THE CENTER FOR STATE AND LOCAL FINANCE

Welcoming Cities: Immigration Policy at the Local Government Level

Xi Huang
Cathy Yang Liu

Georgia State University | ANDREW YOUNG SCHOOL
CENTER FOR STATE & LOCAL FINANCE

Table of Contents

Introduction

The rapid growth of the immigrant population in the United States and associated socioeconomic impacts has spurred much academic and political discussion on immigration policies at both the national and local levels. At the federal level, in the early 2000s, growing immigrant populations raised concerns about increased burdens on the national social welfare and security systems, pushing national immigration policy toward relative stalemate. In contrast, state and local governments have become increasingly active in making and enforcing immigration policy in recent years. According to the National Conference of State Legislatures (2008), in 2007 alone, more than 1,000 bills and resolutions related to immigrants and immigration were introduced nationwide. Nearly 370 local governments have drafted or implemented immigration and immigrant-related policies, mostly since 2005 (Walker and Leitner 2011). While some of these cities have adopted restrictive policies to exclude undocumented immigrants, others have either proposed or established immigrant "sanctuary" ordinances that support the rights of undocumented residents (Walker and Leitner 2011). Prior studies have found that local demographic changes and political partisanship are important factors affecting whether a city adopts such policies (Walker and Leitner 2011; Lewis et al. 2013; Steil and Vasi 2014; Filomeno 2015).

A new wave of local government policies has emerged across cities that is aimed at improving immigrants' economic and social integration. This report examines the group of cities that joined the Welcoming America's Welcoming Cities initiative, a notable example of this new policy movement. Welcoming America is a national grassroots-driven cooperative that launched the Welcoming Cities and Counties initiative in 2013 to provide a venue for immigrant-welcoming communities to share resources and exchange best practices. We focus on cities in this report because they make up the majority of the program participants (only four out of 54 local participating governments are counties). We examine these cities in terms of their spatial and temporal patterns, as well as program areas. We then explore the city characteristics associated with participation in the Welcoming Cities initiative and discuss the rationales behind this new wave of local government immigration policy.

The data for this research are drawn from various sources. The primary data sets are the American Community Survey (ACS) 2008-12 combined sample (referred to as the 2010 sample) and the 2000 U.S. Census. These data sources enable us to calculate changes in city characteristics over time. Census places are the unit of analysis, and they mostly correspond to city, town, village and other municipal-level jurisdictions. We only include localities with consistent geographic boundaries between 2000 and 2010 using the Census geographic relationship crosswalk. We obtained city public finance data from the Census of Governments 2012. For the local political context, we draw data from the 2004 presidential election data set available from the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR; Schildkraut and Grosse 2014),[1] the 2011 International County/City Management Association (IMCA),[2] the

---

[1] As the presidential election data are only available at the county level, we cross-walked the original data onto the city-level sample based on the weighted population.

2011 National Center for Charitable Statistics sample, as well as each city's government website. Data for Welcoming America initiative participation are derived from the Welcoming America directory. Following previous studies in the literature (O'Neil 2011; Walker and Leitner 2011), we restrict our sample to cities of at least 10,000 people in 2010, for a final sample of 2,879 cities.

Background on Local Immigration Policies

Two trends have shaped the growing role of local governments in addressing immigration and immigrant-related issues: the devolution of immigration policy responsibilities to local levels and the movement of immigrants to new destinations and suburban neighborhoods (Ellis 2006; O'Neil 2011; Walker and Leitner 2011). The 1996 Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act, which produced section 287(g), and the Welfare Reform Act, devolved federal enforcement power and responsibilities over immigrant well-being to subnational jurisdictions (Ellis 2006). At the same time, the foreign-born population began to increasingly settle in places with short immigrant histories. Between 1990 and 2013, the number of immigrants more than doubled in 25 states that historically had relatively small immigrant populations (Migration Policy Institute 2015). Moreover, immigrants began to disperse geographically, moving from inner-city ethnic neighborhoods toward native-majority suburban neighborhoods (Massey 2008; Singer et al. 2008). By 2010, more immigrants lived in suburbs than in central cities (Wilson and Singer 2011). These new immigrant-receiving communities lacked the institutional infrastructure and historical experiences of traditional gateway cities. The rapid demographic change in these communities prompted municipal governments to respond to and act on immigrant issues.

