



# Welcoming San José

*Plan 2.0: Moving toward Civic, Economic, Linguistic, and Social Inclusion 2021–2024*





Dear Community Member,

My family and I immigrated to the U.S. from England when I was a young child. San José became my home, and while I was too young to fully understand what the journey meant, I learned from my parents that the U.S. was the land of opportunity. My wife was born in El Paso, Texas and is the daughter of immigrant parents from Mexico. Her family is from Ciudad Juárez, and I have learned from her experience and the experience of her family. What I have come to know is that immigrating to another country is not easy and takes courage. I also have come to realize that my wife's family was not always treated as well as my family.



As the City Manager of San José, I am committed to making sure that all immigrants feel welcomed. Immigrants belong in San José, after all, this is what makes our very diverse City one of the most innovative in our nation. I want immigrants and people of color to feel at home, and know that they have a role in making this City the very best it can be. The last several years have been challenging for immigrant communities across our nation. Now more than ever, it is critical that we drive forward the goals of this newly revised Welcoming San José Plan.

The newly created **Office of Racial Equity** includes a team that remains focused on Immigrant Affairs. This team is working with the community to move the Welcoming San José goals forward and to ensure San José is a city where everyone, regardless of status, can find success.

What I love most about San José is the diverse people who live and work here. I commit to listening and learning from our immigrant neighbors and community partners, and I invite you to join us in making San José a welcoming city for people from around the world.

The City of San José deeply values the contributions and perspectives of our immigrant community members. San José would not be what it is without each of you.

Sincerely,  
Dave Sykes, *City Manager*



Dear San José Immigrant Community, Receiving Community,  
and Partners,

*No matter where you're from, we're glad you're our  
neighbor.*

As the first Director of the Office of Immigrant Affairs and  
the recently appointed Director of the City's newly created  
Office of Racial Equity, it brings me great pleasure to present  
to you the updated *Welcoming San José Plan*. This Plan  
will help drive the work of our growing team and will serve as the three-year  
strategic action plan to support and serve the immigrant community throughout  
the City of San José.



Since the inception of the Office of Immigrant Affairs in 2015, our small but  
passionate team has learned so much from each of you, and has always strived  
to reflect your vision, your dreams, and your ideas in all the work that we do.  
Now, as our team expands through the Office of Racial Equity, we stay committed  
to supporting San José's immigrant community — by asking hard questions,  
listening deeply, thinking creatively, and dreaming big. We want to make your  
dreams the reality of our city.

As we look back and also move forward, we are deeply grateful to our partners  
in the immigrant community. We are also excited about the potential that our  
new national landscape brings, at the same time that we mourn the lives lost  
and the lasting impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. We stand committed to a full  
community recovery that results in an even stronger, more vibrant and powerful  
San José immigrant community than before.

Immigrant justice is racial justice, and racial justice is immigrant justice. Onward  
to achieving our *Welcoming San José* goals!

In community,  
Zulma Maciel, *Director, Office of Racial Equity*

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# Executive Summary



**T**HE OFFICE OF IMMIGRANT AFFAIRS (OIA) was established in the City of San José in 2015 to help build a welcoming City for the nearly 40% of our City 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 its first ever Office of Racial Equity (ORE), and the work of OIA and its valuable community partners will now be supported by the same staff team, but within an expanded department. The strategic role of the Immigrant Affairs Team, however, will remain the same — serving as conveners and connectors, supporters and facilitators to help move forward the powerful work of our amazing community partners and to influence City systems to be more welcoming and accessible to the immigrant community.

As the *Welcoming San José Plan* for Civic, Economic, Linguistic, and Social Integration of 2016-2019 has come to an end, the team has engaged in a deep reflection process, including both an external Welcoming America audit and a six-month community engagement process, to

co-design and co-create with community partners an updated *Welcoming San José Plan* for 2021-2024.

The 2019-2020 community engagement process included a working group of 11 key community partners, as well 134 voices from 47 different community groups. The process also included several phases of community engagement and co-creation and seven community input sessions with specific immigrant groups.



The new *Welcoming San José Plan* is both aspirational and actionable, received broad community support, and includes 23 strategies across four core pillars.

### The Four Pillars of the *Welcoming San José Plan*

- I. 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.
- II. Access and Engagement:** Improve immigrant access to City information and services, and augment immigrant participation in civic life.
- III. 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.
- IV. Safe Communities:** Foster trust and communication between law enforcement, local government, immigrants, and the community at large.

