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Aurora's Office of International and Immigrant Affairs Achieving Integration, Economic Development Successes

AURORA, Colo. – In its first three years, the city of Aurora's Office of International and Immigrant Affairs has helped thousands of immigrants and refugees in the city and successfully raised Aurora's profile as a hub for international business and investment. That's the assessment of a new report, "Building Aurora's Future Together," focusing on the city's efforts to serve a growing, diverse immigrant community and the largest population of refugees in Colorado.

Since its inception in 2015, the office has accomplished many of the goals set out in its strategic plan, through successful projects such as the negotiation of the city's first consulate, the creation of civic engagement programs for newly arrived immigrants and refugees, and the development of business grant and loan programs to promote entrepreneurship.

"Aurora is becoming a destination city for the immigrant and refugee community, and this is in no small part due to the vibrant, rich and diverse culture that international residents bring to our community," said **Ricardo Gambetta, head of Aurora's Office of International and Immigrant Affairs**. "As the work of this office grows, we have helped support the successful transition of thousands of immigrant and refugee families into our community. We have provided them with the necessary tools to bolster our local economy through the creation of small businesses and employment in vital fields including medicine, research and academia."

Among the successes highlighted in the "Building Aurora's Future Together" report, which is available at AuroraGov.org/international:

- The Office of International and Immigrant Affairs led extensive negotiations with the government of El Salvador to select Aurora as the location for the **Salvadoran Consulate** in Colorado in 2017. This was in part due to the city's population as home to the highest percentage of ethnic Salvadorans in the state, as well as the work that was being undertaken to welcome immigrants to the city. This move has already generated economic opportunities for the city through discussions on partnerships in business and trade with the country.
- In 2017, the Office of International and Immigrant Affairs partnered with the Community Enterprise Development Service and Community College of Aurora to launch the **International Impact Fund**, a citywide initiative to promote small business among immigrants and refugees. This initiative provides seed money for

local entrepreneurs, which are additionally provided support during a year-long incubator pilot at CCA. To date, the International Impact Fund program has funded 38 startup businesses, employing nearly 100 Aurora residents.

- To aide immigrants and refugees in their transition to Aurora, the city developed and implemented the **Natural Helpers** program and is one of only four locations in the country that is currently participating. This program empowers immigrants who are already community leaders to assist new arrivals in accessing vital services such as health insurance, city resources, and language classes and assistance. So far, Aurora Natural Helpers has trained 75 people, representing 27 different immigrant and refugee communities across Aurora.
- The office worked with the Aurora Police Department to create the **Global Teen Police Academy**. This program takes place every summer and helps build relationships between law enforcement and the international communities that are vital to the city's security. The program allows students the opportunity to begin pursuing careers in law enforcement by exposing them to the responsibilities of the city's police force.

As Aurora's Office of International and Immigrant Affairs continues its work, it is building additional international relationships toward greater business and economic development for the city, as well as additional services for immigrant and refugee residents.

Manuel Castillo, El Salvador's new Consul General in Colorado, said that since El Salvador chose Aurora, "The integration of our community into the city and the willingness of the city to work with our community have allowed us to have a very good relationship."

"The Team at the Village Exchange Center is deeply grateful to the city of Aurora and, specifically, the Office of International and Immigrant Affairs for entrusting us to implement and expand the Natural Helpers Program. Ricardo Gambetta and his team have an aligned vision for Aurora of inclusion and have become invaluable partners and a source of support for our team in this shared mission," said **Amanda Blaurock, executive director of the Village Exchange Center**.

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About the city of Aurora Office of International and Immigrant Affairs

The Office of International and Immigrant Affairs facilitates the integration of immigrants and refugees into Aurora's civic, economic and cultural life. As part of this effort, the office oversees the coordination of the Aurora Immigrant and Refugee Commission, Aurora International Roundtable, Aurora Global Fest and the Aurora International Cabinet. In addition, it undertakes international efforts focused on creating strategic global partnerships. Learn more at AuroraGov.org/international, on [Facebook](#), or on [Twitter](#).