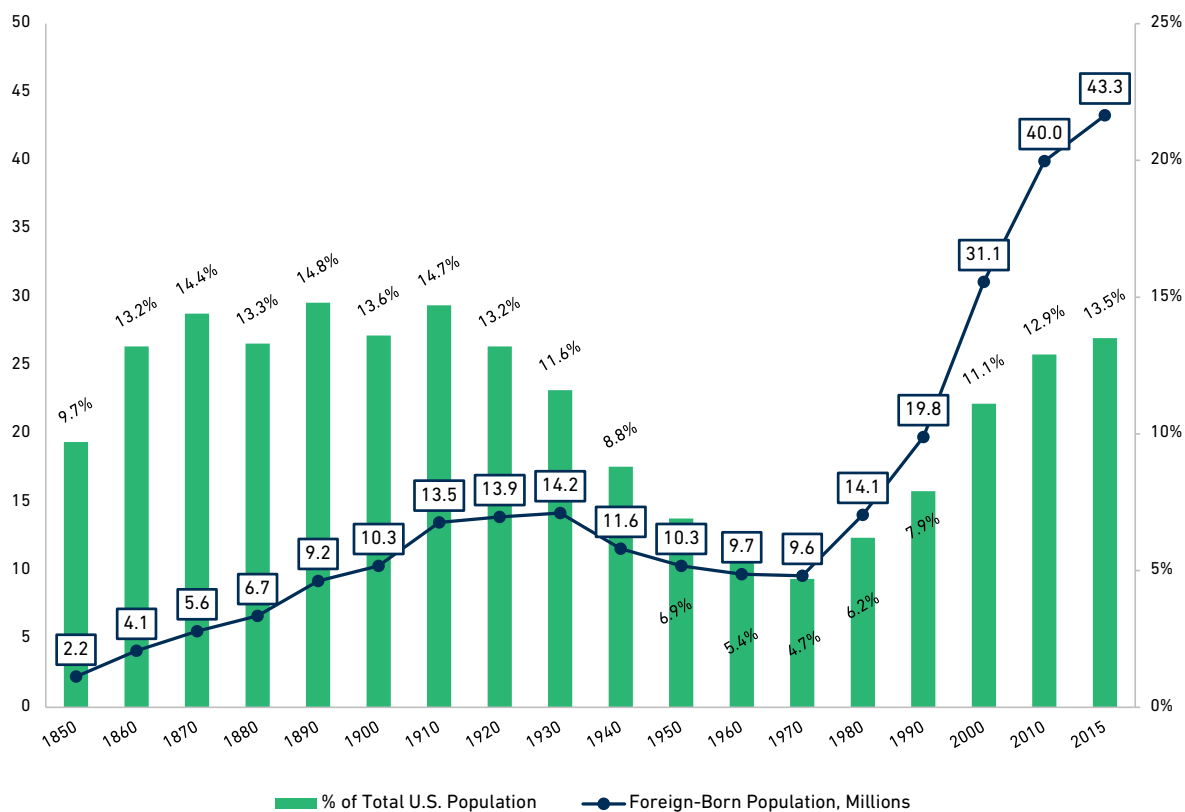
This document was written by Yair Kalor, Mel Meder, Satya Rhodes-Conway and Mariah Young-Jones, but was based on, and borrows heavily from, an earlier COWS report by Pablo Mitnik, Jessica Halpern-Finnerty and Matt Vidal.

A NEW SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC REALITY

A number of trends help explain why immigration has become such a contentious and central political issue. The foreign-born population in the US increased by 350% between 1970 and 2015.⁷ Between 1990 and 2015 alone, the foreign-born population more than doubled from 19.8 million to 43.3 million.

Immigration to the U.S. in recent decades has also increased in relative terms. The share of the foreign-born in the general population has risen from a historically low 4.7% in 1970 to 13.5% in 2015 (see Figure 1). Moreover, the acceleration of immigration has driven the share of foreign-born people in traditionally favored immigration destinations to notable highs - 51.7% in Miami, 38.2% in Los Angeles, and 37.2% in New York City in 2015.⁸ In that year immigrants accounted for more than 23% of the population in the 15 most populated metropolitan areas in the U.S., and more than 25% in the 8 most populated areas.⁹

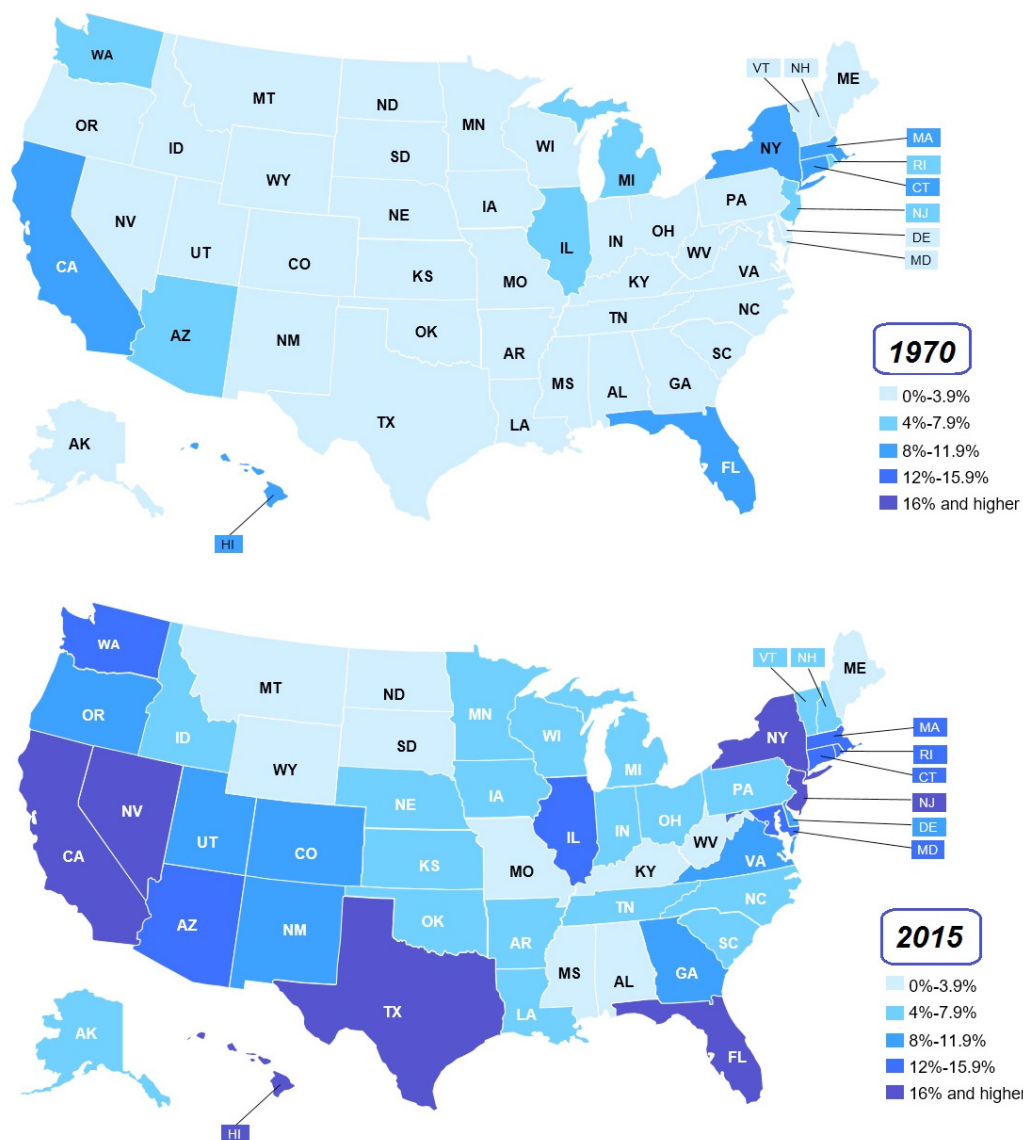
FIGURE 1
THE GROWTH OF IMMIGRANT POPULATION IN THE UNITED STATES



Source: Historical Census Statistics on the Foreign-Born Population of the U.S.: 1850-2000 and American Community Survey 2011-2015

Unlike in the past, when most immigrants were concentrated in a few states, today there are significant concentrations of immigrants all over the country (see Figure 2). Growth in the share of foreign born people in states that previously were not important immigrant destinations has been significant. Between 1990 and 2015 the growth rate was at least 100% in 37 states. In 22 states the growth was more than 200%, and Arkansas, Georgia, North Carolina, Nevada and Tennessee all saw growth rates of at least 400% during this 25-year period.

