



BUILDING AURORA'S FUTURE TOGETHER

A Summary of Aurora's Work with the International Community from 2015-2017



Office of International and Immigrant Affairs

CITY OF AURORA • 15151 E. Alameda Parkway, Aurora, Colorado

WHAT WE DO

The Office of International and Immigrant Affairs was created to facilitate the successful integration of immigrants and refugees into Aurora's civic, economic and cultural life. We oversee the development and implementation of a strategic citywide plan regarding policy, programs and initiatives toward the local immigrant and refugee populations. We oversee the coordination of the Aurora Immigrant and Refugee Commission, Aurora International Roundtable, Aurora Global Fest and the Aurora International Cabinet. In addition, we lead international efforts focused in the establishment of strategic global partnerships, manage official protocol activities and events, and serve as a liaison to the international community.

LEADERSHIP TEAM

Roberto Venegas
ASSISTANT CITY MANAGER
303.739.7007

Ricardo Gambetta
MANAGER OF THE OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL AND IMMIGRANT AFFAIRS
303.739.7115

Minsoo Song
ADMINISTRATIVE SPECIALIST
303.739.7521

international@auroragov.org
facebook @internationalaurora





LETTER FROM THE MAYOR AND THE CITY MANAGER

Aurora is Colorado's most international city and one of the most diverse cities in the country. Approximately 70,000 people in Aurora, or about one out of every five of our residents, was born outside the United States. We come from 140 different nations, and our kids speak more than 150 different languages in our public schools.

Aurora's international community is one of the city's greatest assets. Our immigrants and refugees help us build relationships with economies abroad, and they are key to the city's growing potential to draw in entrepreneurs, investment, business and trade opportunities from across the globe.

Aurora's immigrants and refugees are also helping to build a stronger and more secure Aurora from within. They are starting businesses, supporting law enforcement and contributing to the civic fabric of our community. The unique traditions, celebrations and perspectives they bring to our city amplify our whole community's understanding of the world around us, and engrain innovative thought throughout city institutions, businesses and daily life.

Seeing the great potential in Aurora's international community, the Aurora City Council approved a three-year Comprehensive Strategic Plan in 2015. The plan established a strategy for how the city of Aurora was going to raise its international profile and was going to provide immigrants and refugees the tools they needed to fully integrate into the city.

Since the Comprehensive Strategic Plan was approved, the Office of International and Immigrant Affairs (OIIA) has made immense progress on the plan's implementation, initiating innovative and nationally recognized programs to provide immigrants and refugees the tools they need to address linguistic and cultural barriers, partner with law enforcement agencies, reach for opportunity and learn about city resources.

Our diversity and our international community is part of what makes Aurora strong, and will be part of what defines Aurora's future. The immigrants and refugees of today will become tomorrow's citizens, business owners, law enforcement officers and community leaders.

Through the programs outlined in this report, OIIA is working to make sure we all have the tools we need to work together to build the brightest possible future for our city.



Steve Hogan
MAYOR OF AURORA



Jason Batchelor
INTERIM CITY MANAGER

Introduction and Overview

After extensive consultation with our international community, the city of Aurora approved a 2015-2018 Comprehensive Strategic Plan. The plan created a structure and strategy to: (1) enable the city to support the integration of immigrants and refugees into our community; and (2) raise Aurora’s profile as a hub for international business and investment.

Since the Aurora City Council adopted the Comprehensive Strategic Plan in 2015, the Office of International and Immigrant Affairs (OIIA) has made progress on most of the plan’s goals and objectives, initiating major steps to expand Aurora’s presence on the international stage, encouraging the start-up of immigrant- and refugee-owned small business, supporting partnerships to promote public safety between the international community and Aurora Police Department, and expanding opportunities for immigrants and refugees to learn English and gain citizenship.

OIIA has also successfully built an infrastructure to support implementation of the goals and objectives outlined in the Comprehensive Strategic Plan. The Office of International and Immigrant Affairs has become a center for all things international in the city of Aurora, providing support, consultation and community connections for other city departments, community partners and international delegations. Aurora’s immigrants and refugees now have a permanent voice in city government through the formalized Aurora Immigrant and Refugee Commission. In addition, OIIA has worked with other city departments to establish an International Cabinet, where the city can work together to more efficiently serve.

