High Point establishes immigrant advisory committees

On May 17, 2012, the High Point Human Relations Commission voted to establish an International Advisory Committee in order to better represent immigrant and refugee perspectives to the local government and the wider community. This decision highlights High Point’s commitment to its trademark as “North Carolina’s International City.” The initiative was the result of two years of meetings between leaders and more than 80 immigrants from 20 different countries.

The International Advisory Committee is a result of Building Integrated Communities (BIC), a collaboration between UNC-Chapel Hill’s Latino Migration Project, School of Government, the Department of City and Regional Planning, and municipal governments throughout North Carolina, funded by the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation. High Point is one of three NC municipalities currently participating in the program. As a result of this process, the City of High Point has developed a comprehensive plan designed to enhance immigrant leadership, civic engagement, language acquisition, cultural competence, and access to services. The International Advisory Committee is one of sixteen recommended initiatives that range from a Southwest Renewal Project that will provide gardening space for immigrant farmers and work space for immigrant women artisans and small business owners, to a biannual HiFest to celebrate the community’s cultural diversity.

At the same meeting, the Human Relations Commission also approved the foundation of an Interfaith Affairs Committee, which will convene faith-based community leaders to improve cultural and religious understanding. High Point is home to a diversity of immigrant and refugee communities that include people from Latin America, India, Pakistan, Burma, Nepal, Vietnam, Sudan, and Eastern Europe. 11.6% of High Point’s population was born outside of the United States in comparison to the North Carolina average of only 7.6% foreign-born.

The foundation of these committees is an important step in integrating immigrants and their perspectives into the fabric of the High Point community.

Read more about Building Integrated Communities at http://isa.unc.edu/.
Immigrant communities take part in civic education with mayor

The City of High Point and immigrant volunteers are hard at work promoting civic education and engagement.

The City of High Point and volunteers from immigrant communities are working to implement action items from recommendations provided by immigrant leaders during the Building Integrated Communities process.

One action item is to provide immigrant communities ongoing opportunities for civic education and civic leadership. A second action item is improve access to public transportation and safety by hosting public tours and educational sessions regarding city services.

City agencies are already providing training and learning opportunities for immigrant communities: Over the past year, the High Point Human Relations Commission has invited delegations of Vietnamese and Nepalese immigrants to meet with departments of transportation, fire, police, public works, customer service, library, and the mayor’s & city manager’s offices.

The meetings have been well-attended. In October 2011, 25 Vietnamese immigrants took part in a city hall tour, where they learned about local government and met with the Mayor in the council chambers.

These meetings also provide opportunities for city personnel to learn about their increasingly international community. The city agencies and the Human Relations Commission plan to continue hosting community groups to build relationships and promote immigrant civic engagement.

High Point Mayor Rebecca Smothers met with a delegation of Vietnamese residents in October of 2011 and participated in BIC stakeholder summit meetings in February of 2012.

I sit here and I am awed by the diversity that has come in this room and what a challenge it is to all of us to build a city together ... Mayor Smothers

High Point Fire Department and other city agencies hosted a delegation of Vietnamese residents in October of 2011 to build relationships and improve access to safety services.
Greenville entered the Building Integrated Communities program in May 2011 with the hopes of creating “an inclusive community where trust, acceptance, fairness, and equity are community norms.” Since then, the program has made great strides in creating innovative strategies to improve understanding between long-term residents and new immigrants. With guidance from BIC staff from UNC Chapel Hill, the City of Greenville and the Human Relations Council convened 5 stakeholder meetings in the past year involving former Mayor Pat Dunn and Mayor Pro-tem Rose Glover, members of the City Council and Human Relations Council, and leaders from the immigrant community, including a representative from the organization AMEXCAN. Also present were representatives from Pitt Community College, ECU, area religious and non-profit institutions, the Greenville City Council, the City of Greenville Government, and the Deputy Police Chief. Such a wide variety of stakeholders has brought many unique and insightful perspectives to the project.

Overall, stakeholders have identified three main areas in need of improvement for immigrant communities: 1) access to services and information 2) transportation and 3) the need to open lines of communication. With these issues in mind, Building Integrated Communities participants have created an ambitious action plan for the city of Greenville. The first goal is to make information about city services and events more available through public libraries, community festivals, resource fairs, Spanish radio stations, faith-based organizations, and local newspapers. The next goal is to provide bilingual information and build awareness about the City’s transit system in immigrant communities. The final goal, to provide immigrants with more leadership opportunities in local government as well as learn about rights and responsibilities, will be addressed with initiatives such as a One-Stop Information Center, a Community Ambassador program and monthly “Get to Know Your Neighbor” newspaper articles about immigrants and their contributions to the community.

In the short-term, Greenville’s Building Integrated Communities team hopes to establish an Immigrant Advisory Board as a sub-committee of the Greenville Human Relations Commission.
Building Integrated Communities receives Welcoming America grant

Funds will support demographic research in Durham

This summer, the Latino Migration Project received funding from the national organization Welcoming America to extend Building Integrated Communities’ current geographical focus from High Point and Greenville to the City of Durham.