With recent changes in the 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: 2021-2024* is another step towards building and implementing this local strategy, in collaboration with our many community partners.



# Background

**A** WOMAN OF COLOR, BORN IN A FOREIGN COUNTRY... English was not her native language, and she spoke with a heavy accent. She was teary-eyed as she described both the fear and relief she felt as she walked into City Hall in November 2016, shortly after the Presidential election.



She was worried — literally fearful — about what people truly thought of her and her immigrant status. Seeing the “We Welcome Everyone” banner bravely flying in the Civic Center Plaza, she breathed a sigh of relief. It was a simple banner, but it reminded her of what it means to work and live in San José.



**What can we do**, in San José, to make sure that every child and adult know their value and that they have an important place in their city? **What can we do**, in San José, to build a community and a city that welcomes all people of all races, genders, languages, national origins? **What can we do**, as a city, to

be welcoming in both words and actions?

The answers lie in the *Welcoming San José Plan: 2021-2024*.

The Office of Immigrant Affairs (OIA) was established in 2015 to help build a welcoming City for the nearly 40% of our City residents who were born in another country. Many more San José residents have immigrant relatives and family members, with approximately 60 percent of children having at least one immigrant parent. More than half of the immigrants in the San José metro area are naturalized citizens, while 21% are undocumented residents. Data show that some of our immigrant communities and immigrant neighborhoods have been hit the hardest by the pandemic. According to the Santa Clara County COVID-19 dashboard, the Latina/o/x community makes up more than 50% of COVID-19 cases, even though they make up only 25% of the population.

The immigrant community is a critically

important part of our city and the City of San José is committed to creating policies and programs to facilitate immigrant connection, engagement, and community recovery in all aspects of living, working, and playing in San José.

The ORE team aims to assist immigrant communities, long-term residents, and the City itself to build a welcoming community — in words, action, policies, and programs. Our vision of a welcoming city is one in which all members of our community, including those who are part of immigrant families, are able to fully participate in our City democracy, successful economy, as well as the

social fabric of the San José community.

Upon its creation in 2015, the Office of Immigrant Affairs quickly set out to work with community partners to develop the



first *Welcoming San José Plan*, to build a city based on Civic, Economic, Linguistic, and Social Integration, 2016-2019.

The world has changed dramatically since 2016 and the creation of the first *Welcoming San José Plan*. While we had developed an aspirational three-year plan to support San José's immigrant community, the



2020. With the onset of the pandemic, as well as the murder of George Floyd and the resulting protests against police brutality of communities of color, San José's immigrant communities felt the devastating and inequitable impacts in terms of health outcomes and death, economics

and unemployment, and sense of safety in their own City.

In terms of welcoming, the 2019 City of San José community survey results (n=1334) indicated that 92% of surveyed residents describe San José as diverse, while 22% of surveyed residents view San José as not welcoming and 20% as not inclusive.<sup>1</sup>

There is much more work to do.



anti-immigrant policies and rhetoric of the federal Administration required the Office of Immigrant Affairs to play defense more than offense, to be reactive rather than proactive.

The world then changed even more significantly in

<sup>1</sup> (Source: FM3 Research, July 19-26, 2019) 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.

## Role of Office of Racial Equity

In 2020, the City of San José established the new Office of Racial Equity (ORE) responsible for advancing systems change towards racial equity for all residents of San José. ORE will work to examine and improve San José's internal policies, programs, and practices to eradicate institutional racism within our municipal government. This includes a focus on enabling the organization, at all levels and in all departments, to identify ways to improve outcomes for Black, Indigenous, Latina/o/x, and People of Color in general. As such, the important work of the Immigrant Affairs Team has merged with the ORE, creating the opportunity to deepen welcoming and inclusion work.

As a city, we are stronger together. As a community, we strive for all people to thrive and be the best version of themselves. It is with this overarching vision

that the ORE approaches our work within the SJ community, the immigrant community, and the City organization.

The role of the ORE is the following:

- enable the organization to embed equity in culture, decision making, and practice
- support city-wide coordination and systems change
- engage in multi-jurisdictional collaboration





# Vision, Mission, and Guiding Principles

THE VISION, MISSION, AND PRINCIPLES of *2021-2024 Welcoming San José Plan 2.0* were originally developed in 2016 in collaboration with the *Welcoming San José* Steering Committee, community partners, and immigrant residents. They remain true today.

