



Memorandum

TO: NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES
AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE

FROM: Zulma Maciel

SUBJECT: SEE BELOW

DATE: February 22, 2021

Approved

Date

03/03/21

**SUBJECT: OFFICE OF IMMIGRANT AFFAIRS ACTIVITIES AND WELCOMING
SAN JOSE PLAN 2021-2024 REPORT**

RECOMMENDATION

Accept the report of the Office of Immigrant Affairs and Welcoming San José Plan 2.0, 2021-2024 and cross-reference this report to the March 30, 2021 City Council meeting for approval.

OUTCOME

This memorandum and attached *Welcoming San José (WSJ) Plan 2.0: 2021-2024* will update and inform the Mayor and City Council on the priority strategies that will direct the work of the Immigrant Affairs team within the Office of Racial Equity.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As the City's first *Welcoming San José Plan for Civic, Economic, Linguistic, and Social Integration of 2016-2019* came to a close, the Immigrant Affairs team engaged in a deep reflection process, that included both an external audit by the national organization Welcoming America, and a six-month community engagement process, to co-design and co-create an updated Welcoming San José Plan for 2021-2024. The new plan has received broad community support and has shifted from aspirational to actionable. It includes 21 strategies across four core pillars which are described in Attachment A, *Welcoming San José Plan 2.0: 2021-2024*.

This memorandum provides a retrospective view of significant work delivered by the Immigrant Affairs team, unanticipated challenges as well as opportunities, and a description of the two-pronged approach to inform and develop the WSJ Plan.

BACKGROUND

The City of San José established the Office of Immigrant Affairs (OIA) in 2015 to help build a welcoming City for the nearly 40% of San José's residents who were born in another country. The goal of the Office of Immigrant Affairs is to assist immigrant communities, long-term residents, and the City itself to build a welcoming community – in words, action, policies, and programs.

In 2020, the City of San José established the Office of Racial Equity (ORE), and the work of OIA and its valued community partners will now be supported by the same staff members, within an expanded office. The strategic role of the Immigrant Affairs team, however, will remain the same - serving as conveners, connectors, supporters and facilitators to help move forward the important work of immigrant and refugee serving community partners, and to impact City systems to be more welcoming and accessible to the immigrant community.

A Look Back: Welcoming San José Plan, 2016-2019

In September 2015, the Mayor and City Council adopted a Welcoming San José Resolution, that described guiding principles for making San José a more welcoming and inclusive place for all residents. Soon after, the Office of Immigrant Affairs, developed a three-year immigrant inclusion strategy in collaboration with community and immigrant-serving organizations. As a result of a robust community engagement process, the Welcoming San José Plan, 2016-2019 was crafted, and was steered by the following vision and mission statements:

Vision: Immigrants and refugees are engaged, respected, and have opportunities to reach their fullest potential.

Mission: To facilitate and accelerate immigrant inclusion in civic, economic, linguistic, and social aspects of life in San José.

The previous WSJ Plan was aspirational and was designed to guide the work of the OIA and partner organizations. It included 63 strategies across five main pillars of work:

1) Leadership and Communications, 2) Access and Engagement, 3) Education, 4) Economic Opportunity, and 5) Safe Communities. The role of OIA has always been defined as a connector and a convener, and to facilitate and support the work of our strong dedicated community partners. In this way, the Immigrant Affairs team worked alongside many organizations to make progress toward the community-created goals, while acknowledging that due to changing circumstances, many goals remained incomplete.