OIIA’s progress on Aurora’s Comprehensive Strategic Plan would not have been possible if not for its strategic partnerships with community organizations and other city departments. Over the last two years, OIIA has greatly expanded its reach in Aurora by using its resources to serve as the catalyst for partner initiation and expansion of programs for immigrants and refugees.

The following report summarizes the work OIIA has done over the last two years, both to unlock the economic potential of an international Aurora, and to give our immigrants and refugees the tools they need to help us build Aurora’s future together.

Unlocking the Economic Potential of an International Aurora

Over the last two years, Aurora has proved that its international community draws international trade, business and attention into our city.

In May 2017, El Salvador officially opened its consulate in Aurora. The El Salvador Consulate represents the first diplomatic representation in our city, and the first consulate in Colorado to be located outside of Denver.

Alongside strong community support from SARCO, an organization of Salvadorans in Colorado, OIIA played a key role in making the case that Aurora was the best place for El Salvador to locate the new consulate. OIIA led outreach efforts to the Salvadoran government and helped to facilitate negotiations to bring the new consulate to our city. OIIA ran the organization of a city delegation trip to El Salvador, and facilitated El Salvador's visit to see Aurora.

OIIA's programs to support the integration of immigrants and refugees were an important factor in El Salvador's decision to locate its new consulate in Aurora. As Manuel Castillo, El Salvador's new Consul General in Colorado, said when 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 new consulate is already opening up economic opportunities for our city. This year, OIIA worked with the Consulate of El Salvador and others to host a business luncheon at Global Fest to explore business opportunities between El Salvador, Aurora, Colorado and the Western United States. The luncheon was attended by 120 business leaders, city officials and representatives of the Salvadoran government.

Since 2015, OIIA has also worked with its partners to spread the word about the unlimited possibilities for international collaboration rooted in Aurora's dynamic and diverse population.

Over the last two years, OIIA has successfully pushed for Aurora's membership in Strong Cities International Network and International Visitor Program with the U.S. State Department. Membership to the International Visitor Program means that Aurora is now a regular stop for every international delegation the State Department brings to Colorado. OIIA led Aurora's efforts to host State Department's international delegations from Europe, Africa, Asia and Latin America, and represented Aurora at Strong Cities International Network events in the United Kingdom, Canada and Turkey.

OIIA's ongoing efforts combined with Aurora's vibrant community of refugees and immigrants will continue to draw international interest and investment into Aurora in the coming years.



Tools for Immigrants and Refugees, A Strong Future for Aurora

For the last two years, OIIA has worked to build an infrastructure of tools to help immigrants and refugees integrate into the community they have come to call home. These tools, combined with OIIA's strategic partnerships, have created new pathways for our international community to contribute to Aurora's government, economy, security and cultural diversity.

OIIA's work is paying off. OIIA's programs have successfully served thousands of Aurora's immigrants and refugees, and, earlier this year, the National League of Cities recognized OIIA's integration program as one of the best in the United States.

Tools to Learn English and Engage in Our Democracy

Learning the English language is essential to successful integration into the United States. Some level of English fluency is often a requirement for obtaining employment, participating in our education system, starting a business, or even simply communicating with law enforcement and neighbors. Many members of the immigrant and refugee population also come here with dreams of becoming citizens, and giving back through engaging in our political process and democratic society.

Through partnerships with community and faith-based organizations, OIIA has helped support the expansion of English language and civics classes to immigrant and refugee groups throughout the city. For the first time, English language and civics classes are being offered to hundreds of Aurora's immigrants and refugees on evenings and weekends, and through churches and other organizations they already know.

In addition to the civics classes offered through our community partners, OIIA worked with the Aurora Public Library system and its federal partners to provide "Citizenship Corners" in every Aurora Public Library. Citizenship Corners combine all of the information relevant to how to apply for U.S. citizenship in one central and easily accessible place.

Every year, members of Aurora's international community complete the hard work it takes to become U.S. citizens. OIIA helps celebrate citizenship by working with its federal partners to host naturalization ceremonies and celebrations with new citizens at the Aurora Municipal Center twice a year.