FIGURE 2
IMMIGRANTS AS A SHARE OF STATE POPULATION, 1970 VS.2015



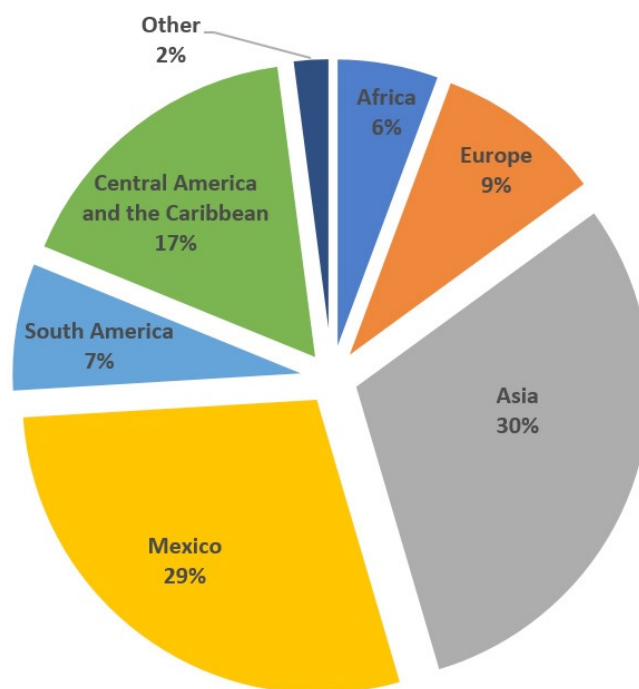
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2011-2015

The immigrant population in recent decades has been extraordinarily diverse. An indicator of this diversity is the varied origin of those who entered the country between 1990 and 2015 (see Figure 3). The ethnic and cultural diversity associated with this geographic diversity is significant. Today almost 21% of the U.S. population speaks a language other than English at home, while close to 9% do not speak English fluently.¹⁰ Of course, these average figures hide marked disparities across states, counties, and cities. For example, in Los Angeles, a traditional immigration destination, 60% speak a language other than English at home, while in Las Vegas and Atlanta, both of which are new destination cities, the corresponding figures are 33.6% and 10.2%, respectively.¹¹

Another reason for the importance of immigration in the public arena is the high participation of immigrants in the labor force. Between January 2007 and January 2017, more than 50% of the growth in the U.S. labor force was due to the arrival of new immigrants.¹² In 2015 immigrants represented 13.5% of the population but about 17% percent of the civilian labor force. In some states their share of the labor force was considerably higher – 34% in California, 27.9% in New York, 27.8% in New Jersey, 25.4% in Florida, and 25.3% in Nevada.¹³

A final reason has to do with immigrants' legal status. According to a recent study by the Pew Research Center, unauthorized immigrants accounted for 25.5% of the U. S. foreign-born population in 2014, about 11.1 million people.¹⁴ Although this figure represents a sharp rise from only 3 million unauthorized immigrants in 1980, the number of unauthorized immigrants declined from a peak of 12.2 million in 2007.

FIGURE 3
GEOGRAPHIC ORIGIN OF IMMIGRANTS WHO ENTERED THE U.S. IN 1990-2015



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2011-2015

FEDERAL IMMIGRATION POLICY: THE CONTEXT FOR LOCAL RESPONSES

The modern history of U.S immigration begins in 1952, when Congress re-codified and combined all previous immigration and naturalization law into the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA). With the proliferation of immigration during the 1970s, the federal government set out to impose greater constraints on the entry of immigrants by narrowing their access to political and economic rights. The first move in this direction was the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA),¹⁵ which criminalized the act of knowingly hiring unauthorized immigrants by establishing penalties for employers in violation.¹⁶ In the 1990s, when anti-immigrant rhetoric escalated around perceptions that unauthorized immigrants were taking jobs from US-born residents and abusing social welfare, Congress passed three additional immigrant-restrictive bills.¹⁷ These greatly reduced the rights of individuals suspected of criminal activity or terrorism, restricted unauthorized immigrants' access to essential public services such as welfare, and expanded the range of offenses for which immigrants could be deported.¹⁸



Source: Welcoming America, www.welcomingamerica.org/

The terror attacks of September 11, 2001 and the recession of 2001-2002 led to new policies to limit both authorized and unauthorized immigration. A “special registration” system and a “voluntary interview” program singled out foreign-born Muslims, Arabs, and South Asians.¹⁹ New laws combined and conflated anti-terrorism concerns with attempts to control unauthorized immigration. These included the REAL ID Act of 2005, which required states to demand proof of citizenship or legal immigration status before issuing a driver’s license.²⁰

The federal attitude towards immigration changed somewhat under the administration of President Obama. In 2012, an executive action allowed young adults who had been brought to the country illegally as minors to apply for deportation relief and a work permit. The program, known as Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), was expanded in 2014, and a new program was set up to offer similar benefits to some unauthorized-immigrant parents of U.S.-born children.²¹ However, the Obama Administration also prioritized removals (formal proceedings initiated when someone is apprehended trying to cross a border, which bar attempts to reenter via legal methods for at least five years) more than returns (the informal process of turning away anyone trying to cross a border, without initiating formal proceedings).²² The Administration also prioritized the arrest and deportation of immigrants with multiple or significant criminal convictions “other than minor traffic offenses or offenses related to person’s immigration status.”²³

With the election of President Trump, who made immigration reform a top issue in his campaign,²⁴ the federal approach has become once more focused on restrictions and deportations. In addition to ongoing rhetoric about and attempts to fund a full border wall between the US and Mexico, the Trump administration’s oversight of ICE is much more lax and prioritizes the removal of unauthorized immigrants who have committed even minor crimes many years ago; This is a much broader set of removal criteria, which has led to increased state and local counter-efforts.²⁵

“Giving ample opportunities to anyone willing to work hard and to participate in the social and civic life of the nation is a salient element of the American identity.”

WHY ADOPT IMMIGRANT-FRIENDLY POLICIES AT THE LOCAL LEVEL?

There are many reasons why local governments should adopt immigrant-friendly policies. From a practical perspective, numerous studies show the positive impact of immigration on a wide range of economic indicators. From a historical perspective, the U.S. has experienced wave after wave of immigration, starting with the first European settlers. Giving ample opportunities to anyone willing to work hard and to participate in the social and civic life of the nation is a salient element of the American identity. Other reasons include legal, moral, and cultural considerations. This section reviews some of the main motivations for cities and local governments to welcome immigration with inclusive, supporting policies.

ECONOMIC BENEFITS

It is often argued that immigrants “take jobs away” from local workers. However, economists have found that immigrants do not cause any sizeable decrease in wages and employment of U.S.-born citizens,²⁶ and can actually have a small positive effect on the income of native population.²⁷ A study conducted in St. Louis, for example, found that a larger influx of immigrants to the city would stimulate the local economy, resulting in an increase of 4%-7% in income growth in the city and leading to an increase of 7%-11% in the total income of the region.²⁸ There is also no evidence that immigration significantly affects the overall employment levels of native-born workers.²⁹

Immigrants often contribute to local economies as small business owners, promoting community development and rejuvenation. A recent study conducted in Charlotte, NC, for example, found that “immigrant businesses have transformed deteriorating and abandoned street fronts into vibrant and well-frequented urban environments conducive for further development.”³⁰ Another study, which focused on Antwerp, Belgium, and Izmir, Turkey, found that immigrants contribute to economic growth not only because of their talents and skills, but also because of their social connections.³¹ Researchers have found that immigrants are disproportionately represented among entrepreneurs (a quarter of entrepreneurs identify as immigrants) and start firms that are on average smaller than US-born entrepreneurs³² – a boon for cities seeking to cultivate small businesses.