## Vision Statement

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

## Mission Statement

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

## Principles

1. The voices of immigrants and the broader community are critical to the welcoming agenda.
2. City 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.
3. People of all backgrounds — socioeconomic, racial, ethnic, religious, etc. — have unique talents that can be brought to bear to make our communities vibrant, and welcoming work should be as inclusive as possible to all groups.
4. Programs intended to help immigrants navigate the community and learn about local norms should also be respectful of and leverage the cultural and leadership assets and knowledge that immigrants bring.
5. It is essential to engage the receiving community in ways that build greater understanding, particularly among people who may have concerns about — or are unaware of — the changing demographics of their community.

# Reflecting on the last five years and the *Welcoming San José Plan 1.0*

**A**S WE PLAN FOR THE FUTURE, we must also reflect back on the lessons learned from the first five years of the Office of Immigrant Affairs and the *Welcoming San José Plan: 2016-2019*:

- Our initial *Welcoming San José Plan* was far-reaching and aspirational; our 2.0 Plan is intended to guide the work and strategies that our immigrant community partners want us to prioritize.
- We are optimistic about the impacts we can help drive in San José's immigrant community, because we anticipate a national landscape that will allow us to dream bigger, together with the immigrant community.
- Our role is to facilitate the amazing work of our community partners and to continue to build new and deeper relationships and partnerships. We act as conveners and connectors.
- We need to measure both our effort and our impact, and are currently developing an evaluation plan to help us do that.
- We cannot do welcoming work within the immigrant community without addressing systemic racism. Though we did not call it racial equity work in 2015, that is what we were doing. Embedding the work of the Office of Immigrant Affairs into the newly created Office of Racial Equity simply makes sense.
- The work of the Office of Racial Equity and the Immigrant Affairs Team belongs to all City staff, and our role is to help amplify the priorities of the immigrant community within the work of all City departments.
- In some situations where immigrant priorities are embedded in department priorities, the role of ORE is to support while departments lead. This is especially true for digital connectivity and inclusion, early childcare education, and community and economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.



# Community Process to Inform Welcoming San José Plan 2.0

**T**HE UPDATED AND REVISED THREE-YEAR PLAN is the result of listening and learning from immigrant community leaders and partners of all kinds, with the aim to convert the ambitious guide of 2016 into a concrete action plan for 2021-2024.

The Immigrant Affairs Team used a collaborative approach to co-create a plan which will serve San José's diverse immigrant population, first by identifying community partners to serve in the working group for the six-month planning process. The 11 primary working group members are from various sectors: city and county government, education, basic need providers, legal, and nonprofits focused on immigrant well-being.

Community input into decision-making occurred in the following ways:

- Phase 1:** Visioning and high-level process. Working group only, August 2019
- Phase 2:** Broad community feedback. Working group, community partners, community members (incl. youth), September 2019
- Phase 3:** Strategies and tactics; prioritization. Working group only, November 2019
- Phase 4:** Engagement with draft strategies. Working group and community partners, January 2020
- Phase 5:** Reflect and revise; community

re-engagement, given COVID. Working group and community partners, Community Partner Survey, November 2020

- 134 unique voices from 47 community groups
- Seven community input sessions with the following populations: Vietnamese, Arab, Latina/o/x, and African immigrants, youth, and educators
- Community partner survey to confirm and revise strategies, given pandemic impacts
- Regular contact with the 11 working group members
- Process resulted in a final list of 23 Welcoming San José Plan strategies, with broad support of community partners

Given the timing of the initial community process to draft the strategies (August 2019 – January 2020) and the large impacts of the pandemic on



the immigrant community, the Team reconnected with immigrant-serving community partners in November 2020 to determine if the strategies agreed upon in January 2020 were still relevant and high priority. Sixty-five community partners were asked to review all strategies and determine if the strategy was:

- a. Still relevant (keep as is)
- b. Still relevant but needed revision
- c. Is no longer relevant
- d. 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 “Reflect and Refresh” 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, team members met individually with community partners who had identified concerns, offered new suggestions, or cited missing strategies. Team members then discussed this feedback and used it to finalize the list of WSJ strategies.



# Welcoming San José Goals and Strategies

## I. Leadership and Communications:

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**Goal:** 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.