Cities have enacted two broad types of local immigration policies and programs. On the one hand, many conservative cities with rapid immigrant growth have proposed and passed restrictive policies designed to exclude immigrants (Ramakrishnan and Wong 2010; Walker and Leitner 2011). These exclusionary policy measures include preventing employers from hiring unauthorized workers, cooperating with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to impose harsh immigration controls and policing, and implementing other practices that target immigrants such as requiring landlords to verify the immigrant status of tenants and regulations on the day-labor market. On the other hand, many cities have adopted inclusive policies aimed at integrating the new immigrant populations. These policies range from "sanctuary" ordinances that shield undocumented immigrants from being unduly interrogated to the establishment of day-labor centers that protect the rights of workers (Ramakrishnan and Wong 2010; O'Neil 2011; Walker and Leitner 2011).

The 2007 Great Recession slowed the rapid immigrant inflow to the country. The flows of both legal and unauthorized immigrants have since stabilized (Passel et al. 2014; Migration Policy Institute 2015). The Great Recession also brought increasing attention to regional competitiveness and long-term economic development (Christopherson et al. 2010). The majority of recent economic research shows that

---

[2] As with the election data, we cross-walked the original nonprofit data onto the city-level sample based on the weighted population because the data are only available at the county level.

immigrants, regardless of skill level, bring positive impacts to the receiving economy by contributing skills and ideas, and spurring innovation and productivity growth (Peri 2010; 2013). Meanwhile, empirical evidence indicates that previous anti-immigration measures have failed to produce the anticipated effects on local immigrant populations, employment or public safety (O'Neil 2011; Parrado 2012).

A new wave of local government responses to immigration has emerged within these contexts. Different from previous pro-immigrant policies that focused on the legal status and rights of immigrants, these new policies are mostly programs and strategies adopted by government entities in an effort to integrate immigrants both economically and socially. The Welcoming Cities initiative under the Welcoming America framework is a notable example. Welcoming America is a national grassroots-driven cooperative. In 2013, it launched the Welcoming Cities and Counties initiative to provide a venue for immigrant-welcoming cities to share resources and exchange best practices. All member cities are committed to adopting immigrant-welcoming values, developing and implementing strategies to promote immigrants' economic and social inclusion, and engaging local business, civic, religious and immigrant leaders in building a welcoming climate. In return, it provides member cities with technical assistance and capacity building (Welcoming America 2015).

The number of municipalities pursuing immigrant-integration policies has increased dramatically since 2013. As of July 2015, 50 cities from 31 different states have joined this initiative and labeled themselves as "welcoming cities." Before joining the initiative, some cities had engaged in prior immigrant-integration activities whereas others had not. Thus, program participation entails different levels of engagement and implementation for different cities. In welcoming cities that do not have specific strategies yet in place, a formal entity is created to jump-start the process of program development. In cities that had been pursuing welcoming strategies before joining the network, the mayor's office typically announces a formal commitment and a multi-stakeholder approach to undertake immigrant-integration efforts. (Welcoming America 2015).

Timeline and Geography of Welcoming Cities

Welcoming America launched the Welcoming Cities and Counties initiative in January 2013. Since its launch, the initiative has gradually gained momentum over time (Figure 1). As of July 2015, 50 cities from 31 different states have officially joined and labeled themselves as "welcoming cities" (Table 1).

Figure 1. Welcoming City Participation Timeline with Running Totals
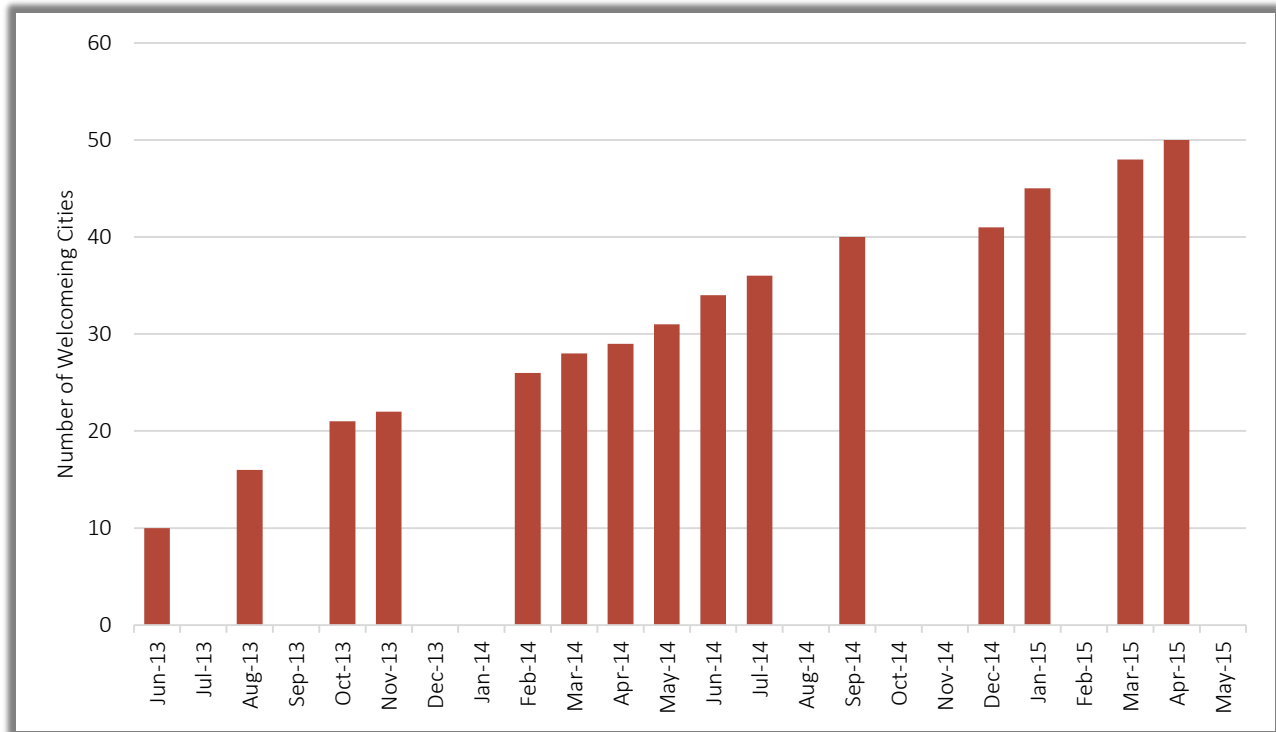
Source: Welcoming America documents