Eleven members of the Aurora's international community have taken their commitment to engage in our city's government to the next level through their service on Aurora's Immigrant and Refugee Commission. The members are not only serving as a voice for their community, but also giving back to our city through their participation and unique perspectives.



Partnering with Leaders in the Immigrant and Refugee Community

Aurora is one of only four cities in the country to offer the Natural Helpers Program. The Natural Helpers Program provides immigrants and refugees who are already leaders in their communities with the tools they need to be a more effective and complete resource. Each Natural Helper is invited to attend a training that includes information like how to access city resources, how to register for health insurance, and whom to contact as trusted service providers. Through the program, Natural Helpers are trained to serve as a key connection between their communities and the resources available to help immigrants and refugees thrive in Aurora.

Since it started, the Natural Helpers Program has trained more than 60 Natural Helpers from 24 different immigrant and refugee communities in Aurora. Those Natural Helpers who have completed the training are providing volunteer support to countless others.

The Natural Helpers Program is a good example of OIIA's approach to forming partnerships to extend the reach of city resources. OIIA helped design and start the Natural Helpers Program, and used its networks and connections to engage the first round of volunteers. Aurora's Village Exchange Center (VEC) now implements most of the day-to-day elements of the program, while OIIA continues to provide administrative support and connections where needed.

The VEC hosts two Natural Helpers Programs every year and provides the Natural Helpers support and connections with services every day. In September 2017, the Natural Helpers Program won a grant from the Colorado Health Foundation. The grant will help the VEC continue the Natural Helpers Program in 2018.

The Denver Regional Council of Governments awarded Aurora the 2017 Metro Vision Award to recognize the exceptional role the Natural Helpers Program is serving in our city.

Natural Helper Profile: Sabe Kemer

Sabe Kemer came to the United States from Ethiopia in 2004. She attended high school in Minnesota and she graduated from Metro State in Denver. Sabe speaks three languages, including English, Swahili, and Oromo. She is a Medical Interpreter and is currently working on starting her own small business to support home healthcare for seniors and people with disabilities.

Sabe was recently appointed to serve on Aurora's Immigrant and Refugee Commission and has volunteered with Aurora Youth Options. Sabe has been helping Colorado's new residents navigate their new communities for several years. She was one of the original participants in the Natural Helpers Program, and she uses the resources provided to her through the program to help amplify the help she can provide to members of her community. As Sabe says, "I was helping anyway, but the resources enhanced the role I could play and made me more effective."



Working Together to Keep Aurora the Safest Large City in Colorado

OIIA and Aurora’s international community have helped to support the Aurora Police Department’s efforts to sustain Aurora’s ranking as the safest large city in Colorado.

OIIA works with the Aurora Police Department to design and host a Global Teen Police Academy every summer. The academy includes education on the structure of the police force, how to become a police officer, and community policing. The Global Teen Police Academy was created to help build the trust and relationships between law enforcement and the international community essential to city security. The academy also promotes careers in law enforcement among immigrants and refugees, and serves as professional development for the officers engaged in the academy.

Global Teen Police Academy Profile: Jailyn Rivera

Jailyn’s mother and father immigrated to the United States from Mexico and El Salvador before she was born. Now 15 years-old, she is a sophomore at Vista Peak Preparatory School in Aurora.

Jailyn has wanted to work in law enforcement since she was little. She not only wants to help stop crime from occurring, she wants to help others in the immigrant and refugee community communicate and work with law enforcement. Her goal is to obtain a criminal justice degree from Metro State, and then to join the Navy. Eventually, she would like to serve on the city’s police force and maybe serve with the FBI.

Jailyn is a recent graduate of Aurora’s Global Police Academy, where she saw how the Aurora Police Department really works. She loved her experience, not only for what she learned about the APD, but also for the relationships she built through the process. As she describes it, “The Police Academy was helpful. It helped us understand how and why the police do their jobs, and that we shouldn’t be afraid of them.”

In 2016, the Strong Cities Network, an international organization focused on strategies to increase security through engagement with the international community, recognized the Global Teen Police Academy as a best practice.

