

# POLICY BRIEF | VISITING SCHOLAR SERIES

## WHAT IS A WELCOMING COMMUNITY: CITY LEADERSHIP IN DYNAMIC TIMES

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Director Cedillo-Pereira spoke at the Tower Center September 13, 2018 at the Global Refugee Symposium.

Communities across the United States are actively working across sectors to establish local and regional welcoming frameworks to integrate and include immigrants and refugees. Local government leaders, together with businesses, non-profits, academia, service providers, faith-based groups, and first responders recognize the economic and social benefits of welcoming immigrants and refugees.

A welcoming community is one where leaders harness the diversity of their communities by addressing difficult issues together and developing strategic inclusion plans around focus areas such as equity, safety, healthy and connected communities, economic opportunity and education, leadership and communications and civic engagement. From this process, long-time residents and newcomers are developing new integration methods built around shared values of inclusion.

*“The refugee resettlement, legalization programming and citizenship efforts allow local leaders to draw upon best practices and lessons learned from federal integration efforts to craft a modern-day approach to effective inclusion and integration efforts.”*

The most recent U.S. comprehensive immigration reform measure occurred in 1986 when President Ronald Reagan signed the Immigration and Reform Control Act (IRCA) which provided for increased border controls, employer sanctions and a pathway for the undocumented population who met the requirements to normalize their immigration status.

More and more, local communities understand that immigrants are families, neighbors, business owners, students and members of faith communities. They bring cultural diversity and economic contributions. They see immigrants as part of a growth plan. Port cities like New York City, San Francisco, and Chicago have established immigration affairs offices. Additionally, welcoming strategies are also anchored in cities that have less history with established integration and inclusion programs. Dallas has always received immigrants but now the City is taking proactive steps to leverage what immigrants bring to our community.

**Questions? Reach out to Director Cedillo-Pereira directly:**

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