Progress, Collaborations, and Deliverables

The OIA, in partnership with community and City departments, were able to make progress on key components of the WSJ Plan such as:

- **Citizenship:** Assisted community partners through supporting citizenship workshops, which served almost 2,100 immigrant participants and resulted in 950 naturalization applications completed (2018-2019) and saved participants \$1.35 million in legal fees and \$300,000 in application fees;
- **Citizenship Corners:** Created Citizenship Corners at City community centers and libraries, and offered on-site citizenship workshops at libraries, community centers and the airport;
- **Language Access Policy:** Operationalized the City's first ever Language Access Policy with city-wide vendor contracts available to all City departments and provided Language Access training for 1,087 City Staff, resulting in 91% of training participants responding the training "was useful for my job";
- **Civic Leadership Academies:** Launched two in-language Academies (in Spanish and Vietnamese) with 40 participants, in which 94% reported that they have "more knowledge about City depts" and 97% reported that they are "more comfortable attending City meetings";
- **Demographic Data Reports:** Partnered with *New American Economy* to build awareness of economic contributions of immigrants, releasing two San José-specific research reports on immigrant demographics and contributions, with one focused intentionally on immigrant data related to the COVID-19 pandemic;
- **Special Events:** Supported and hosted more than 35 cultural events and community experiences such as World Refugee Day celebrations, East African Festivals, Immigrant Storyteller Showcase, Vietnamese Black April commemoration, naturalization ceremonies, Stop the Hate Week events, and Civity workshops to focus on "connecting across difference";
- **Legislative Advocacy:** Coordinated with the City legislative team to advocate for state and federal legislation to support the immigrant community, through 15 support letters as well as litigation opposing rescission of DACA, opposing the addition of the citizenship question to the census form, and public comments on the public charge rule change and the Flores Settlement Agreement;
- **Skilled Refugee and Immigrant Convening:** Co-hosted the event with the Refugee and Immigrant Forum of Santa Clara County and participated in four Skilled Refugee and Immigrant job fairs, together with 81 employers and 468 skilled refugees and immigrants (2017-2019).

Despite these efforts, data from the 2019 City of San José community survey results (n=1334) indicate that 22% of surveyed residents view San José as not welcoming and 20% as not inclusive. It is also important to note that it is unclear how significant the immigrant voice is in these survey results, such that the actual percentage could be much higher. (Source: FM3 Research, July 19-26, 2019).

Challenges and Opportunities

When the national landscape changed dramatically for immigrant communities in 2016, so did the priorities of our community partners. The previous White House administration wreaked havoc on various immigrant communities, particularly to undocumented residents, and was deeply felt at the local level. The OIA pivoted quickly to respond to urgent needs in the community through efforts such as the community-led Rapid Response Network to support residents vulnerable to deportation, complete count of the 2020 US Census to ensure that “hard to count” immigrant communities were included, Public Charge awareness and trainings to protect immigrants’ access to benefits, and partnerships with pro bono legal assistance. While these activities were not included in the WSJ Plan, they became critical components of work for the Immigrant Affairs team during the period of 2017-2020. Dedicated staffing was also a challenge. It was not until 2018, two years into the City’s three-year WSJ Plan, that two additional FTE positions were added to the OIA.

Though not included in the WSJ Plan, staff determined that racial equity and systems change work was necessary for true immigrant inclusion. As a result, in 2018, the Immigrant Affairs team guided the City’s engagement in intentional racial equity training and work through the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE).

Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic accentuated the importance of the expertise and perspective of the OIA. The team was immediately deployed to serve in the following functions of the Emergency Operations Center: Public Information (EPIO), Food and Necessities, Virtual Local Assistance Center, and Community and Economic Recovery Branch.

Highlights of substantial areas of work assumed by the Immigrant Affairs team include, but are not limited to:

- **Rapid Response Network:** Supported the work of the community-driven Rapid Response Network (RRN), a 24/7 hotline for undocumented immigrants and their families to get immediate support if targeted by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). RRN has built trust in the undocumented community, as evidenced by receiving 7,343 calls from June 2017-January 2021.
- **Census Count:** Achieved the highest U.S. Census self-response rate at 77.2% among large cities (pop>300,000), with a specific City focus on reaching “hard to count” populations in the 2020 Census;
- **Racial Equity:** Coordinated the City’s initial GARE training sessions of 56 City employees, numerous cross-departmental meetings, 2 training sessions for Senior and Executive Staff, 2 Council Study Sessions, and led an equity analysis of a dozen budget proposals.
- **Response to COVID-19:** Established a Language Access Unit within the EPIO; liaised with cities across the county to coordinate food and necessities distribution; facilitated meetings with community organizations and administered to 2 surveys that would center the voice of communities most impacted by the pandemic; informed the financial

assistance and rent relief program; and supported the small businesses assistance program.