Table 1. List of Welcoming Cities and Date They Joined the Initiative (as of July 2015)

| WELCOMING CITIES	REGION	JOIN DATE	WELCOMING CITIES	REGION	JOIN DATE
Anchorage, AK	West	Sep-14	Hartford, CT	Northeast	Jan-15
Atlanta, GA	South	Oct-13	High Point, NC	South	Aug-13
Austin, TX	South	Jun-13	Indianapolis, IN	Midwest	Mar-15
Baltimore, MD	South	Jun-13	Iowa City, IA	Midwest	Feb-14
Beaverton, OR	West	Dec-14	Lincoln, NE	Midwest	Jun-13
Boise, ID	West	Jun-13	Los Angeles, CA	West	Mar-14
Boston, MA	Northeast	Jul-14	Louisville, KY	South	Oct-13
Burlington, VT	Northeast	Jan-15	Memphis, TN	South	Sep-14
Central Falls, RI	Northeast	May-14	Nashville, TN	South	Oct-13
Charlotte, NC	South	Nov-13	New York, NY	Northeast	Oct-13
Chicago, IL	Midwest	Jun-13	Norcross, GA	South	Aug-13
Cincinnati, OH	Midwest	Jul-14	Oakley, CA	West	Jun-14
Clarkston, GA	South	Feb-14	Philadelphia, PA	Northeast	Jun-13
Cleveland, OH	Midwest	Aug-13	Pittsburgh, PA	Northeast	Jun-13
Columbia, MO	Midwest	May-14	Raleigh, NC	South	Mar-14
Columbus, OH	Midwest	Jun-13	Roanoke, VA	South	Jun-14
Dayton, OH	Midwest	Jun-13	Salt Lake City, UT	West	Jan-15
Decatur, GA	South	Mar-15	San Francisco, CA	West	Apr-15
Denver, CO	West	Apr-14	St. Louis, MO	Midwest	Aug-13
Detroit, MI	Midwest	Sep-14	Sterling Heights, MI	Midwest	Jun-13
Dodge City, KS	Midwest	Aug-13	Tacoma, WA	West	Aug-13
East Lansing, MI	Midwest	Sep-14	Toledo, OH	Midwest	Jan-15
Grand Forks, ND	Midwest	Apr-15	Tucson, AZ	West	Oct-13
Greensboro, NC	South	Jun-14	Washington, D.C.	South	Feb-14
Hamtramck, MI	Midwest	Feb-14	York, PA	Northeast	Mar-15

Source: Welcoming America

Consistent with the new immigration geography described earlier, these welcoming cities are spatially dispersed and include not only established immigrant gateway cities like Chicago and San Francisco, but also new immigrant destinations in the Midwest and South such as Missouri, Tennessee and Georgia (Figure 2). Some of the new immigrant destinations are emerging immigrant gateway cities (e.g., Washington, D.C. and Charlotte) and others only recently started to see an influx of immigrants (e.g., Nashville, Boise). Therefore, the welcoming cities in this study represent a wide range of immigrant profiles. In 2010, the immigrant populations[3] in the 50 study cities ranged from .31 percent (Dayton, Ohio) to 47.0 percent (Norcross, GA) of the total city populations, as shown in Table 2. Immigrants made up more than 10 percent of the total population in 29 of the 50 cities. About half of the welcoming cities

