ONE REGION INITIATIVE

CREATING A WELCOMING METRO ATLANTA















REGIONAL STRATEGIC WELCOMING PLAN PHASE I

Creating an inclusive metro Atlanta region in which all people, including immigrants and refugees, have the opportunity to reach their greatest potential, engage with the larger community, and fully contribute their talents.

CONTENTS

3 4 **STEERING COMMITTEE** 6 **REGIONAL MODEL PURPOSE & STRUCTURE** 7 HIGHLIGHTS FROM LISTENING SESSIONS 8 ECONOMIC IMPACT AND DEMOGRAPHICS 10

LETTER FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

- 14 IMPLEMENTATION
- 15 MUNICIPAL COMMITMENT FORM

THE WELCOMING PLAN

LETTER FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



The Atlanta Region is growing, and it is changing. Today, nearly one in every seven Atlantans is born outside the United States, and the region's global ties are driving a vibrant and prosperous economy.

While people from around the world have long called Atlanta home, the region is a relatively new destination for immigrants and refugees. With all change that is new, communities need programs and policies that facilitate incorporation of new neighbors into the civic, social and economic fabric.

With this in mind, in 2014, Welcoming America worked with former Atlanta Mayor. Kasim Reed. and members of the mayoral Welcoming Atlanta Advisory Committee to put forward a plan that would foster a welcoming environment in the City of Atlanta for all individuals regardless of race, ethnicity, or place of origin. These recommendations ultimately became enshrined in Welcoming Atlanta (also known as the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs), which today continues its important work of ensuring that more Atlantan residents—including immigrants and refugees—can open businesses, buy homes, obtain citizenship, and feel safe in the city they call home. While Atlanta continues to play an important role, in metropolitan Atlanta, the vast majority of foreign-born residents actually reside in suburban municipalities outside of the city of Atlanta.

With this in mind, Welcoming America partnered in 2017 with the Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta and other regional entities to create the One Region Initiative. This bold effort drew on expertise from the Foundation and community partners to create an inclusive region extending beyond the core of city limits. The One Region Initiative goal is to make Metro Atlanta the first major metropolitan area to adopt a regional welcoming plan, serving as a model for what we expect will be many more regions to follow. We ultimately envision an inclusive metro region in which all people, including immigrants and refugees, have the opportunity to reach their greatest potential, engage with the larger community, and fully contribute their talents expanding prosperity and well-being for all.

To launch the initiative, leaders from across the metro region were invited to share their ideas and concerns, and listen to local residents to better understand the barriers they face to full participation, and the opportunities that exist to fill those gaps. Through a series of listening sessions, community stakeholder gatherings, and numerous points of engagement, leaders from five counties within the region developed the One Region Plan, which we are delighted to share here. Welcoming America is grateful to all those who helped shape this plan, and in particular to the Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta for making this ambitious effort possible.

The plan is a starting point—a roadmap that points us toward a more inclusive and prosperous region. Its success will only be possible with the involvement and support of Atlantans from all walks of life. As a global nonprofit organization headquartered in Decatur, GA, Welcoming America knows that the success of metro Atlanta has already and will continue to inspire similar efforts across the country, and even the globe. But more importantly, our stake in this goes beyond our professional commitment to encompass our profound moral commitment to our neighbors, long-time and new, believing, in the words of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., that we are truly 'bound together in a single garment of destiny.'

In this new era, metro Atlanta can continue to stand as a beacon to the world and as a place that prospers because of the values that unite its diverse residents. We hope the One Region Plan offers a promising roadmap, and look forward to partnering with community leaders from across the region to make good on its promise.