As noted above, the Office of Immigrant Affairs was integrated into the newly created Office of Racial Equity (ORE). As part of ORE, the team will continue its systems change work in partnership with the immigrant community and partner organizations, and will continue to help create a City that is more welcoming and accessible to the immigrant community - with a dual focus on both immigrant affairs and racial equity.

ANALYSIS

This section provides an overview of the two methods that informed the development of the Welcoming San José Plan 2.0.

Welcoming America Audit

As part of the planning process for the new Welcoming San José Plan, the Immigrant Affairs team turned to the national Welcoming America organization for an audit of the OIA. In April 2019, the Welcoming America Audit Team reviewed documents and interviewed 36 individuals – including community partners and City staff - and measured OIA’s work against the Welcoming America national criteria, which consists of 45 criteria within seven categories.

The Welcoming America Audit showed that the City of San José met 40/45 (88%) of the core criteria of the Welcoming Standard, whereas a score of 90% is required to achieve Welcoming Certification.

Results of the Welcoming America Audit revealed the following key highlights and recommendations:

Areas of Strength:

- a. **Government Leadership** is a strength in San José, with specific mention of the OIA Leadership and staff and OIA relationships with community partners.
- b. **Safe Communities:** Rapid Response Network is a highlight, as is the equity-focused work of several departments.
- c. **Equitable Access** is an area of strength for San José, although there is room for growth. The City has made significant strides in ensuring language access to City services and is well beyond many of its peers. At the same time, audit interviews suggest confusion among City staff about language access policies and related contracts. Additional investment in training on language access will benefit the organization.
- d. **Economic Development** is a strength, and the deep investment of organizations in San José to provide education on workers’ rights and workplace safety, and to ensure access to legal advice on workplace issues is a highlight. However, the cost of living in San José is high and programs struggle to place individuals in jobs that earn an adequate wage, and the city needs to continue to invest in these challenges.

- e. **Partnership** is an area of strength for San José. The OIA actively collaborates both internally with other departments and externally with community-based organizations and other jurisdictions. However, there is potential to expand collaboration with the private sector.

Areas of Growth:

- a. **Government Leadership:** Feedback loops and accountability mechanisms are an area of growth for San José. At the time of the audit, OIA was no longer convening the Welcoming San José Steering Committee and did not have a formal process for ongoing community accountability. It was also noted that there is potential for more engagement between OIA and departments. In addition, information on City services could be provided in a way that is clearer and more user friendly for immigrant and refugee communities.
- b. **Civic Engagement, particularly leadership development,** is an area of growth for San José. 1) No program was currently in place to develop immigrant knowledge of local government workings, or advance immigrant civic engagement in democratic spaces (i.e. hearings, council meetings, commissions, boards). 2) Currently there is a gap in leadership development programming particularly for the Asian / Pacific Islander (API) community. 3) Interviewees suggested that past programs had varying degrees of impact and that structural problems – such as the length of city council meetings and infrastructure to access board and commission positions – created real barriers to civic engagement for immigrants and refugees.
- c. **Receiving-community engagement** is an area of growth for San José. There is significant room to engage longer term residents and build deeper relationships between newer immigrants and generational community members, to work on issues of common interest, and to promote regular interaction and communication between leaders in the immigrant community and leaders in the receiving community.
- d. **Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion:** GARE work has the potential to make San José a leader in their approach to diversity, equity, and inclusion and welcoming work if racial equity action plans for departments include specific goals around inclusion of immigrant and refugee populations.
- e. **Goal setting, monitoring, and impact** is an area of growth for San José. Currently feedback on programs relies heavily on relationships between the OIA staff and community leaders. Formal systems to assess impact should be put in place.