While some claim that immigration puts a heavy fiscal burden on governments, both authorized (such as those who become citizens or work under visas) and a significant portion of unauthorized immigrants pay taxes. The chief actuary of Social Security estimates that in 2010, the unauthorized immigrant workers paid an excess of tax revenue over benefits of about \$12 billion.³³ At the state and local levels, The Institute on Taxation & Economic Policy estimates that undocumented immigrants collectively paid taxes of \$11.7 billion in 2014, with contributions ranging from less than \$1 million in Montana to more than \$3.1 billion in California.³⁴ According to the institute, allowing undocumented immigrants to work in the United States legally would increase their state and local tax contributions by an estimated \$2 billion a year.

SECURITY AND SAFETY

Proponents of restricting immigration often argue that such policies are necessary for public safety and national security.³⁵ However, studies have shown that these claims have no basis in reality.³⁶ One study, for example, analyzed data from Chicago for the years 1995-2003 and found that immigrants were 45% less likely to commit violent acts than third-generation Americans.³⁷ The study further showed that neighborhoods of concentrated immigration are more likely to have lower levels of violence. A more recent study analyzed census data from 1970 to 2010 for 200 randomly selected metropolitan areas, which include center cities and surrounding suburbs.³⁸ The results were similar: increased immigration was correlated with a decreased incidence of both violent crimes and property crimes. The researchers concluded that the results provide “strong and stable evidence that immigration does not cause crime to increase in U.S. metropolitan areas, and may even help reduce it.”

“...increased immigration was correlated with a decreased incidence of both violent crimes and property crimes...”

While immigration has not been shown to cause a rise in crimes rates, diverting local policing units for immigration enforcement tasks means that less resources are invested in preventing crimes and ensuring the safety of local communities. According to the Police Executive Research Forum, “active involvement in immigration enforcement can complicate local law enforcement agencies’ efforts to fulfill their primary missions of investigating and preventing crime.”³⁹ The forum recommends that police departments prohibit officers from arresting or detaining persons for the sole purpose of investigating their immigration status, and to uphold the constitutional and civil rights of persons regardless of their immigration status.

No less important is the reality that compliance with ICE also causes a chilling effect within immigrant communities. Undocumented residents are significantly less likely to report crimes to local police, which threatens their safety. Police and judges in Los Angeles, CA, El Paso County, TX, Austin, TX, San Antonio, TX, and Denver, CO have observed a correlation between increased ICE presence or enforcement and a drop in the number of reports made or protective orders sought – especially about domestic violence and sexual assault – coming from communities with a large unauthorized immigrant population.⁴⁰

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

James Madison, a principal author of the Constitution and the fourth president of the United States, explained long ago that “as they [aliens], owe, on the one hand, a temporary obedience, they are entitled, in return, to their [constitutional] protection and advantage.”⁴¹ The U.S. Supreme Court reiterated this position in *Zadvydas v. Davis*, stating that “as persons within our jurisdiction, the aliens are entitled to the protection of the Due Process Clause.” The court ruled that “due process” of the 14th Amendment applies to all aliens in the United States whose presence maybe or is “unlawful, involuntary or transitory.”⁴²

“...it is virtually impossible to crack down on the undocumented without inflicting suffering on many people who are not violating the law and without throwing broad segments of the communities where undocumented immigrants live into disarray...”

While the federal government has the right to regulate the national borders and make decisions about the admission and exclusion of outsiders, the physical presence of immigrants within the U.S. awards them with equal rights and personhood.⁴³ This position is evident in the Yick Wo tradition – a line of judicial thought based on the Supreme Court ruling in *Yick Wo v. Hopkins* (1886) - which holds that “the treatment of aliens in the interior should be essentially equivalent to that accorded citizens”⁴⁴

Another legal reason for immigrant-friendly policies is related to familial ties of undocumented immigrants, who often have spouses, partners, or children who are citizens or legal residents, and almost always have many other relatives and friends who are citizens or legal residents. Thus, it is virtually impossible to crack down on the undocumented without inflicting suffering on many people who are not violating the law and without throwing broad segments of the communities where undocumented immigrants live into disarray.

AMERICAN VALUES AND TRADITION

There are also historical-normative reasons for supporting immigrant-friendly policies. A significant part of the U.S. mythos is its reputation as “A Land of Opportunities,” in which anyone willing to work hard and to participate in the social and civic life of the community can become an American citizen. This is considered one of the main achievements of the United States and a major element of its cultural identity. Since many U.S. citizens’ ancestors voluntarily immigrated to the U.S. from other countries – with the notable exception of Native Americans, some Asian Americans, and most African Americans – it can be argued that denying present immigrants the same opportunities those who came before them had is morally wrong.

Humanitarian reasons play a role as well. Many people are appalled by the conditions in which many new immigrants live, horrified by the poverty wages and the unhealthy working conditions of their jobs, indignant at the discriminatory treatment they sometimes receive, and moved by the sacrifices they often make in order to attain a better life for themselves and for their families. These attitudes alone may justify immigrant-friendly stances and policies.

WHAT CAN CITIES DO?

While the federal government has primarily responded to the upturn of immigration by passing laws that restrict immigrants’ rights, policies at the state and local level have been much more diverse. Since immigrants in the U.S. are overwhelmingly concentrated in metropolitan areas,⁴⁵ city officials find themselves at the forefront of immigration issues, and therefore must develop their own policies and programs around immigrant communities. Additionally, while local government does not have statutory authority to enforce immigration law, cities can fall into a *de facto* enforcement role if they are not intentional in making other choices.⁴⁶

Given how rapidly the federal policy landscape is shifting, there are several notable organizations in the U.S. that offer information (and sometimes technical assistance) focused on the legal and policy aspects of immigration. These include Welcoming America, a national non-profit that provides cities with the roadmap and support they need to become more welcoming toward immigrants and all residents;⁴⁷ The National Immigration Law Center (NILC), which focuses exclusively on defending and advancing the rights of low-income immigrants;⁴⁸ The Migration Policy Institute (MPI), a nonpartisan, nonprofit think tank dedicated to the analysis of the movement of people worldwide;⁴⁹ the Immigrant Legal Resource Center (ILRC), which works with immigrants, community organizations, and the legal sector to promote the rights of immigrant communities;⁵⁰ and the National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (NNIRR), which works to defend and expand the rights of all immigrants and refugees, regardless of immigration status.⁵¹

CENTER YOUR CITY'S IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES IN POLICYMAKING

When considering any local action to support immigrant communities, it is good policymaking to include members of those communities in your process. Holding community meetings that are language-accessible is one step. Due to presiding concerns that many immigrant communities have of direct contact with official government entities, it is critical to be mindful of the way in which city outreach efforts are made in order to have the greatest impact. Working with staff or elected officials with strong ties to groups, or non-profits who focus on a given community, can ensure that you are proceeding in a respectful and truly inclusive way that also protects immigrant communities' privacy. As shown in the data, it is also essential to represent all immigrant groups, including all Latinx nationalities, African, and Asian immigrants. To truly advance equity, city elected officials should ensure that they are making decisions in collaboration with those who are most directly impacted.