1. Develop systems for identifying and advancing anti-racist, immigrant-friendly, and intentionally equitable policies, practices, and budgeting processes.
2. Develop and implement an intentionally anti-racist Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion training program, including unconscious bias, for City employees to improve quality of City service for all residents and foster improved connections between City representatives and our culturally diverse community.
3. Develop a robust communications mechanism with the County of Santa Clara and San José City Council offices to ensure consistent and timely messaging and information dissemination to the immigrant community, and a structure to discuss coordination of policy and procedures that impact the immigrant community.
4. Create meaningful connections between long-term residents and immigrant and refugee communities through supporting neighborhood, cultural, art, and other local community events that focus on bringing people together and centering our immigrant and refugee residents.
5. Continue City leadership's active participation in immigrant community events to foster real listening and authentic partnership through events such as World Refugee Day, Immigrant Heritage Month, Citizenship Day, naturalization ceremonies, flag raising and cultural celebration events.
6. Support legislation that protects immigrant rights, provides a pathway for citizenship, legal permanent residency, or protected status including comprehensive immigration reform. Oppose efforts that remove due process rights, undermine the humanity of immigrants and refugees, weaken data privacy or confidentiality rights, and separate or require long-term detainment of families.

## II. Access and Engagement:

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**Goal:** Improve immigrant access to City information and services, and augment immigrant participation in civic life.

1. Create a City-wide policy for equitable public outreach, engagement, and civic participation; incorporate lessons learned from effective communication during the pandemic.
2. Complete a comprehensive Language Access Assessment; evaluate and implement priority recommendations for a city-wide Language Access Implementation plan to deliver quality language access services city-wide.
3. Partner with the South Bay Consortium for Adult Education on legislative and policy issue and build on the English-Learner Civics curriculum to increase participation in civic and community life.
4. Amplify partner organizations' naturalization and voter registration efforts and DACA application efforts through public education and awareness campaigns.
5. Partner with the New American Workforce project

to expand the network of San José businesses offering citizenship support to their employees.

6. Develop opportunities to regularly connect with smaller and newer immigrant and refugee groups and neighborhoods with a high concentration of immigrants.
7. Address anti-Blackness in immigrant communities and foster bridge-building and intra/inter-community dialogues between communities, including Indigenous populations.

8. Address hate crimes and violence targeting immigrant communities.



### III. Education and Economic Opportunity:

**Goal:** 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.

1. Partner with local employers, community colleges and immigrant-serving organizations to facilitate credentialing and certification processes and accelerate apprenticeships and career pathways for foreign trained professionals.
2. Deepen partnerships between local employers, labor unions, community colleges, the San José Public Library, the Office of Economic Development, and immigrant-serving organizations to expand job training programs that connect individuals to employment opportunities and ladders toward middle-skills jobs and sustainable livelihoods.
3. Increase participation in ESL classes through targeted, collaborative outreach and a marketing campaign.
4. Promote immigrant entrepreneurship and support immigrant-owned small businesses.
5. Promote financial literacy and access to tools and banking opportunities.

### IV. Safe Communities:

**Goal:** Foster trust and communication between law enforcement, local governments, immigrants, and the community at large.



1. Continue support for community partners operating the Rapid Response Network, to protect/defend community members at risk of deportation, mobilize the receiving community, and engage in leadership development to advocate for justice.
2. Facilitate trust-building and healing opportunities between immigrant/refugee communities and the Police Department, with special attention to teens and young adults, and intentionally engage immigrant communities in "Reimagining Community Safety."
3. Enhance outreach and support for disaster preparedness and emergency responses that are linguistically and culturally responsive through coordination with community agencies and City and County Office of Emergency Services/Management.
4. Collaborate with partner organizations and networks to address human trafficking, sex trafficking, gender identity, domestic violence, and sexual orientation issues that impact refugees and immigrant communities.

# Call to Action

AT THIS PIVOTAL JUNCTURE IN OUR NATION’S HISTORY, building an inclusive and cohesive San José is work that requires a deliberate investment from all sectors.

In order to conduct a robust and comprehensive COVID-19 response and recovery, bold national and local strategies supporting immigrant inclusion are crucial. These strategies will effectively and efficiently fulfill the mission of the City of San José in ways that ensure that race, zip code, status and origin do not impede the opportunity, success, and contributions of any resident of San José.

Our community process has coalesced around a solid people-centered immigrant inclusion strategy that will lead to increased City leadership and understanding in serving San José’s immigrant communities. This process is designed to yield greater civic access and engagement, improved educational and economic opportunities, and safe communities for all residents of San José.





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<https://www.sanjoseca.gov/your-government/departments-offices/office-of-the-city-manager/office-of-racial-equity>