STEERING COMMITTEE



Luz Borrero DeKalb County Deputy Chief Operating Officer for Development

Robyn Bussey ARCHI Community Health Strategist

Thomas Calloway City of East Point City Council Member

Amy Campbell Corners Outreach Development Director

Claudia Colichon Georgia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce Business Developer

Ann Cramer Coxe Curry & Associates Senior Consultant

Jason Esteves Atlanta Board of Education Board Chair

Anthony Ford City of Stockbridge Mayor **Dr. Volker Franke** Kennesaw State University Professor

Patti Garrett City of Decatur Mayor

Joe Gebbia City of Brookhaven Mayor Pro Tem

Linda Harris City of Decatur Chief, Civic Engagement, Education & Communication

Nicole Love Hendrickson Gwinnett County Community Outreach Program Director

Lynette Howard Gwinnett County Commission Commissioner

Victoria Huynh Center for Pan Asian Community Services Vice President

Dr. Allen Hyde Georgia Tech Assistant Professor **Deana Holiday Ingraham** City of East Point Mayor

Deborah A. Jackson City of Lithonia Mayor

Natalie Jones Metro Atlanta Chamber Manager of Global Programs

Soumaya Khalifa Islamic Speakers Bureau Atlanta Executive Director

Dr. Anna Joo Kim Assistant Professor of City Planning Georgia Institute of Technology

Stephe Koontz City of Doraville City Council Member

Jordyne Krumroy Regional Manager Welcoming America

Emily Laney Lutheran Services of Georgia Regional Director

Miguel Lugo Atlanta Police Officer **Pedro Marin** Georgia House of Representatives Representative for District 96

Santiago Marquez Hispanic Chamber of Commerce CEO

Nick Masino Partnership Gwinnett Chief Economic Development Officer

Frances McBrayer Catholic Charities of Atlanta Refugee Resettlement Director

Dr. Paul McDaniel Kennesaw State University Assistant Professor

Valerie Mills Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs-Atlanta Senior Program Manager

Paedia Mixon New American Pathways Executive Director

Craig Newton City of Norcross Mayor

CONTINUED...

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Carlos Niño Brookhaven Police Officer

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Albert Sorto Hispanic Chamber of Commerce Vice President

Katerina Taylor DeKalb Chamber of Commerce CEO

Ted Terry City of Clarkston Mayor

Wesley Tharpe Georgia Budget and Policy Research Director

Anibal Torres Latin American Association Executive Director **Gabriel Velázquez Jr.** Taqueria El Mercadito Business Owner

Alison Weissinger DeKalb County Public Library Director

Patricia Wheeler City of Stone Mountain Mayor

Alvin Wilbanks Gwinnett County Schools Superintendent

Graham Younger Faith in Public Life Georgia State Manager

SPECIAL THANKS TO THE WELCOMING AMERICA TEAM WHO SUPPORTED THIS PROJECT

Melissa Bertolo, Leyla Compani, Keiron Bone Dormegnie, Susan Downs-Karkos, Jared Feuer, Molly Hilligoss, JJ Krehbiel, Jordyne Krumroy, Isha Lee, David Lubell, Vanja Pantic-Oflazoglu, Rachel Peric, Christina Pope, Smilie Sandhu, Meg Shoemaker Little, Daniel Valdez, and Tim Walden.

REGIONAL MODEL PURPOSE & STRUCTURE

GOAL

To create an inclusive metro Atlanta region in which all people, including immigrants and refugees, have the opportunity to reach their greatest potential, engage with the larger community, and fully contribute their talents—expanding prosperity and well-being for all.

REGIONAL STRUCTURE

73% of jobs in Fulton County, 59% of jobs in Gwinnett, and 72% of jobs in DeKalb are held by non-residents¹. Thus, most people in metro Atlanta live and work in different communities. The geographical transient nature of our region, combined with the ever-increasing recognition that collaboration breeds success, led to the development of this approach.

GEOGRAPHICAL FOCUS AREA



STEERING COMMITTEE

Elected officials from Fulton, DeKalb, Gwinnett, and Henry, as well as social workers, Chambers of Commerce, teachers, attorneys, immigration experts, community leaders, and business executives from the region, volunteered to join the steering committee.