In response to the audit report, the Immigrant Affairs team will carry out the following during the next year:

1. Develop a Welcoming San José Evaluation and data collection plan;
2. Improve feedback and accountability, through a community advisory group;
3. With the merging of Immigrant Affairs work into the Office of Racial Equity, staff will emphasize the importance of integrating specific goals around immigrant inclusion and language access into racial equity action plans;
4. Increase partnership with City departments, related to equity planning, community engagement, and language access;

5. Focus on job training and opportunities with the goal of moving immigrant residents towards middle skills jobs; and
6. Explore greater collaboration with the philanthropic and private sectors.

Community Engagement Process for Welcoming San José Plan 2.0

With the sunset of the 2016-2019 Welcoming San José Plan, staff and community partners again co-developed an updated version of the WSJ Plan; one that builds upon the first plan but also helps focus the work more directly. Staff desired to maintain the aspirational nature of the work, while simultaneously insuring that limited resources and staffing were used most efficiently, effectively, and toward the highest community priorities.

To refresh the work of the 2016-2019 Plan, the team engaged in an interactive process from August 2019- January 2020 to simultaneously build on, brainstorm, assess, and prioritize the strategies. The City used a collaborative approach to develop a plan which would serve San José’s diverse immigrant population, by identifying community partners to serve in the working group for the six-month planning process. The 11 primary working group members were from various sectors: City and county government, education, basic need providers, legal, and nonprofits focused on immigrant wellbeing. Most of the working group members also participated in the 2016 planning process. Additionally, 134 unique voices from 47 community groups were engaged, as well as seven focus groups with the following populations: Vietnamese, Arab Muslim, Youth, Educators, LatinX Spanish-speaking adults and youth, African immigrants/Eritrean, and underserved neighborhoods.

Community input, feedback, and decision-making occurred in the following phases:

Phase 1, August 2019	Visioning and high-level process
Phase 2, September 2019	Broad community input
Phase 3, November 2019	Strategies and tactics; prioritization
Phase 4, January 2020	Engagement with draft strategies
Phase 5, November 2020	Reflect on Draft Strategies and Revise; Community re-engagement, during COVID-19

Given the impacts of the pandemic since the plan was initially drafted, City staff reengaged with immigrant-serving community partners to determine if the strategies agreed upon in January 2020 were still relevant and high priority. Sixty-five (65) community partners were asked to review all strategies and determine if they were:

- Still relevant (keep as is)
- Still relevant but needed revision
- Is no longer relevant
- Is missing (a strategy needs to be added)

After reviewing the survey responses, it was clear that the identified strategies from January 2020 were still top priorities, despite the additional impacts of the pandemic. Overall, community

partners who responded to the survey (n=30, 45% response rate) felt that most of the strategies agreed to in January 2020 were still relevant; only one or two people felt that any of the 25 proposed strategies were identified as “no longer relevant.” To dig deeper, City staff met individually with community partners who identified concerns, had offered new suggestions, or cited missing strategies. Staff considered the feedback and used it to finalize the list of strategies outlined in the attachment.

Subsequently, staff determined that it would be best to combine Education and Economic Opportunity into one goal area, with a more focused approach on job-related educational opportunities. Furthermore, there are several community priorities that do not appear in the Welcoming San José Plan 2.0 because this work is being addressed elsewhere in the City – namely Digital Inclusion, Early Childcare Education, and Community and Economic Recovery. ORE is grateful for the forward movement led by the SJ Public Library, Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services, Civic Innovation, and the Emergency Management and will continue to be available for supporting this work, as it is a high priority for the immigrant community.