Source: Welcoming America, www.welcomingamerica.org/

DO NOT PARTICIPATE IN THE ENFORCEMENT OF FEDERAL CIVIL IMMIGRATION LAW

Local governments have no legal obligation to enforce federal immigration law, but many have cooperated with federal agencies in enforcement efforts in various ways.⁵²

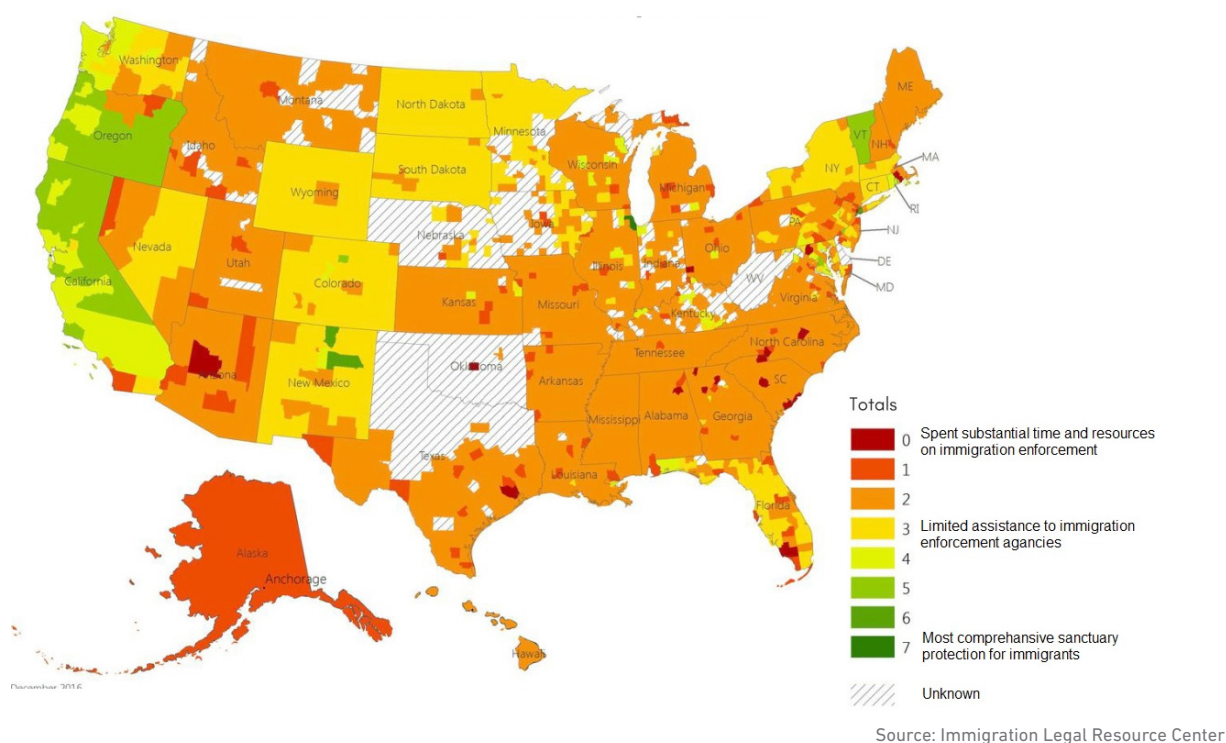
Takoma Park, MD in 1985 and New York, Chicago, and San Francisco in 1989 passed ordinances or issued executive orders prohibiting city employees from gathering, keeping, or sharing with INS information on the immigration status of their residents, and establishing that neither city personnel and facilities, nor any other city resources, would be employed in the enforcement of civil immigration law.⁵³ A 1996 federal law, the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA), banned local governments from refusing to turn over information collected about immigration status of any individual.⁵⁴ In response, cities including Seattle, WA, Portland, ME, New York, NY, Durham, NC, Philadelphia, PA, and St. Paul, MN shifted to policies that bar the collection of any information about immigration status, unless required by law (a tactic that is legal under IIRIRA).

In 1979, Los Angeles, CA became the first city to officially withdraw cooperation with the Immigration and Naturalization Service, a precursor to ICE, by no longer allowing arrest or other police action on the grounds of immigration status.⁵⁵ Since then, many jurisdictions have established immigrant “sanctuary” laws that support the rights of undocumented residents. There are a variety of ways that cities fall under the “sanctuary” umbrella. According to the Immigrant Legal Resource Center, about 447 local jurisdictions nationwide generally reject requests from immigration enforcement agencies to detain people without a judicial warrant, and 87 do not offer significant resources for immigration enforcement. 73 jurisdictions prevent the use of local resources for immigration enforcement (for a detailed map see figure 4).⁵⁶

These policies make good sense for the entire community because there is evidence that when local police enforce immigration law immigrant communities are less likely to report crimes that put everyone’s safety at risk.⁵⁷ New Orleans LA has one of the most immigrant-friendly policing policies that formalizes that “NOPD shall not engage in, assist, or support immigration enforcement.”⁵⁸ Additionally, mayors can ensure that immigrants are not required to reveal their citizenship status in order to access city services; see Mayor Andrew Ginther’s Executive Order for Columbus, OH for one example.⁵⁹

Given the shifting attitudes of the federal government and the absence of a national consensus around immigrant integration,⁶⁰ many cities are responding to the challenge by working with civil society organizations to address critical issues and implement progressive policies at the city level.⁶¹ These efforts have become particularly important given the recent initiatives of the newly elected federal administration.⁶² As of publication, President Trump’s executive order threatening to bar sanctuary cities from receiving federal funds is currently challenged in federal courts by several municipalities and other jurisdictions,⁶³ though the House of Representatives has voted in favor of legislation with the same effect.⁶⁴

FIGURE 4
LOCAL POLICE ASSISTANCE WITH DEPORTATION



SUPPORT IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES WITH WORDS AND ACTIONS

The Immigrant Legal Rights Center notes that while these do not offer tangible benefits or protections, statements of support can ease fears among immigrant communities that the city will take aggressive enforcement action or withdraw needed services.⁶⁵ As just one example, Chicago, IL passed an ordinance in 2012 to declare itself a Welcoming City.⁶⁶ Minneapolis, MN passed a resolution immediately after the November 2016 election denouncing hate speech against Muslims and vowing to uphold the rights of immigrants and refugees within the city.⁶⁷ Mayors can also take it upon themselves to use their bully pulpit in support of immigrant rights, as several mayors including Mayor Bill de Blasio of New York, NY and Mayor Sam Liccardo of San Jose, CA have done.⁶⁸

CREATE AND IMPLEMENT PLANS TO BE IMMIGRANT-FRIENDLY

Some cities have adopted more comprehensive plans for creating immigrant-friendly environments for their constituents. This approach is particularly effective at building government capacity to respond to immigrant community's needs and issues as they arise. Cities such as Dayton, OH,⁶⁹ and Anchorage, AK⁷⁰ have passed resolutions to apply a framework of immigrant friendliness and equity across all city policies.

AMPLIFY WORKERS' RIGHTS

Protect Low-Wage Workers

According to a 2015 analysis by the Pew Research Center, only 26 percent of unauthorized immigrants held professional or office-based jobs in 2012 — half the share of U.S.-born workers. This means that unauthorized immigrants are disproportionately working lower wage jobs that generally offer fewer benefits.⁷¹ Improving wage and benefit standards for lower wage jobs will improve the economic prosperity of your city's immigrants, as well as U.S.-born residents. The following recommendations would strengthen economic inclusion of the working poor:

Raise and index the local minimum wage

Currently 40 localities have raised their minimum wage in states that do not preempt such increases.⁷² Additionally, 29 states and Washington DC have set their minimum wage above the \$7.25 federal minimum.⁷³ Of the 13 states that raised their minimum wage in early 2014, all thirteen experienced equal or better job growth compared to states that did not.⁷⁴ Indexing the minimum wage (as cities such as Los Angeles, Seattle, and D.C. have done) means that it automatically increases each year based on inflation, which better meets the needs of workers whose costs of living increase too. If your city is not preempted by state government, raising and indexing the local minimum wage will better support immigrant workers, who often end up at the bottom of the labor market.

“Improving wage and benefit standards for lower wage jobs will improve the economic prosperity of your city’s immigrants, as well as U.S.-born residents.”