COMMUNITY INPUT

Co-hosted by service-providers, multiple community listening sessions detailed community challenges and opportunities. Information gathered from these sessions underpins the created recommendations.

ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Welcoming America, a nonpartisan nonprofit based in Decatur, Georgia, served as the primary consultant on this initiative. Financial support was provided by the Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta. The Atlanta Regional Commission generously provided guidance throughout.

1 LEHD 2014, Census Bureau



"As Georgia's population grows increasingly diverse, planning and collaboration that bridge divides and unite both immigrants and communities are more important than ever. To that end, the regional welcoming plan will help build leadership pipelines and advance welcoming policies and practices that will enhance relationships, catalyze change, and uplift all Georgians."

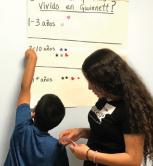


ELIZABETH L SANFORD, AICP MANAGER, CORPORATE AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ATLANTA REGIONAL COMMISSION

"When you add southern hospitality to Atlanta's civil rights history, our present economic ambitions, and our future desire to be a world-class metropolitan region, it becomes very clear that we must be a welcoming region. It is simply who we are."

HIGHLIGHTS FROM LISTENING SESSIONS





Cuanto tiempo has



142 SESSION PARTICIPANTS

DOCUMENTED & UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS REFUGEES US-BORN CITIZENS





3 GOALS

- Listen to the voices of immigrants in our communities
- Have participants define their needs as experts of their own lives
- Provide space for solution brainstorming

IDENTIFIED CONCERNS

- TOP 2 Lack of English proficiency
- Fear of deportation
- Racism, discrimination, and bullying
- Inability to obtain drivers license
- Fear of police
- Inadequate healthcare options
- Rising housing cost
- Barriers to accessing services

GENERATED IDEAS REFLECTED IN THE PLAN

- Q&A session with elected officials
- Cultural Interaction Center for new Americans
- Availability of medical assistance
- Conversations across racial divides
- More options for transportation

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

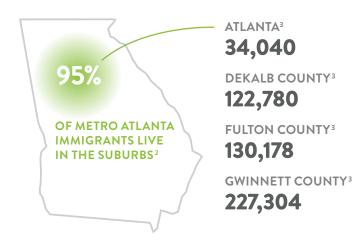


Complete session reports can be found at welcomingamerica.org/one-region/listeningsessions

ECONOMIC IMPACT AND DEMOGRAPHICS

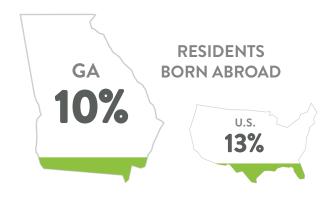
1 MILLION

foreign-born persons lived in Georgia in 2016.¹



991,168

Georgia residents were born abroad, the 9th largest immigrant population in the country.¹



120%

Increase in the Hispanic population in the Atlanta Metro Area between 2000 and 2015.⁴



\$1.5B

Business income generated by immigrant-owned businesses in 2014.¹





of Fortune 500 companies based in Georgia were founded by immigrants or their children.¹



\$26.1B

was immigrant-led household income in Georgia in 2014, 10.7% of all income earned by Gerogia.¹

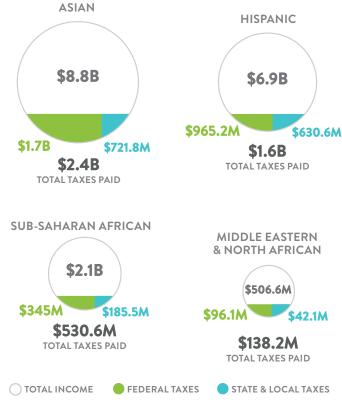
IMMIGRANT CONTRIBUTION

\$19.2B SPENDING POWER	
\$4.7B FEDERAL TAXES	
\$2.2B STATE & LOCAL TAXES	

\$738.9M MEDICARE CONTRIBUTION

\$2.9B SOCIAL SECURITY CONTRIBUTION

INCOME AND TAX CONTRIBUTIONS'



303.3%

FSC

increase in Hispanic student enrollment in public schools since 2000.⁵



5.3% OF GEORGIA K-12 STUDENTS ARE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS.

