

The Greater Kansas City Welcoming Plan

We want Greater Kansas City to be a welcoming and inclusive place for all. We recognize that our greatest asset is our people – and that no matter what your background, or where you are from, Greater Kansas City is stronger when we all have the opportunity to contribute and succeed. The economic and social benefits of being a welcoming community are clear, and it's that spirit that will keep Greater Kansas City a healthy and vibrant community for all.

Through the development of a welcoming plan, we have an opportunity to proactively address our changing community by bringing together key leaders in our region to learn more about today's demographics, consider the implications of those changes to Greater Kansas City, identify priorities for action, and to work together to develop new policies and programs that can benefit all.

Following are 6 framework areas with goals, recommendations, and strategies for creating a welcoming Greater Kansas City.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Greater Kansas City works to empower immigrants, refugees, and underrepresented populations with education and access to civic life.

- Local community organizations and institutions are accessible and processes for engagement are clear.
 - Create and implement an immigrant and refugee education program that includes information on the responsibilities of local government.
 - Create and implement a civil servant workshop series that provides education and resources to work with diverse populations, including immigrants and refugees. Topics covered would include anti-racism, immigration systems, and/or other equity and inclusion topics.
 - Review requirements to serve on local boards and commissions to ensure they are accessible to immigrants, refugees, and other underrepresented community members.
- Neighborhood groups and associations increase inclusion, equity and belonging.
 - Review and adjust civic education programs to intentionally reach newcomers and ensure programming is accessible.
 - Communicate neighborhood groups/associations with immigrant/refugee neighbors.
- Naturalization programs are supported and accessible.
 - Increase access to citizenship opportunities.
 - Promote and celebrate naturalization ceremonies at public locations (e.g. Kauffman Stadium, Royals Fan Fest).

CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

Greater Kansas City will be a place that purposefully creates, supports, and promotes opportunities for newcomers and longer-term residents to build relationships.

- A “connected communities group/program,” composed of members from diverse sectors, will develop and host new, smaller-scale culturally enriching events in spaces that will reach and engage a diverse group of individuals and communities.
 - Develop a steering committee from diverse sectors to regularly plan, host, and promote events.
 - Use partnerships and personal relationships to engage diverse groups and proactively market events on diverse platforms.
 - Host events to invite people into spaces they are not familiar with (e.g. places of worship will host an open house once a quarter for other community members to tour and learn about different faiths).
 - Host events to invite diverse people/cultures/ideas into traditional spaces (e.g. traveling exhibits, speakers, performances, etc.).

- Greater Kansas City will promote immigrant, refugee, and asylee owned restaurants.
 - Hold a Restaurant Week tailored to international communities. Identify restaurants, sponsors, and organizers for that Restaurant Week.
 - Create a map or app for immigrant-owned or ethnic focused and locally-owned restaurants, have broadcasted/shared on Open Belly Podcast, The Pitch, Visit KC, other online platforms, local bloggers, KCUR, Made in KC, and the digital displays by the streetcar.
 - Partner with a tour group(s) and incorporate immigrant-owned restaurants and community spaces into the tour and end by eating at a refugee or immigrant-owned restaurant. (i.e. Reaching out to Faith-Based tours, Airbnb tours, tour groups in KC.)

- Greater Kansas City is promoted as a welcoming and inclusive community.
 - Promote and recognize existing large-scale cultural and faith-based events throughout the Greater Kansas City area.
 - Promote cultural and faith-based events through physical and online locations, including the Digital Display Boards at each KC streetcar stop, in community centers, on the Visit KC website.
 - Highlight welcoming stories through various media outlets.
 - Participate in Welcoming Week and other welcoming activities.
 - Sign a welcoming proclamation or resolution.

- Build trust with the larger community and between communities.
 - Address the perception that the advancement of one minority group means the loss for others – together we thrive.

- Identify issues of common interest and concern for diverse community members to work on together.

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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

All residents of Greater Kansas City are able to fully participate in the economy, and economic development systems are prepared to leverage new and existing talent.

- Workforce systems and initiatives support and sustain career pathways for newcomers.
 - Engage local employers, chambers of commerce, and other employer networks in immigrant inclusion work.
 - Support access to career and credentialing opportunities.
 - Support initiatives and programs for immigrants' access licensure and re-enter professions.

- An entrepreneurial ecosystem supports new business development and growth.
 - Increase contract opportunities for women and minority-owned businesses.
 - Promote innovative programs for minority entrepreneurs
 - Market existing assets and entrepreneurial resources to increase new business success.
 - Work with Small Business Development Centers in the metro area to ensure that their services meet the needs of immigrants and minority entrepreneurs eligible to take advantage of federal programs.
 - Increase entrepreneurship among immigrants by offering multi-lingual training, microfinance and business incubation support services (e.g. Hispanic Economic Development Council).
 - Identify barriers for immigrant entrepreneurs and create solutions through collaborations.

Regional economic development collaboration expands and sustains the impact of immigrant inclusion and economic development.

- Regional economic development plans and efforts include immigrant inclusion.
 - Promote the effort through existing conveners such as Workforce Partnership, RWIN, regional chambers, national associations, etc.