The $10,000 grant will cover the project’s initial research phase, expected to conclude at the end of October, 2012. Research will consist of 1) assessing the social, economic, and political factors affecting immigration in Durham, as well as receptivity towards immigrants among key leaders and institutions in Durham, 2) researching the demographic profile of foreign-born residents of the city of Durham, 3) establishing a baseline knowledge of community resources for immigrant integration in the City of Durham, and finally, 4) gauging community needs for immigrant integration.

Welcoming America is a national, grassroots-driven collaborative that works to promote mutual respect and cooperation between foreign-born and U.S.-born Americans. Its local affiliate, Uniting NC, is a non-partisan non-profit organization that shares a similar mission to promote understanding, on a human level, of demographic changes transforming the state of North Carolina.

Sneak preview: BIC research staff at UNC-Chapel Hill are mapping out immigrant neighborhoods in Durham
In May 2012, the Immigration/Human Rights Policy (IHRP) Clinic at UNC Chapel Hill released its briefing book, *A Legal Advocacy Guide to Building Integrated Communities in North Carolina*. The briefing book consists of both legal analyses and applied legal policy proposals which are intended to serve as resources for community integration efforts.

Part One of this guide, entitled "Making the Legal Argument for Integrated Communities: Immigrants in North Carolina," provides a legal foundation for community immigrant integration efforts which is tailored to North Carolina municipalities, and explores what municipalities in North Carolina must, can, and should do to facilitate community integration.

Parts Two and Three apply the legal concepts explored in Part One in the context of two discrete community integration efforts in which IHRP Clinic took part. Part Two, "Community Integration and Day Laborers in North Carolina," chronicles the challenges faced by day laborers in the Chapel Hill and Carrboro communities, and provides comprehensive policy and legal analysis of potential solutions to these problems. Part Three, "Local Law Enforcement: A Vital Part of Community Integration," analyzes the complex relationship between immigrants and local law enforcement, including examining how local law enforcement should assist immigrant victims of domestic violence and how local police departments may be approached by the IHRP Clinic to discuss community policing policies.

It is the intent of IHRP Clinic to engage in these policy projects to help further the abstract goals of the Building Integrated Communities Project, and so that these discrete projects can serve as models in their own right, demonstrating proactive efforts which may be taken on behalf of immigrants and inspiring future efforts by the IHRC and other groups. The IHRP Clinic is continuing to work on these issues, and currently is engaged in a collaborative project regarding wage theft in North Carolina with the NC Justice Center.

The report is lengthy and is posted online as a whole and in parts so that people may review those sections most relevant to their work and interests. It is located at [http://www.law.unc.edu/academics/clinic/ihrp/default.aspx](http://www.law.unc.edu/academics/clinic/ihrp/default.aspx)

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Community planning tools help leaders launch their own integration initiatives

During the fall of 2012, Building Integrated Communities will be releasing online tools to help communities launch their own immigrant integration planning processes. These tools have the benefit of being “road-tested” by local governments and immigrant leaders in municipalities across North Carolina involved in the BIC process since 2010. These resources aim to assist communities in structuring conversations, creating practical plans for supporting immigrants and refugees, and designing evaluation measures to determine the efficacy of strategies once they are implemented.

Current research on immigrant incorporation highlights the importance of the social, political and historical contexts of receiving communities as factors influencing integration. Indeed, BIC participants gained extensive experience creating strategies that make sense for their specific communities, adapting best practices from other parts of the country to North Carolina contexts. These strategies are particularly relevant to new immigrant destination regions in the Southeastern United States facing the effects of the recession and record deportation levels. As a result, the online resources will meet a critical need of giving communities the tools to address their own needs and create their own roadmaps.

The Online tools consist of a Blueprint that describes the Building Integrated Communities process, a Guide to Getting Started, Community Planning Worksheets, Best Practices PowerPoint presentations, and a Guide to Evaluating Immigrant Integration Programs. The Community Planning Worksheets cover different community development themes and include information on successful programs from other communities, a discussion of what made them successful, and questions to guide users through adapting programs to meet the needs and unique conditions of their own community. The worksheet themes are Sports community, Civic Leadership, Cultural Competence, Community Activation, Language Access, and Access to Services.

Because Building Integrated Communities is a dynamic, ongoing project, we will be releasing materials as they become available and updating content as appropriate. Online tools are available on the Latino Migration Project website at http://isa.unc.edu/programs-activities/lmp/building-integrated-communities/

The Latino Migration Project
The Latino Migration Project provides research and educational expertise on Latin American immigration and integration issues in North Carolina. Established in 2006, The Latino Migration Project is a collaborative program of the Institute for the Study of the Americas and the Center for Global Initiatives at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
http://isa.unc.edu/programs-activities/lmp/