

DRAFT for Community Feedback

Charlotte Immigrant Integration Task Force Recommendations

Based on community feedback from listening sessions and surveys, and research on best practices in other new immigrant gateways, the Charlotte Immigrant Integration Task Force makes the following recommendations to the Charlotte City Council. **These items were prioritized as the most important for creating a safe and welcoming city that will maximize the role of immigrants in expanding the local economy and enriching civic and cultural life. They were also limited to those areas for which the City of Charlotte has direct responsibility.** However, several task force subcommittees addressed local needs in other areas, including healthcare and education, both of which ranked high in importance in community conversations. Additional recommendations, including many that focus on areas supervised by the county, Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools, and the State of North Carolina, are included in the appendices and would also promote effective integration.

The Charlotte Immigrant Integration Task Force makes the following recommendations to the City of Charlotte.

1. Support Immigrant and Refugee Entrepreneurship and Small Businesses by:

- **Supporting small business growth** by collaborating with the Charlotte Business Resources Partners, Business Advisory Committee, Charlotte International Cabinet, Small Business Services and the Office of International Relations to grow immigrant community-oriented programming. Specific strategies would include: 1) holding workshops on how to start and run a business; 2) helping connect underserved populations with services, professional networks, and chambers of commerce; 3) navigating government; and 4) hosting job fairs.
- **Creating a “shop local” list of all small businesses and increasing Small Business Certification of immigrant-owned businesses.** Charlotte Business Inclusion (CBI) would create a campaign to encourage small immigrant-owned businesses to become certified, and develop and market a public list of local small businesses to facilitate the “shop local” campaign.
- **Prototyping economic development strategies** such as a “start-up row” in a vacant strip mall with immigrant entrepreneurs; piloting “pop up” markets for immigrant entrepreneurs using underused parking lots on the weekend; and encouraging application for neighborhood matching grants and installation of immigrant-themed public art.

- **Establishing a program for neighborhoods to apply for designation as “International Corridors”** to encourage economic development in areas with large immigrant populations (e.g., Central Avenue and South Boulevard). The city will provide grants for new street signs, banners, immigrant-themed public art and marketing of these communities to consumers, visitors and new businesses.
- **Creating stronger neighborhoods, business corridors and grassroots leadership** through multiple strategies including: 1) hosting a neighborhood summit of **all** neighborhood associations and/or making presentations at individual neighborhood association meetings that focus on the benefits of immigrant integration and being culturally inclusive; 2) in highly diverse neighborhoods that are experiencing rapid immigrant growth, partnering with faith congregations, community-based organizations and ethnic chambers of commerce to encourage participation of all residents in neighborhood initiatives, to support collaborations that build trust and shared goals and to develop grassroots leadership; and 3) support newly proposed Neighborhood Mash-ups that pair different neighborhoods across the city for block parties that highlight businesses, houses of worship, parks, schools and other resources.
- **Creating a “Going Global” campaign** that matches Charlotte businesses that seek to export with immigrants in our community who have expertise and connections with targeted global markets. Actively promote the location and expansion of international businesses in Charlotte in collaboration with existing economic development organizations. Encourage global recruitment and retention of highly talented individuals to help Charlotte businesses thrive.

2. Promote Public Safety by:

- **Creating a Community ID Card.** The card will improve public safety by helping immigrants become more willing to report crimes and allowing law enforcement to identify individuals who may not otherwise be able to obtain photo identification. With multiple functions it can benefit all Charlotte residents. The Community ID Card would streamline many city and county services since the card could serve as a library card, a way to access and pay for public transportation and parking, a school ID and proof of county residency. The multiple uses would reduce the costs for multiple municipal agencies and also allow the city and county to more accurately track how services are being used for future resource allocation. Partnerships with cultural institutions and businesses, such as restaurants and museums, could be formed to provide benefits to all Charlotte residents and subsidize the cost of the ID cards. The card would also

spur economic activity, as many immigrants would be able to open bank accounts and more easily start businesses. The Charlotte Mecklenburg Public Library has expressed interest in exploring use of its branches for processing of a Community ID Card.

- **Creating an awareness campaign, in coordination with community organizations,** to disseminate information on the changes in US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) detention policies and the opportunities brought to the eligible population with the recent expansion of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and the creation of Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents (DAPA).
- **Increasing collaboration and communication between law enforcement and immigrant communities.** Recommended strategies (based on recent national events) would include reestablishing Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department (CMPD) liaisons with the immigrant community similar to the International Relations Unit, hosting information sessions in neighborhoods with high concentrations of immigrants about neighborhood safety and emergency preparedness, recruiting and hiring bilingual police officers and incorporating cultural competency and language training for all officers. Cultural competency and language training could be expanded to other public servants in public safety, including MEDIC, CATS and 911 Dispatch.

3. Ensure and Enhance Access to City Services and Promote Economic Development for Immigrant Charlotteans by:

- **Establishing and staffing an “Office of New Charlotteans.”** This office will take the lead role in overseeing and facilitating the recommendations of the Task Force. It will serve as a liaison with immigrant neighborhoods to promote economic development and help immigrants understand city services. The office will be staffed with bilingual worker(s) with community development expertise. This office would coordinate with city agencies to engage, inform and serve new residents and promote effective service delivery; expand cultural and language training for city employees, especially those providing direct services to Charlotteans with limited English proficiency; ensure interpretation and translation services; and create information in several languages about government services and nonprofit services that can be distributed and accessed online. It would do this in partnership with community-based organizations, chambers of commerce and ethnic media.