A Look Forward: Welcoming San José 2.0 Strategies

Through incorporating the ideas and voices of many immigrant individuals and partner organizations/community groups, as well as the Welcoming America organizational audit, the following goals emerged and were confirmed as priorities:

1. **Leadership and Communications**: Establish equitable systems, policies, and practices throughout the City that create a welcoming and inclusive environment that allows immigrants, residents of color, and all people of San José to thrive.
2. **Access and Engagement**: Improve immigrant access to City information and services, and augment immigrant participation in civic life.
3. **Educational and Economic Opportunity**: Advance educational and economic opportunities among immigrants and refugees through job skills training, strengthening career pathways, promotion of entrepreneurship, small business retention and growth, and financial literacy.
4. **Safe Communities**: Foster trust and communication between law enforcement, local governments, immigrants, and the community at large.

The goals and strategies are built upon important partnerships across City departments and with community organizations. The full list of strategies can be found in the Welcoming San José Plan 2.0: 2021-2024 attached to this memorandum.

CONCLUSION

City staff successfully completed a community engagement process, despite the pandemic, to co-create a three-year immigrant inclusion plan, *Welcoming San José Plan 2.0*, which focuses on civic, economic, linguistic and social aspects of life in San José. Centered on 21 strategies across four primary topic areas, the Plan will guide the work of ORE's Immigrant Affairs team for the next three years.

With recent changes in the federal government and national landscape that allow for greater forward movement for immigrant communities, building an inclusive and cohesive San José is work that requires a deliberate investment from all sectors. A bold local strategy and infrastructure, to support immigrant inclusion is critical to a successful city for all, regardless of national origin or immigration status. The *Welcoming San José Plan 2.0* is an initial step towards building and implementing this local strategy, in collaboration with many community partners.

The ORE is supporting and advocating for a bold, national strategy and infrastructure to support immigrant inclusion, as well as just and humane immigration policies. This is critical to a robust and comprehensive COVID-19 response and recovery, and to ensure that race, zip code, status and origin do not impede the success and contributions of any San José resident. Our immigrant and Black and Brown communities have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, and millions of immigrants and their children were left out of CARES Act relief programs yet continue to serve in essential positions that put them at great risk. Recognizing the importance of harnessing the talents of all people across our nation in fostering economically and socially vibrant communities and promoting an equitable and inclusive recovery from the coronavirus pandemic is pivotal to the success of the nation and our city.

EVALUATION AND FOLLOW-UP

As part of the development of the Welcoming San José Plan 2.0: 2021-2024, ORE is currently in contract with a consultant to develop both evaluation and data collection plans, specific to the 21 Welcoming San José Strategies. Planned launch of the WSJ evaluation/data collection plan, in collaboration with community partners, is July 2021.

Staff will continue to work collaboratively with local and regional partners to implement WSJ Plan strategies, will monitor progress using the evaluation plan, collect data to record successes and adjust as needed. Staff will return to the Neighborhood, Services, and Education Committee in the fall of 2022, to present on reporting period of July 2021-June 2022 (Year 1 of the triennial plan).

CLIMATE SMART SAN JOSÉ

The recommendation in this memo has no effect on Climate Smart San José energy, water, or mobility goals.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

This memorandum will be posted on the agenda website for the Neighborhood Services and Education Committee meeting for March 11, 2021.

COORDINATION

This memorandum was coordinated with the City Manager's Office.

COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION/INPUT

No commission recommendation or input is associated with this action.

BUDGET REFERENCE

The Office of Immigrant Affairs has a budget of \$250,000 annually in the General Fund. Yearly funding is applied towards the programs and initiatives described in this report, as well as one temporary employee who serves as the City's Language Access Coordinator, seasonal interns, and operational expenses.

CEQA

Not a Project, File No. PP17-009, Staff Reports, Assessments, Annual Reports, and Informational Memos that involve no approvals of any City action.

/s/

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NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE

February 22, 2021

Subject: Office of Immigrant Affairs Activities and Welcoming San José Plan, 2021-2024

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ATTACHMENT A: *Welcoming San José Plan 2.0: 2021-2024*