---

[3] In this study, foreign born and immigrant are used interchangeably to denote those people who are not born in the United States and are not born of American parents. The U.S. Census Bureau reports nativity status only, which refers to whether a person is native or foreign born.

saw a 30 percent or higher increase in their immigrant populations between 2000 and 2010, with 11 registering growth rates greater than 70 percent (Table 3). At the same time, six cities saw immigrant out-migration. None of the established immigrant gateway cities experienced rapid immigrant growth. The percentage increases of immigrants in these cities[4] are below the national average of 28 percent from 2000 to 2010 (Table 3). In Figure 3, we plot all 50 welcoming cities in a four-quadrant scatterplot with immigrant share and growth on the horizontal and vertical axes, respectively. Only eight cities — Norcross, Clarkston, Sterling Heights, Austin, Beaverton, Charlotte, Raleigh and East Lansing — experienced both a high concentration of immigrants in 2010 and strong growth of this population in the preceding decade. The majority of cities fall in one of two quadrants: 1) the upper-left quadrant, which contains cities with low 2010 concentrations of immigrants but rapid immigrant population growth from 2000 to 2010, or 2) the lower-right quadrant, which contains cities with a high percentage of immigrants in 2010 but slow growth in that population over the previous10 years. A handful of cities fall below the national levels in both immigrant concentration and growth.

Figure 2. The Geographic Distribution of Welcoming Cities, 2015
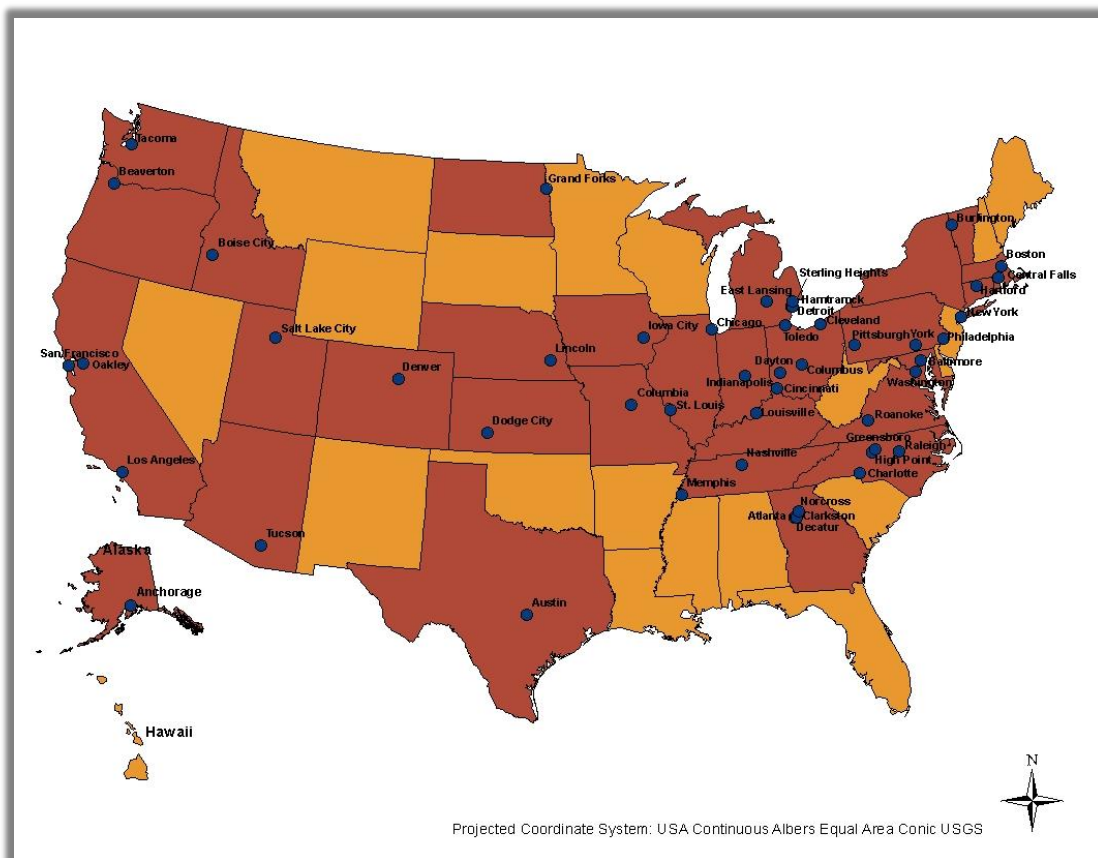
Source: Authors' analysis of Welcoming Cities documents

---

[4] Established immigrant gateway cities include Chicago, Boston, New York, San Francisco and Los Angeles. These cities are defined based on the gateways typology developed by Singer et al. (2008) and include both the *Continuous gateways* and *Post-World War II gateways*.