Greater Kansas City creates a welcoming and inclusive workplace environment.

- Employers and immigrants work together to improve workplace conditions and culture.
 - Provide education to immigrants on workers' rights and workplace safety.
 - Address discriminatory practices in hiring and employment.
 - Support businesses regarding worker classification (i.e. credentialing and visa type, including international students)
 - Businesses offer racial equity, inclusion and belonging training to employees.
 - Businesses incorporate a racial justice lens in hiring and retention policies and practices.
 - Convene HR managers with a history of hiring immigrants to support small and mid-sized businesses with their hiring processes.

EDUCATION

The Greater Kansas City Region commits to creating a pipeline to prepare and support students, regardless of immigration status, for the workforce through all areas of education.

- Education opportunities are expanded for young adults with immigration status challenges or who have aged out of secondary education.
 - Create twilight schools in community locations.
 - Provide GED/HiSet and trade/vocational classes at no cost.
 - Provide paid internships for work experience.
 - Create programs similar to the Hispanic Development Fund for other population groups.
 - Create KCPS (and other schools within the region) certification program for bilingual and multilingual students.

The Greater Kansas City Region commits to immigrant integration and economic mobility through education.

- Educational opportunities are available at multiple levels for working adults.
 - Prepare students of all ages to enter certification programs through trade/vocational classes by offering them at various times and locations.
 - Hold on-site English learning classes at employment locations.
 - Duplicate the RISE program at the Kansas City Public Library
 - Inventory communities regarding resources and needs.

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EQUITABLE ACCESS

Greater Kansas City provides safe spaces that are easily identifiable to immigrant, refugee, and other underrepresented community members to facilitate access to essential services, including healthcare, transportation, housing, legal assistance, places of worship, and government services.

- Processes for safe space designation are developed.
 - Immigrants and refugees will be involved in the process to identify barriers and address solutions.
 - Identify organizations that represent the range of necessary access points.
 - Identify toolkit.
 - Create a checklist of criteria for safe space designation.
 - Identify a committee to administer safe space designation.
 - Provide education to community members to increase awareness of designation.
- Policies are in place that protect immigrants and refugees from fraudulent services and scams.
 - Community-based organizations provide information about fraudulent services and scams.
 - Community-based organizations provide referrals and information to reputable service providers.

Organizations in Greater Kansas City make a commitment to racial equity, inclusion and belonging.

- Organizations are supported in their efforts and commitment to racial equity, inclusion and belonging.
 - Provide training to organizations.
 - Create a resource hub for organizations to access training materials/information, activities, and resources for continued education.
 - Use a racial justice lens to review how community issues are particularly impacting immigrants in GKC community.
 - Invite community leaders from immigrant community groups to biannually discuss how community issues impact them and which groups they can get involved in.

Appropriate language access is provided throughout Greater Kansas City, including by all local governments.

- A language access program is in place to ensure language access across government agencies with the goal to expanding equitable access to programs, services, and activities.
 - Audit government services for language access compliance.
 - Provide training to government employees on how to access and work with interpreters and translation services.
 - Include emergency services and emergency response plans in any language access programs.

GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP AND SAFE COMMUNITIES

Greater Kansas City will receive continuous support and active participation from the government to welcome new Americans.

- The Chamber and Mid America Regional Council actively engage local governments to adopt the welcoming plan.
- Greater Kansas City government leaders are encouraged to actively participate in welcoming new Americans.
 - Invite government members to attend events held by community members and partners to show support/celebrate.
 - Encourage government leaders to make public statements about the importance and strength of being a welcoming and inclusive community.
 - Ensure information about local resources, government services, English classes, and naturalization is available online and in print in multiple languages.

Greater Kansas City creates a welcoming and inclusive climate attractive to diverse current and future residents.

- Local governments take steps to become more welcoming to immigrants to ensure that all residents, particularly those new to the US and to Greater Kansas City, feel welcome and respected.
 - Review local government policies to ensure they do not exclude or disenfranchise immigrants.
 - Identify best practices for local governments to adopt, including policies, to ensure all residents feel welcome.
 - Promote the art and culture of immigrants and encourage their greater participation in the community's and local government's arts and culture programs and services.

Local governments in Greater Kansas City adopt policies that promote safe and welcoming communities.

- Local law and code enforcement agencies review and adopt policies to strengthen relationships and promote regular communication.
 - Partner with community-based organizations to provide Know Your Rights education sessions.
- Local law and code enforcement agencies receive regular training on working with diverse populations.
 - Include information on language access.
 - Include information on working with immigrant and refugee community members.
- Local government services are available to all residents, regardless of immigration status.
 - Adopt ordinances and/or review policies to ensure immigrants are able to access.
 - Provide clear directive and guidance to ensure citizenship status is not shared.

Greater Kansas City is prepared for natural disasters and mass emergencies with strategies to support resilience in diverse communities.

- Local governments have inclusive emergency management plans.
 - Ensure emergency alerts are available in multiple languages.
 - Include immigrants and refugees in the emergency planning process.

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