- 1 "The Contributions of New Americans in Georgia." *New American Economy*, Aug. 2016, www.newamericaneconomy.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/ nae-ga-report.pdf."
- 2 Singer, Audrey, and Jill Wilson. "Immigrants in 2010 Metropolitan America: A Decade of Change." Immigrants in 2010 Metropolitan America: A Decade of Change, Brookings, Oct. 2011, www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/1013_immigration_wilson_singer.pdf.
- 3 "U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Gwinnett County, Georgia; Fulton County, Georgia; DeKalb County, Georgia; Atlanta City, Georgia; Georgia." U.S. Census Bureau, www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/gwinnettcountygeorgia,fultoncountygeorgia,dekalbcountygeorgia,atlantacitygeorgia,ga/POP645216.
- 4 "Race and Ethnicity." *Neighborhood Nexus*, Atlanta Regional Commission, 8 May 2017, neighborhoodnexus.org/race-and-ethnicity/.
- 5 Enrollment by Ethnicity/Race, Gender and Grade Level (PK-12). Georgia Department of Education, app.doe.k12.ga.us/ows-bin/owa/fte_pack_ethnicsex.entry_form.

THE WELCOMING PLAN



CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Actively ensure that residents, including newcomers, fully participate in civic life by increasing access to leadership and democratic spaces.

- Provide information and referral to trusted, existing resources that promote and facilitate naturalization including fee waivers, citizenship classes, and immigration services.
- Partner with providers that host citizenship clinics with free application help.
- Organize regular opportunities for all residents to engage with community leaders.
- Ensure multilingual citizenship information is readily available at city and county facilities such as libraries and community centers.
- Host workshops and community tours to expose residents to various aspects of government and civic life.
- Facilitate voter registration at community events through non-partisan entities.
- Launch a local, multilingual digital media campaign focused on citizenship and/or civic engagement.
- Engage and cultivate immigrant leaders through civic engagement programs (such as "My City" and "Police Academies").
- Include immigrant communities in outreach for governmental employment pipelines.



GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP

Implement systems and programs that strengthen community efforts and embed inclusion within government agencies.

- Conduct and amplify ongoing community outreach within newcomer, immigrant, and existing communities to encourage civic participation, and spread information about governmental services.
- Establish an advisory committee that includes immigrants and reflects the community's diversity.
- Make efforts to spread awareness of services and communicate governmental messages to limited English speaking community members through the use of bilingual or multilingual materials and translators.
- Work toward the diversification of staff and appointed positions.
- Promote messaging that communicates and celebrates the value of diversity and inclusion.
- Provide and encourage access to community services, such as workforce training and English classes.
- Dedicate staff resources to work on immigration affairs and issues of diversity.
- Provide or encourage equity, diversity, and inclusion trainings for municipal and county officials and staff.



SAFE COMMUNITIES

Foster trust and build relationships between residents, including newcomers, and local law enforcement and safety agencies.

- Supply department heads and elected officials with materials that reflect the demographic diversity of their communities.
- Reach out to and engage a cross-section of leaders from across the community to better understand community concerns.
- Educate first responders, including police and fire departments on cultural competency.
- Facilitate opportunities to meet patrol officers to build trust and foster positive relationships.
- Recruit police and firefighters within immigrant communities.
- Educate the community about police training to support accountability, and have local officials enforce community policing best practices.
- Create a multilingual resource(s) (electronic or/and print) that police can give out.
- Encourage law enforcement and emergency service officials to attend continuing education programs and contribute to a banking of materials pertinent to serving immigrants.
- Seek to better understand how to respond to human trafficking and domestic violence crimes, including U-visa and T-visa referrals.
- End or avoid 287(g) agreements with the federal government, do not participate in federal immigration enforcement activities of any kind, do not comply with ICE detainer requests in the absence of a judicial warrant, and do not question suspects or witnesses about their immigration status unless it is directly related to the crime being investigated.



CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

Build connections between newcomers and longer-term residents by strengthening relationships and communicating shared values.

- Launch a media strategy to communicate shared welcoming values and promote awareness, education, and dialogue on diverse and global communities.
- Promote cultural and recreational events that bridge communities.
- Establish "welcoming hubs" with multilingual resources at city hall, community centers, and libraries.
- Host or attend a multicultural/interfaith council or advisory committee with the goal of mediating and connecting communities.
- Host educational programs or workshops about issues related to immigrant communities.
- Release a proclamation/resolution publicly affirming the values of Welcoming America and commit to becoming a member.
- Implement a language accessibility plan.
- Promote and support training to better understand how to build bridges between existing community members and newcomers.



EQUITABLE ACCESS

Ensure community services and opportunities are available to all residents, including immigrants.

- Partner with local organizations and institutions to offer free community workshops on civic engagement and financial literacy.
- Assess linguistic, economic, cultural, and legal barriers for the purpose of remedying inequitable access to services and opportunities within localities.
- Create a community threat assessment tool and corresponding communications plan.
- Host art initiatives that represent and display diversity within public spaces.
- Identify partnerships in trusted and accessible public/private spaces to encourage community engagement.
- Engage community-based organizations and other local partners to increase immigrant ridership of public transportation.
- Publicly support health care options, health care partnerships for reduced cost, and health care advocacy to ensure equitable access.
- Require equitable affordable housing as measured by area median income and other relevant factors; across the socioeconomic spectrum with the end goal of increasing upward economic mobility and multigenerational wealth acquisition.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Harness the full potential of all residents. Ensure that immigrants have the skills and assets to thrive, and economic development systems are prepared to leverage new and existing talent.

- Plan for inclusive economic development through supplier diversity programs.
- Promote networking opportunities that encourage immigrants to share knowledge and business experience.
- Communicate business resources for immigrant entrepreneurs and business owners.
- Facilitate immigrant entry into professional skill-training programs such as the Georgia High Demand Careers Training program.
- Encourage training on business basics and entrepreneurship in the USA.
- Encourage contracting with immigrant-owned businesses in public purchasing.
- Create programs that reward a mentor/mentee model, such as tier 1 suppliers training tier 2/immigrant-owned supplier businesses.
- Showcase immigrant business success to raise awareness of their positive impact on local economies.



EDUCATION

Strive for an educational system that ensures all students have the support they need to succeed in school and the education they need to succeed in the workforce.

- Implement culturally diverse programming such as events that celebrate multiple heritages or popular sports from around the world.
- Incorporate the use of classroom instructional materials and administrative trainings that are inclusive of cultural diversity.
- Support the development of civic responsibility by encouraging community volunteering for all elementary and middle school students.
- Promote parent engagement by providing multilingual resources to immigrant parents that teach student readiness, parent readiness, information on school structure, and community support options.
- Provide training and materials to teachers and students to create a welcoming classroom environment including welcoming terminology, and rules of thoughtful engagement.
- Offer mentorship, internship, and skill-building programs for all post high school (including non-college bound) students.
- Explore options that would allow foreign-born students to go through a dedicated year-long transitional program on the path to integrating into the standard school system.
- Implement an anti-bullying program specifically addressing challenges of racial and cultural differences.



JEFFREY TAPIA FORMER EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR LATIN AMERICAN ASSOCIATION

"Atlanta's success lies in becoming an inclusive community. The time is now. Our local governments, businesses, and civic groups are increasingly committed to becoming a welcoming region in which all members feel engaged, valued, and connected. Atlanta is on the verge of becoming the nation's first welcoming region for the greater good of the region."