OIIA has also provided technical support to the Aurora Police Department in law enforcement’s other efforts to enhance security through engagement with Aurora’s international community. The APD has made many efforts to partner with the international community, including encouraging members of the Police Department to attend community meetings, creating a position for a Muslim Liaison Officer, and holding regular meetings between the international community and leadership from city law enforcement. The Aurora Chief of Police has also asked citizens from the international community to serve on his New Citizen Advisory Board, a board that is consulted to periodically weigh in on strategic planning and personnel practices.



OIIA's relationship with Aurora's international community has enabled the office to provide the APD strategic advice on the Police Department's efforts to engage. OIIA has supplied the APD with connections to members of the international community interested in helping support APD efforts, and to leaders in the community who could help facilitate community engagement.

The partnership between APD, OIIA and Aurora's international community has resulted in a safer Aurora for everyone.

Supporting the Next Generation of Business Owners

In 2017, OIIA partnered with Community Enterprise Development Services (CEDS) and the Community College of Aurora to create a combined entrepreneurship training and capital investment program for immigrants and refugees. Through this program, Aurora's international entrepreneurs can qualify for seed capital from CEDS through the Aurora International Impact Fund (AIIF) after completing a year-long incubator program housed at the Community College of Aurora. Eight entrepreneurs recently completed the program pilot and are currently eligible for seed capital to start their new businesses. In the end, AIIF is slated to provide 38 loans to 19 entrepreneurs for a total minimum injection of \$95,000 investment capital.

The CEDS micro-loan model has already proved successful. In Aurora, CEDS has provided small startup loans to 38 new businesses started by members of the immigrant and refugee community. Those businesses now employ 92 people in the city.

The new partnership between OIIA, CEDS and the Community College of Aurora will serve to amplify the ability of international entrepreneurs in Aurora to make the best use of the seed capital from CEDS and grow their businesses.

Tools to Support Health and Wellness

In 2017, OIIA partnered with the Tri-County Health Department, CREA Results and others to spark the Health Powers Life campaign. The Health Powers Life campaign used the city's existing health care infrastructure and organizations to educate the immigrant and refugee population on the benefits of preventative health care. The campaign emphasized the role personal behavior and responsibility play in healthy families, while promoting information about basic steps to a healthy lifestyle, access to healthcare and the difference between urgent and regular health care.

In six months, the Health Powers Life campaign attended 44 total events, administering health screenings to almost 1,300 people through the mobile unit and distributing information about preventative health care to more than 4,000 people.

With a small grant from OIIA, the partners supporting the Health Powers Life campaign provided life-sustaining information and blood tests to thousands of immigrants and refugees throughout the city.



AURORA INTERNATIONAL IMPACT FUND

Collaboration between
CCA, CEDS, and OIIA



CEDS
COMMUNITY ENTERPRISE
DEVELOPMENT SERVICES



Office of
International and
Immigrant Affairs



Building Relationships Through Community, Cultural Exchange, and Sports

Joining Together to Celebrate Our Diversity

Every year, OIIA works with the International Roundtable to host Global Fest, a day to celebrate the unique contributions the people and the cultures that make up Aurora's international community make to our city. The celebration is also a way for everyone in Aurora to enjoy and experience food, art and music from around the world. Global Fest is a landmark event for the city. This year more than 12,000 people attended the celebration, breaking all previous attendance records.

Global Fest serves as an opportunity for the different communities in Aurora to connect with each other. Every year Aurora's International Cabinet uses Global Fest as a chance to provide attendees with information about the International Cabinet and city services.

Participation in Sports Means Stronger Communities

One of the goals outlined in the 2015-2018 Comprehensive Strategic Plan was to utilize sporting activities to bring newcomers and Aurora residents together, create a better understanding across ethnic and linguistic boundaries, promote and develop social skills among new residents, and promote social cohesion in the Aurora community. Since 2015, OIIA has supported this goal by working with members of the international community to plan and sponsor sporting events and tournaments, including several soccer and volleyball tournaments with the Colombian, Bhutanese and Korean communities.







303.739.7521 • International@AuroraGov.org