Grand Forks, ND

Grand Forks, the third largest city in North Dakota, sits on the border of Minnesota, along the Red River. The city has a population of 60,000 and is home to the University of North Dakota and the Grand Forks Air Force Base. About 3.5% of the greater Grand Forks area's population is foreign born, and that share is growing. Immigrants are over-represented in the Grand Forks Region labor force, especially in STEM fields.¹ Many of these immigrants are refugees – since 2007, the number of refugees resettled in the Grand Forks region has grown to about 100 people a year.²



Grand Forks, ND
Source: [Randy Stern \[CC BY 2.0\]](#)

In 2009, the City of Grand Forks created an Immigrant Integration Initiative, which brings together a wide range of stakeholders, including elected officials, education and health institutions, the business community, service providers and community organizations. The Initiative focuses on coordinating services, assisting immigrants with naturalization, promoting civic engagement in immigrant communities, and helping immigrants connect to employment and educational opportunities. Bret Weber, Grand Forks City Council Member and Chair of the Grand Forks Immigrant Integration Initiative said “What is most exciting is just how diverse Grand Forks has become and the incredible opportunities that come with being such a welcoming community.”³

The Initiative has tapped in to national resources, including those offered by the National League of Cities, Partnership for a New American Economy, and Welcoming America. Under the auspices of the Initiative, a number of programs have started, including a civic dialog series, a speakers bureau, a civics academy, and the designation of New American Liaisons by the police department. Over the next year, the Initiative will be crafting a Welcoming Community Plan.

There is also a workforce development initiative, developed with by Northland Community and Technical College, North Dakota Job Service, Minnesota Adult Basic Education, Global Friends Coalition, the Chamber of Commerce, the Grand Forks Region Economic Development Corporation and several local employers. This effort includes English language learning opportunities and manufacturing training. According to Mayor Mike Brown, “These are the efforts that benefit our new neighbors with finding good solid, employment and a pathway for further career development. Importantly, it does not just benefit the employees, but also the employers and our whole community’s economy. We need workers. Moreover, we need skilled workers, and these are the types of approaches that create win-wins for Grand Forks.”⁴

Despite these efforts, the Grand Forks area has struggled with community resistance to refugee resettlement and immigrants. Public discussion around the “cost” of new residents to the area has been tinged with racism, and in December 2015, a Somali-owned restaurant was firebombed in a hate crime. The community has since redoubled their efforts to support immigrants and refugees, and the restaurant will re-open soon. This tragic event only underscores the importance of City leadership. As Mayor Brown says, “There is so much talent, so much potential that our New American population brings, and it is incumbent on us to help realize that and put it to work for Grand Forks.”

Notes:

1 “New Americans in the Grand Forks Region,” New American Economy, February 2018, <http://research.newamericaneconomy.org/report/new-americans-in-the-grand-forks-region/>.

2 Brown, M “Welcoming Community & Immigrant Integration Efforts in Grand Forks, ND” (2018) presentation to the Mayors Innovation Project.

3 “News Release: Grand Forks Immigrant Integration Efforts Featured in Regional Report on Immigrant Integration,” City of Grand Forks, October 2016.

4 Mayor Mike Brown, “Immigration helps Grand Forks employers and the economy,” Grand Forks Herald, June 29, 2016, <http://www.grandforksherald.com/opinion/columns/4064967-mayor-mike-brown-immigration-helps-grand-forks-employers-and-economy>.

Extend earned sick time to all workers

Especially when wages are low, families struggle mightily to balance the demands of work and children. Earned sick leave is one way to help make the balance more possible. Workers without paid sick days, very often the lowest paid workers, often work when they are sick, endangering public health, or lose income when illness or sick children keep them away from work. Where earned sick leave is required – currently a law if not yet enforced in at least seven states, twenty-nine cities, two counties, and D.C. – workers at the bottom of the labor market, including immigrants, will find an easier balance.⁷⁵ As with the minimum wage, a number of states have passed laws preempting local earned sick leave efforts; the National Partnership for Women & Families maintains an updated list of states barring or allowing such laws.⁷⁶

“Citizenship status should not be a barrier to fair treatment in the workplace. If it is, labor standards are undermined for all.”

Local Enforcement of State and Federal Employment Laws

Citizenship status should not be a barrier to fair treatment in the workplace. If it is, labor standards are undermined for all. Unfortunately, immigrants are especially vulnerable to unscrupulous employers. Wage theft – when employers underpay or refuse to pay workers for their time – is distressingly common and it is often immigrant workers that suffer the most.⁷⁷ There are a few key elements of a strong local wage theft law and its enforcement, outlined by the National Employment Law Project: classify wage theft as a violation; establish a straightforward process for filing and investigating wage-theft claims (with a sufficiently funded office assigned to such work); and institute actual penalties such as fines for employers in violation.⁷⁸

In order for local governments to aggressively pursue law breakers, they must invest in outreach programs or partnerships to ensure that low-wage workers are both aware of and feel comfortable with methods to report employment law infractions. Cities can work with community and employer organizations to do outreach on labor standards and labor rights, ensuring that workers understand their rights regardless of immigration status. Workers should also have access to city-provided language-specific resources that describe these laws, their rights as employees, and allow workers to anonymously report employers who are in violation of these laws to local and/or enforcement officials (thus removing some fear of being penalized by either their employer or being at risk of deportation if reporting a violation).

Support worker centers, co-ops, and small business development

As discussed in the introduction, immigrants make up a larger share of business owners than their proportional share of the population, so small business development programs can have a positive impact on immigrant communities. Cities often have programs to encourage entrepreneurship and support small businesses, but these may not be accessible to immigrants because of language barriers or lack of outreach to immigrant communities. Providing basic language access is a critical first step, but cities should also consider partnering with cultural or local business organizations to increase their outreach to immigrants.

One way to do this is to consolidate all available information on registering businesses into one source and in many languages so as to make setting up a business as accessible to all as possible. For instance, technical assistance about city-level zoning approval, county-level health inspections, and state alcohol licensing should all be available in the same place. New York, NY offers a “one-stop-shop” to provide targeted technical assistance about permitting and other small business issues, which could be replicated on as small a scale as one dedicated staffer.⁷⁹ Cities could weave in this technical assistance as part of a broader program of support and education by establishing immigrant-specific small business incubators, as the Mt. Airy Community Development Corporation did in its Immigrant Innovation Hub co-working and program space.⁸⁰

Another way to support immigrant entrepreneurs is via worker centers and co-operatives. Worker or Day Laborer centers offer independent contractors a safe physical location from which to solicit work, and often provide education on legal rights and responsibilities, accounting, and other basic business skills. Some cities also support the formation of worker co-operatives. New York City, for example, is funding the incubation of new worker co-operatives, some of which are immigrant-led.⁸¹

Cities can also support small businesses, especially those owned by women and people of color, via affording them a purchasing preference in the procurement process. And, of course, local governments should strive to hire a diverse workforce that represents the demographics of their community.

OFFER SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

Access to decent employment, educational opportunities, avenues for participation in civic affairs, protection of workplace and civil rights, and healthcare are all essential for the integration of immigrants into the larger urban community. However, additional policies are necessary to ensure that immigrants — both documented and undocumented — have the same access to basic services as non-immigrants, and that their specific needs are addressed by city officials and agencies. The following section reviews some of these policies, and how they were implemented in various cities across the U.S.

“Past research has found that while task forces and commissions are important, immigrant integration efforts are most effective when housed within the executive branch.⁸² The importance of Mayoral leadership cannot be overstated.”

ESTABLISH AN OFFICE OF IMMIGRANT AFFAIRS

One of the most comprehensive ways a city can promote the comprehensive integration of immigrants is by establishing a multipurpose office, agency, or department aimed at serving immigrants. Past research has found that while task forces and commissions are important, immigrant integration efforts are most effective when housed within the executive branch.⁸² The importance of Mayoral leadership cannot be overstated. Many of the policies proposed in this report could be administered by or with the help of such an agency, increasing the efficiency of a city’s varied efforts in favor of its immigrant residents. In addition, opening an office of immigrant affairs can hold an important symbolic value, highlighting the city’s stance regarding immigration and immigrants’ rights.