VICTORIA HUYNH VICE PRESIDENT CENTER FOR PAN ASIAN COMMUNITY SERVICES, INC. (CPACS)

"This Welcoming One Region plan and initiative will create an intentional framework to address equity and disparities in communities in the region. Our region, state, counties, cities, and diverse racial and ethnic neighborhoods deserves nothing less."



SOUMAYA KHALIFA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ISLAMIC SPEAKERS BUREAU OF ATLANTA

"My parents immigrated 50 years ago the US. Their reasons for leaving behind successful medical careers and starting all over again included how the US is welcoming to all, if one works hard they will succeed and a bright future for their family. That is why One Region is important to me."



J. ALVIN WILBANKS CEO • SUPERINTENDENT GWINNETT COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

"Most people have a basic need to be accepted as a member of a group, a team, or a community and, as such, be a part of making things better. The feeling of belonging begins with being welcomed into the community, and is enhanced by being recognized as a contributing member. That is the intended outcome of the Welcoming America One Region Initiative. I was honored to be asked to help in 'Creating a Welcoming Metro Atlanta' plan for our region."

IMPLEMENTATION

LEVELS

Municipalities decide how many and which recommendations they will implement. Bronze, silver and gold awards are based on the number of recommendations undertaken.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TASKFORCE

The multi-sector, nonpartisan taskforce is charged with providing programmatic and outreach support for the One Region Initiative.



Communities seeking to continue to work toward national best practices beyond what is set out in the One Region Plan are encouraged to consider Certified Welcoming. The Certified Welcoming process includes a comprehensive evaluation of one's work against the national Welcoming Standard. Communities who become Certified Welcoming receive national recognition for their work.

More at www.welcomingamerica.org/programs/certification.



MUNICIPALITY COMMITMENT TO ADOPT THE ONE REGION WELCOMING PLAN

As representatives of local government, we affirm the importance of proactively welcoming newcomers and taking steps to ensure their successful integration. We recognize the need to ensure that our policies and programs support all residents and encourage individual and communal prosperity.

We therefore resolve to participate in the One Region Initiative and commit to selecting and implementing recommendations written within the One Region Welcoming Plan.

ACTIONS WE WILL TAKE

- Join the Welcoming America network.
- Provide a point of contact who will work closely on this effort.
- Work with the Community Engagement Taskforce to push work forward.
- Implement recommendations from the One Region Welcoming Plan.
- Provide annual documentation of implementation.

VALUES WE WILL FOLLOW

- Support a vision in which all people, including immigrants, have the opportunity to reach their greatest potential, engage with their community, and fully contribute their talents.
- Engage both immigrants and receiving community members, as their voices are critical to defining a welcoming agenda.
- Work to build greater understanding, particularly among people who may have concerns about or are unaware of the changing demographics of their community.
- Believe that people of all backgrounds have unique talents that can be brought to bear to make our communities vibrant, and welcoming efforts should be as inclusive as possible to all groups.
- Operate with the conviction that better decisions are reached when multiple backgrounds and perspectives are meaningfully engaged, and strive to create an equitable and collaborative environment in which differences are embraced and harnessed to achieve the best results.
- Believe leaders can play a catalytic role by recognizing, rewarding, and investing in community partners who are essential to building a community's capacity for this work.
- Value and recognize the importance of multi sector collaboration.

REGIONAL MEMBERS WILL RECEIVE

- Acknowledgement and recognition as first major-metro regional members.
- Coaching, resources, and tailored technical assistance from the Community Engagement Taskforce.
- Opportunities to connect with regional peers via Welcoming America conference calls and webinars.
- Invitations to regional convening events and meetings.

NAME OF MUNICIPALITY		DATE	
POINT OF CONTACT			
NAME	EMAIL	PHONE	
EXECUTIVE NAME		SIGNATURE	

WITH SUPPORT FROM