- **Creating an “Immigrant Advisory Council,”** supported by a diverse group of immigrant business and community leaders, to identify immigrant needs and serve as a liaison for immigrant communities.
- **Evaluating the charges and composition of existing and newly created city boards** to ensure they include immigrant representatives and reflect immigrant concerns. Specifically, explore changes to the charges and representation of the Business Advisory Committee and Charlotte International Cabinet to better reflect the face of diversity in our community and support the work of immigrant integration in business and our community as a whole.
- **Creating a “Fair Housing/Code Enforcement” team** that can respond to immigrants’ housing issues and can conduct pre-occupancy inspections for apartment renters and weekly-rental hotels to ensure they comply with the city and county codes. Create and disseminate information for immigrants about their rights and responsibilities with relation to safe, healthy housing.
- **Examining the needs of workers and employers for public transportation,** and if usage merits, expand or alter CATS routes to address the needs of new Charlotteans to access services and workplaces. Have CATS work with immigrant communities to educate them on safety, operations and usage of public transportation.
- **Expanding city programs for youth** to include more diverse groups and ensure access in all youth programming. Intentionally target immigrant youths in curriculum choices. Broaden outreach and language access as well as add cultural competency to the training of Mayor’s Youth Employment Program (MYEP) interns. Track the number of immigrant youth impacted by all youth programming. Grow partnerships with immigrant community organizations.
- **Designating a city office such as the Community Relations Committee (CRC) to oversee the investigation and enforcement of “Notario” fraud.** With recent executive action by the President, *Notario* fraud will likely become more widespread as eligible residents seek counsel on how to proceed. Build a partnership with the Mecklenburg and North Carolina Bar Associations to create a plan of addressing *Notario* fraud.

4. Promote Citizenship by

- **Encouraging eligible legal permanent residents to naturalize and become citizens.** Draw on the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) resources, and work with community organizations to translate and distribute materials and increase the number of naturalization workshops and promote citizenship. Explore the possibility of setting up “citizenship corners” in library branches. Research shows that citizenship leads to benefits for individuals, including better paying jobs, the right to vote, access to scholarships and government programs, and economic growth for the communities in which the new citizens live. Sign on to become a participating city in Cities for Citizenship (C4C), a national initiative aimed at increasing citizenship among eligible U.S. permanent residents to forge more inclusive and economically robust cities.

5. Promote Inclusion by:

- **Aligning new/expanding programs for immigrants and refugees with current community initiatives** such as the Livable Communities Plan and the Task Force on Economic Opportunity.
- **Convening meetings** of representatives of the city, the county, other towns and Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, as well as community stakeholders, to receive updates on particular topics related to immigrant integration, learn about one another’s work and explore areas where collaborative efforts would be effective.
- **Launching a community-wide call to action to invite organizations across the city to become official Charlotte “Places of Welcome”** and demonstrate how effective immigrant integration can benefit the entire community. Enlist stakeholders from all sectors—business, education, nonprofits, the media, the faith community, government—to sign on and pledge to work on behalf of creating opportunity for all. Compile and publicize examples of community-wide work such as projects bringing longtime residents and immigrants together, organizations supporting immigrants, immigrant contributions, celebrations of immigrants’ cultures and heritage, and cross-cultural educational initiatives. **
- **Supporting state and national efforts to enact reasonable comprehensive immigration reform** including providing more visas for skilled workers and graduates of U.S. colleges and universities, allowing in-state tuition for students with approved Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) applications, and issuing drivers’ licenses for all residents of North Carolina. The Task Force

supports policies that allow all residents of Charlotte to feel at home and to contribute to our community and our economy.

****Places of Welcome**

Pledge

(Name of organization/congregation/business/nonprofit/school, etc.) commits to

Becoming a “Place of Welcome,” creating opportunity and working toward making Charlotte a safe and welcoming city for longtime residents, immigrants and other newcomers.

Whether white or black, Latino or Asian, we are committed to creating opportunity for all Charlotte’s residents. To create a shared prosperity and a stronger community, we commit to carrying on our city’s tradition of welcoming newcomers with new ideas and new energy. As we work together to build a thriving 21st century city, immigrants and other new Charlotteans are crucial participants in creating economic growth and cultural vitality. We commit to supporting policies and programs that engage and empower longtime residents and newcomers alike to contribute to our community and our economy. We believe we are all better off when everyone who lives in Charlotte feels like a part of it. We are stronger together.

We will implement strategies within our mission, within our regular work, to grow opportunity—economic, educational, civic, social and/or cultural.

We will attend convenings to support cross-sector collaboration and/or submit online to share what our organization is doing and how it is accomplishing its work.

Charlotte Immigrant Integration Task Force Members

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- *Emily Zimmern, Vice Chair*, Levine Museum of the New South
- Diego Anselmo, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department
- Keri Carver, Mecklenburg County Department of Social Services
- Nancy Carter, Charlotte International Cabinet
- Monica Colin, Consulate General of Mexico in Raleigh
- Mariana De Luca, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools
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- Jennifer Pearsall, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools
- Jennifer Roberts, International House
- Wil Russell, Charlotte Chamber of Commerce
- Robert Shore, B. Roberts Foods, LLC
- Kim Vazquez, Mecklenburg County Sheriff's Office
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- Sam Wazan, Mecklenburg Ministries
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- Lacey Williams, Latin American Coalition