In New York City, NY, for example, the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs (MOIA) promotes the active participation of immigrant New Yorkers in the civic, economic, and cultural life of the city.⁸³ MOIA works with three groups: immigrants, community-based organizations serving immigrants, and New York City agencies and officials. The office is an active member of the Cities for Action coalition as part of its commitment to advocate for comprehensive immigration reform at all levels of government.⁸⁴ The Mayor's Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs (MOIRA) in Houston, TX, was established in May of 2001 to promote the integration of immigrants and refugees living in the city. On December 2016, Mayor Sylvester Turner announced the creation of the Office of New Americans and Immigrants Communities to improve access to City services.⁸⁵ The office also serves as a clearinghouse for information and engagement with Houston's thriving immigrant community and work with a task force of stakeholders to develop the City's Welcoming Houston program.⁸⁶



Source: Welcoming America, www.welcomingamerica.org/

Such offices can be an important way to conduct outreach that bridges city government and immigrant communities. Nashville, TN, created the Mayor's Office of New Americans (MONA) in 2014.⁸⁷ The office, which is part of the Mayor's Office of Neighborhoods and Community Engagement, works to engage immigrants and empowers them to participate in civil society and the larger community. One of its signature programs is the MyCity Academy, which aims to position immigrants to share information back to their communities and to run for public office by offering leadership development training and educational modules about city service and governance.⁸⁸

“In order to support the integration of immigrants into the urban community, cities need to develop immigrant-friendly communication channels in all municipal agencies, and make active outreach efforts to connect with immigrant communities.”

These offices can also spearhead coordination with other city offices or agencies. Both St. Paul, MN and Portland, OR Parks and Recreation Departments worked with local immigrant communities to offer culturally appropriate programming at public parks and exercise facilities, such as women-only swim hours at pools or the “World Cup Soccer Tournament” that brings together immigrant youth.⁸⁹ Cleveland, OH contributed some city funds to a non-profit initiative called the International Village, which is using a combination of new construction and renovation of existing buildings to create affordable housing units for refugees and other immigrants.⁹⁰

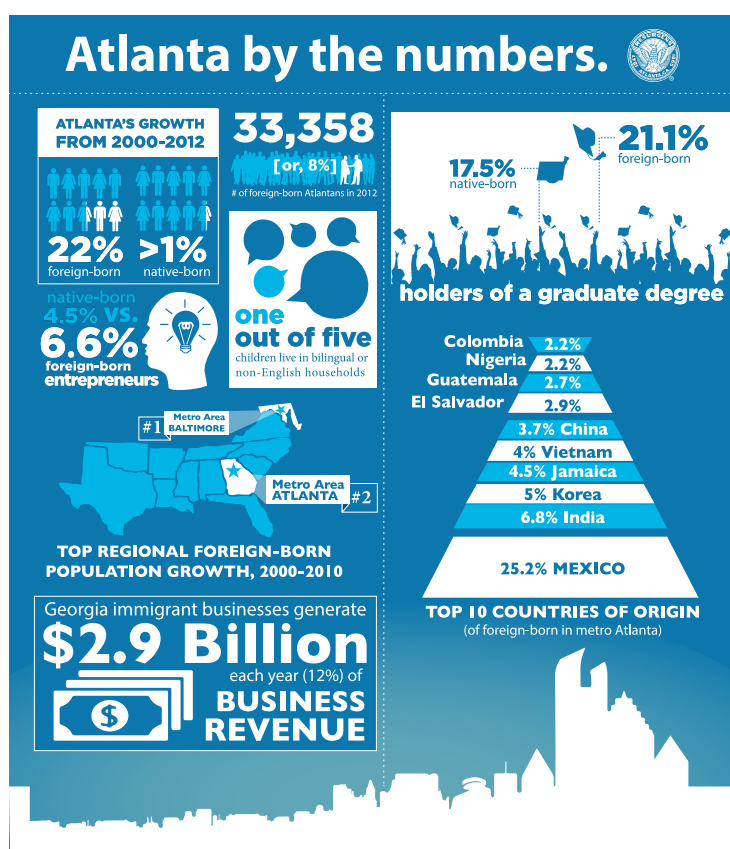
If establishing an office is not practical for a city, there should at least be a designated unit that works on immigrant inclusion and can form partnerships outside city hall. The focus should be on providing equitable access to city and community services and opportunities.

DEVELOP IMMIGRANT-FRIENDLY COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

In order to support the integration of immigrants into the urban community, cities need to develop immigrant-friendly communication channels in all municipal agencies, and make active outreach efforts to connect with immigrant communities.

Cities use a range of approaches to meet translation needs. Important steps in this direction include translating key documents and forms into relevant languages; translated versions of municipal online websites; translating signs in municipal buildings; hiring personnel fluent in the immigrants' languages; making interpreter services available in-situ, either permanently or on-request; collecting data to better understand public policy issues, and to build and sustain culturally competent strategies and services for immigrants. The Memphis, TN Office of Community Affairs contracts with a translation services company to offer interpretation in more than 150 languages, accessible via a call to 311 or the public library system.⁹¹ Given a population where at least one in five residents speaks a language other than English at home, St. Paul, MN developed a comprehensive Limited English Proficiency (LEP) plan for all City departments to ensure that they are respecting the rights to access and meeting the needs of non-English speaking residents.⁹² Washington, DC established a Mayor's Office on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs (AAPI) that offers other agencies technical assistance (and monitors their performance) in outreach to LEP AAPI residents.⁹³

In Atlanta, GA, the Welcoming Atlanta initiative focuses, among other things, on creating avenues for discussion with immigrant communities.⁹⁴ Veteran residents can enroll through the initiative's website to host a *City Dialogue* with immigrant and refugee "to generate meaningful discussion and encourage a more understanding society". Roseville, MN, has organized several programs and activities to welcome new immigrants.⁹⁵ These include holding community dialogues at residences, schools and churches, building a new soccer field, and hosting lemonade stands among other outreach efforts. New York City, NY, publishes a resource and referral guide for recently arrived immigrants and refugees.⁹⁶ The guide, intended for use by New York City agencies, schools, and nonprofit organizations, is available in eleven languages. In Dayton, OH, the "Welcome Dayton – Immigrant Friendly City" initiative is responsible for the outreach efforts. It engages with immigrant communities to ensure they are aware of their civil and constitutional rights, and promote mutual understanding between long-term and new residents.⁹⁷



Source: www.welcomingatlanta.com

Baltimore's Office of Immigrant and Multicultural Affairs

Baltimore, Maryland is the 30th largest city in the United States, with a population of over 600,000. Approximately eight percent of Baltimore residents are foreign born. Historically, Baltimore was an immigrant gateway city. Although that declined in the 1950s, the city is seeing an increase in foreign born residents now – three quarters of the immigrant population arrived after 1990, and over half arrived after 2000. Immigrants make a significant contribution to Baltimore's economy, and are more likely to be employed and to have a bachelor's degree or higher, than the general population. They also own 21 percent of the city's businesses.¹



Baltimore, MD
Source: Randy Stern [CC BY 2.0]

The city of Baltimore opened its Office of Immigrant and Multicultural Affairs (MIMA) in 2013 with the mission of promoting economic growth and community wellbeing through creating a welcoming and supporting environment for immigrants. Shortly following the office's establishment, the office of the Mayor announced the creation of the New Americans Task Force, comprised of high-level representatives from 10 city agencies, stakeholders from nonprofits, private partners, foundations, financial institutions, and many others. After three months of collaboration, the Task Force announced 32 recommendations to the Mayor and MIMA to strengthen the city's efforts to create a welcoming and safe environment of economic opportunity and inclusion for its immigrant residents.²

The win-win approach that the city of Baltimore has taken towards immigration highlights the vast economic and cultural benefits that come with a diverse immigrant community. By pairing its mission of providing services to immigrants with the overall message of creating a multicultural Baltimore, MIMA does not frame its immigrant community as a problem to be dealt with, but rather as an enriching part of Baltimore's cultural, economic, and social landscape.

Baltimore has taken a nuanced approach to disseminating information about paths to citizenship and legal residency by paying particular attention to the many scams that con immigrants into providing highly sensitive information. MIMA offers a number of resources on its website and through printed materials on how to spot and report these scams. In addition, the Mayor and Attorney General launched a campaign in 2015 called "Be Careful. Prepare. Seek the Right Help." to raise public awareness about scams targeting the immigrant community.

MIMA also stays sensitive to ongoing policy and legislation at the national level that impacts its immigrant community. Following the 2016 presidential election cycle, the office issued a statement of support for its immigrant community and published a packet of resources to navigate the heightened political climate. Among these resources includes a section on knowing your rights, the procedure for reporting hate crimes to the city, and legal information for those who hold DACA status.

Beyond its advocacy and policy work, Baltimore has chosen to use MIMA as a vehicle for celebrating and uplifting its immigrant community. In 2014, it joined Welcoming America in observing Welcoming Week, which "highlights the importance of joining together in a spirit of unity to build a better, safer, and stronger Baltimore that embraces both new and native-born Americans." MIMA also coordinates Immigrant Heritage Month every year.

Notes:

¹ New Americans Task Force, "The Role of Immigrants in Growing Baltimore: Recommendations to Retain and Attract New Americans" (2014, City of Baltimore) available at: <http://mayor.baltimorecity.gov/sites/default/files/RoleOfImmigrantsInGrowingBaltimore20140917.pdf>.

² Ibid.

“Building on the communication channels that include the unique needs and experiences of immigrants, cities must also ensure that language barriers do not prevent immigrant residents who lack English fluency from accessing critical information or services provided by the government. For public safety as well as the personal welfare of each individual, it is critical to offer translation services for police and ambulance dispatches, and for less urgent interactions with local government.”

Police departments, which are increasingly pressured to take a larger part in enforcing federal immigration laws,⁹⁸ can go further. Immigrants may distrust the police, not only due to fears related with immigration law enforcement, but also because they may have had negative experiences with the police in their native countries. In addition, immigrants often lack knowledge on local laws and may be unable to file complaints. There are several ways in which police departments can work to improve this situation. First, they can actively work with immigrant communities on traffic and safety education, as well as projects directed at boosting compliance with local regulations. Second, police departments can hire officers of the same ethnicity as major immigrant groups in the city, in order to build trust and improve communication. Third, police departments can create multi-lingual call centers to handle the reporting of crimes and filing of complaints, answer questions about procedures, and provide interpreter back-up to officers.

The immigrant outreach liaison in Austin, TX, for example, works with recently immigrated Latino families and partners with neighborhood schools, churches and other organizations to provide civic education and encourage participation in school and police-related activities.⁹⁹ Special emphasis is placed on organizing events that take place in the apartment complexes where large numbers of Latinos live.

In New Haven, CT, a collaboration between the mayor, the police chief, community leaders and members of the immigrant community led to two initiatives designed to make the city more welcoming and safe. The police department issued a new general order delineating police policies and procedures, and held community meetings aimed specifically at immigrant communities.¹⁰⁰ In Nashville and Davidson County, TN, the Metro Nashville Police Department is leading the El Protector Program.¹⁰¹ The program is based on proactive outreach and partnership between the police department and the Latino community in the country.¹⁰² El Protector increased the presence of police officers in the Latino community using multi-faceted approaches to improve public safety with a focus on reducing drunk driving citations, traffic fatalities and domestic violence.

Building on the communication channels that include the unique needs and experiences of immigrants, cities must also ensure that language barriers do not prevent immigrant residents who lack English fluency from accessing critical information or services provided by the government. For public safety as well as the personal welfare of each individual, it is critical to offer translation services for police and ambulance dispatches, and for less urgent interactions with local government.

OFFER MUNICIPAL IDENTIFICATION CARDS

Under federal law, cities may issue their own identification (ID) cards as they see fit, and do not have to consider the immigration or criminal status of an applicant before doing so.¹⁰³ Ensuring that everyone has access to ID is not only beneficial for individuals but for entire communities as well.¹⁰⁴ A person with a valid form of ID has the ability to open bank accounts and contribute to the local economy, obtain a driver's license which helps ensure that every person behind the wheel has passed a driving test and has auto insurance, has greater access to health care and education services, and more. Increasing access to ID also assists law enforcement to provide protection and basic assistance to those in need.

In 2007, New Haven, CT, became the first city in the United States to provide a municipal identification cards - the Elm City Resident Card.¹⁰⁵ The card is available to all city residents regardless of their immigration status. The card serves as an accepted means of identification, helping immigrants open local bank accounts, borrow books from public libraries and access parks and public buildings.

On January 2009, San Francisco, CA, launched the SF City ID Card, a municipal identification card program modeled after New Haven's.¹⁰⁶ The SF City ID Card includes information about the card holder's medical conditions or allergies and a list an emergency contacts, and provides discounts on San Francisco family excursions, restaurants, museums, and other cultural centers. Chicago, IL, announced the launch of a far-reaching Municipal ID program in October 2016, to ensure all Chicago residents are able to access official identification.¹⁰⁷ The city allocated \$1 million in its 2017 budget to implement the program.

LIST OF MUNICIPAL IMMIGRATION OFFICES & AGENCIES

City	Office Name	Established
Atlanta, GA	Office of Immigrant Affairs	2015
Aurora, CO	International & Immigrant Affairs	2015
Austin, TX	Welcoming Cities Initiative	2013
Baltimore, MD	Mayor's Office of Immigrant and Multicultural Affairs	2013
Boston, MA	Immigrants Advancement	1998
Buffalo, NY	Office of New Americans	2015
Chicago, IL	Office of New Americans	2011
Columbus, OH	New Americans Initiative	2004
Dayton, OH	Welcome Dayton	2011
Denver, CO	Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs	2011
Houston, TX	Office of New Americans and Immigrants Communities	2016
Indianapolis, IN	International and Cultural Affairs Office	2008
Jersey City, NJ	The Office of Welcoming Communities	2013
Los Angeles, CA	Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs	2013
Louisville, KY	Office for Globalization	2011
Nashville, TN	Mayor's Office of New Americans	2013
Newark, NJ	Mayor's Office of International Relations and Diaspora Affairs	2014
New York City, NY	Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs	1984
Orlando, FL	Office of Multicultural Affairs	2014
Philadelphia, PA	Immigrant and Multicultural Affairs	2013
Pittsburgh, PA	Welcoming Pittsburgh	2014
Portland, OR	New Portlanders	2008
Richmond, VA	Office of Multicultural Affairs	2012
San Francisco, CA	Office of Civic Engagement and Immigrant Affairs	2009
San Jose, CA	Office of Immigrant Affairs	2015
Seattle, WA	Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs	2008

Source: Pastor, Ortiz, and de Graauw, 2015, p. 42

In addition to providing a municipal ID program, New York, NY took proactive steps to protect the identities of unauthorized immigrants by passing a December 2016 City Council ordinance to destroy copies of previously submitted identification and destroy new applications upon approval.¹⁰⁸ The City estimates that about half of cardholders use IDNYC as their primary form of identification, including an unknown number of unauthorized immigrants, who can use a passport issued by another country to apply.



Source: [JV Santore](#) (CC by 2.0)

Other cities, such as Durham, NC¹⁰⁹ and Cincinnati, OH¹¹⁰ accept “Faith IDs,” identification cards issued by religious institutions for municipal purposes. This has the benefit of keeping any personal data private and not subject to open records or request by ICE.

IMPROVE ACCESS TO THE BANKING SYSTEM AND PROVIDE FINANCIAL EDUCATION

Immigrants are less likely than otherwise similarly wealthy or poor native-born individuals to use a wide variety of financial services, including checking and savings accounts.¹¹¹ Many immigrants, especially those with lower income and education levels, rely on the alternative financial services - primarily check cashers - to cash checks, pay bills, and send remittances to their countries of origin. Such reliance is not only a barrier to financial literacy, but it is also a direct cost to immigrants; immigrants pay about \$2 billion annually in check-cashing fees.

In addition to problems which are prevalent among individuals and families with low socioeconomic status, immigrants also face a unique set of challenges related to their specific situation.¹¹² These include a lack of accepted identification documents, unfamiliarity with the U.S. financial system, and a general lack of trust in financial institutions which is often related to experiences in their countries of origin. A lack of proficiency in reading, writing, and speaking the English language is another major obstacle for financial literacy.¹¹³

A first step in improving the financial literacy of immigrants is financial education. The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) identifies three categories of practices that cities can implement in order to improve the situation: (1) outreach and awareness campaigns; (2) financial education programs; and (3) targeted financial products and services.¹¹⁴

Cities should make financial education of immigrants a priority. Municipal agencies and local officials can work with banks to conduct outreach to immigrant communities and develop financial seminars and literature designed specifically for immigrants. Worker centers are a natural partner in developing, and perhaps hosting, financial education programs. Literature on financial services can be printed in multiple languages and distributed in immigrant communities. Local officials and immigrant advocates can also focus directly on changing bank practices to improve immigrant financial access.

The Bank On San Francisco program was established by the mayor of San Francisco, CA, in 2006.¹¹⁵ The city partnered with community-based organizations (CBOs) and financial institutions to bring free or low-cost checking accounts to low and moderate income residents. Bank on San Francisco has more than met its original goal to bring 10,000 of the city's estimated 50,000 unbanked residents into the financial mainstream. During the first two years alone, participating financial institutions opened 18,500 accounts. So far, the Bank on San Francisco has partnered with 14 banks and credit unions, with over 170 branches across San Francisco. All of the banks and credit unions participating in the program have agreed to accept the Mexican Matricula and Guatemalan Consular identification cards as primary ID.¹¹⁶ In addition, the bank has led a campaign directed at the immigrant Central-American community in the city. The success of Bank on San Francisco has led the National League of Cities (NLC) to launch the Bank On Cities initiatives, which are modeled after the program.¹¹⁷ During the first two years, NLC worked closely with mayors and their senior staff in two cohorts of 18 cities to help them develop and launch Bank On initiatives.

In New York City, NY, the Office of Financial Empowerment (OFE) conducted in 2013 an Immigrant Financial Services Study, which revealed gaps in financial services for immigrant households with low and moderate incomes.¹¹⁸ In 2014, NYC's OFE and the Department of Consumer Affairs, in partnership with the Consulate General of Mexico in New York, Cities for Financial Empowerment Fund and other partners, launched *Ventanilla de Asesoría Financiera* ("Financial Counseling Window").¹¹⁹ The initiative offered one-on-one financial counseling to Mexican immigrants at the Mexican Consulate. During the first year of the program, more than 16,000 visitors to the consulate received personal financial education materials, and more than 1,200 Mexican nationals received financial counseling services. Additionally, the IDNYC described above can be used at a dozen banks and credit unions to open accounts.¹²⁰ Following its success in New York, in May 2016 Los Angeles, CA, also partnered with the Mexican Consulate to launch its own version of *Ventanilla de Asesoría Financiera*, in order to educate immigrants living in the city on "the ins and outs of finance and managing money".¹²¹

The St. Louis Mosaic Project was launched in 2012 in order to "turn St. Louis into the fastest growing metropolitan area for immigration by 2020".¹²² The Project is professionally managed by St. Louis Economic Development Partnership, World Trade Center St. Louis, and a 27-member committee. Among other services, the project also offers financial literacy and investment best practices workshops.¹²³ The Mosaic Project has also partnered with the locally-owned Midwest BankCentre, which was announced as a Mosaic Ambassador Company to indicate "the bank's commitment to attract and welcome foreign-born individuals to the St. Louis region."¹²⁴



The St. Louis Mosaic Project launch, 2012.
Source: [Inkyhack](#), Patrick Giblin (CC BY-NC 2.0)

PROVIDE LEGAL ADVICE ON IMMIGRATION STATUS AND CITIZENSHIP

For many immigrants, the main obstacle to social integration is likely to be their legal status. Cities can provide resources to help immigrants and their families abroad to better understand how to acquire legal status, permanent residency, and citizenship in the United States.

First, cities can make available relevant information: U.S. immigration legislation and policies; types of visas and the procedures for obtaining them; requirements for permanent residency and citizenship and how to apply for them; and U.S. citizenship exams. Second, cities can offer legal counseling on immigration issues, or refer immigrants to free or reduced-fee legal services. Third, municipal agencies can work with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to provide forms and self-help kits on visas, green cards, and citizenship. Finally, cities can provide workshops and seminars on the U.S. government and history, which can be run in partnership with immigrant advocacy organizations and community-based organizations serving immigrants.

Emergency Response to Deportation Threats

A number of cities are providing resources to residents who are facing imminent deportation threats. In December 2016, city and county officials in Los Angeles, CA, announced a new \$10 million fund to provide legal services to immigrants facing deportation.¹²⁵ The L.A. Justice Fund is a partnership between the city, the county of Los Angeles, the California Community Foundation, the Weingart Foundation and the California Endowment.¹²⁶ The fund will be comprised of \$5 million from government funds and \$5 million sourced by private foundations. In Boston, MA, the Mayor's Office for Immigrant Advancement offers free immigration clinics where constituents meet privately with volunteer immigration attorneys to discuss the immigration process.¹²⁷

Naturalization and Citizenship

Cities can also provide services for residents who do not face the threat of deportation, but are seeking resources on pathways to naturalization or citizenship. The Cities for Citizenship project focuses on offering fee waivers for applications and info sessions about citizenship out of libraries, with cities such as New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago participating.¹²⁸

SUMMARY

There are many reasons why cities should be welcoming to immigrants, from a morality standpoint to proven economic benefit. Over the last thirty years, immigrant communities have become more vulnerable than ever. A lack of comprehensive federal immigration laws, coupled the proliferation of anti-immigrant rhetoric has made cities, particularly metropolitan centers, the new frontier of immigration. Fortunately, there are many innovative strategies and policies that cities can enact to not only protect immigrants' rights, but also to improve the quality of life for their immigrant residents and for all.

RESOURCES

ORGANIZATIONS

National League of Cities

The National League of Cities (NLC) is a resource and advocate for the nation's cities and their leaders. NLC represents 19,000 cities, towns, and villages, and encompasses 49 state municipal leagues. It provides training to municipal officials, holds conferences, lobbies and provides assistance to cities in educational issues. Their Bank On Cities program offers resources to help connect immigrant communities to financial services.

<http://www.nlc.org/>

The National Immigration Law Center

The National Immigration Law Center (NILC) engages in policy analysis, litigation, education and advocacy, to promote a vision of “a society in which all people — regardless of race, gender, immigration or economic status — are treated fairly and humanely.” Additionally, NILC continues to update its Sanctuary Cities Toolkit.¹²⁹

<https://www.nilc.org/>

The Migration Policy Institute (MPI)

The Migration Policy Institute (MPI) is a nonpartisan, nonprofit think tank dedicated to analysis of the movement of people worldwide. MPI provides analysis, development, and evaluation of migration and refugee policies at local, national, and international levels. It aims to meet the demand for pragmatic and thoughtful responses to the challenges and opportunities that migration presents to communities and institutions in an increasingly integrated world.

<http://www.migrationpolicy.org/>

The National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights

The National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (NNIRR) works to defend and expand the rights of all immigrants and refugees, regardless of immigration status.

<http://www.nnirr.org/drupal/>

Welcoming America

Welcoming America leads a movement of inclusive communities becoming more prosperous by making everyone feel like they belong. They believe that all people, including immigrants, are valued contributors who are vital to the success of our communities and shared future. Today, a growing number of places recognize that being welcoming leads to prosperity; Welcoming America provides the roadmap and support they need to become more welcoming toward immigrants and all residents.

<https://www.welcomingamerica.org/>

Cities for Action Coalition

CITIES FOR ACTION is a coalition of over 150 mayors and municipal leaders fighting for federal immigration reform, and galvanizing the movement by launching inclusive policies and programs at the local level.

<http://www.citiesforaction.us/>

Partnership for New American Economy

New American Economy brings together more than 500 mayors and business leaders who support immigration reforms that will help create jobs for Americans today.

<http://www.newamericaneconomy.org/>

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About the Mayors Innovation Project

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