Table 2. Immigrant Share of Local Populations for Welcoming Cities, 2010

| CITY	FOREIGN-BORN PERCENTAGE	CITY	FOREIGN-BORN PERCENTAGE
Foreign-born > 40%		Nashville, TN	12.0
Norcross, GA	47.0	Philadelphia, PA	11.8
Clarkston, GA	45.6	Iowa City, IA	11.4
Hamtramck, MI	43.1	Greensboro, NC	10.5
Central Falls, RI	41.3	Columbus, OH	10.5
Foreign-born between 30-40%		**Foreign-born share <10%**	
Los Angeles, CA	39.1	Burlington, VT	9.7
New York, NY	36.9	Anchorage, AK	9.3
San Francisco, CA	35.7	Indianapolis, IN	8.4
Foreign-born between 20-30%		Columbia, MO	8.3
Dodge, KS	28.5	Atlanta, GA	7.8
Boston, MA	26.7	Boise, ID	7.6
Sterling Heights, MI	23.2	York, PA	7.5
Hartford, CT	22.0	Baltimore, MD	7.4
Chicago, IL	21.2	Lincoln, NE	7.3
Beaverton, OR	21.5	Pittsburgh, PA	7.1
		Decatur, GA	6.8
Foreign-born between 10-20%		St. Louis, MO	6.8
Austin, TX	19.1	Roanoke, VA	6.5
Oakley, CA	17.7	Louisville, KY	6.4
Salt Lake City, UT	17.6	Memphis, TN	6.1
Denver, CO	16.1	Detroit, MI	5.1
East Lansing, MI	15.3	Cincinnati, OH	5.0
Tucson, AZ	15.2	Cleveland, OH	4.6
Charlotte, NC	15.1	Grand Forks, ND	4.3
Raleigh, NC	13.8	Dayton, OH	3.3
Washington, D.C.	13.5	Toledo, OH	3.1
Tacoma, WA	13.5		
High Point, NC	12.0		

Source: Authors' calculations using data from American Community Survey 2008-12

Table 3. Immigrant Population Growth for Welcoming Cities, 2000-10

CITY	PERCENT CHANGE	CITY	PERCENT CHANGE
% Foreign-born growth>70%		**% Foreign-born growth 10-30%**	
Louisville, KY	297.9	Anchorage, AK	27.6
Oakley, CA	155.7	Dodge City, KS	22.3
Roanoke, VA	116.1	Atlanta, GA	22.0
High Point, NC	93.8	Hartford, CT	21.2
Indianapolis, IN	91.5	Central Falls, RI	20.4
Charlotte, NC	86.9	Cincinnati, OH	19.3
Nashville, TN	86.9	Tacoma, WA	17.0
Boise, ID	75.8	Pittsburgh, PA	15.6
Columbus, OH	74.7	Tucson, AZ	14.3
Norcross, GA	73.4	Washington, D.C.	11.5
Raleigh, NC	72.7	St. Louis, MO	11.3
		Decatur, GA	11.2
% Foreign-born growth 30-70%			
Columbia, MO	66.9	**% Foreign-born growth 0-10%**	
York, PA	63.3	Boston, MA	8.9
Greensboro, NC	57.1	New York, NY	5.3
Baltimore, MD	55.1	Hamtramck, MI	1.9
Memphis, TN	52.6	San Francisco, CA	1.0
Iowa City, IA	52.1	Denver, CO	0.8
Clarkston, GA	51.0		
Dayton, OH	47.2	**% Foreign-born growth <0%**	
Lincoln, NE	42.9	Salt Lake City, UT	-1.0
Sterling Heights, MI	42.7	Los Angeles, CA	-1.6
Austin, TX	40.0	Toledo, OH	-5.2
Beaverton, OR	38.7	Chicago, IL	-9.0
Grand Forks, ND	37.0	Cleveland, OH	-14.4
East Lansing, MI	34.9	Detroit, MI	-18.5
Burlington, VT	31.1		
Philadelphia, PA	30.7		

Source: Authors' calculations using data from U.S. Census 2000 and American Community Survey 2008-12

Figure 3. Immigrant Level in 2010 and Immigrant Growth 2000-10
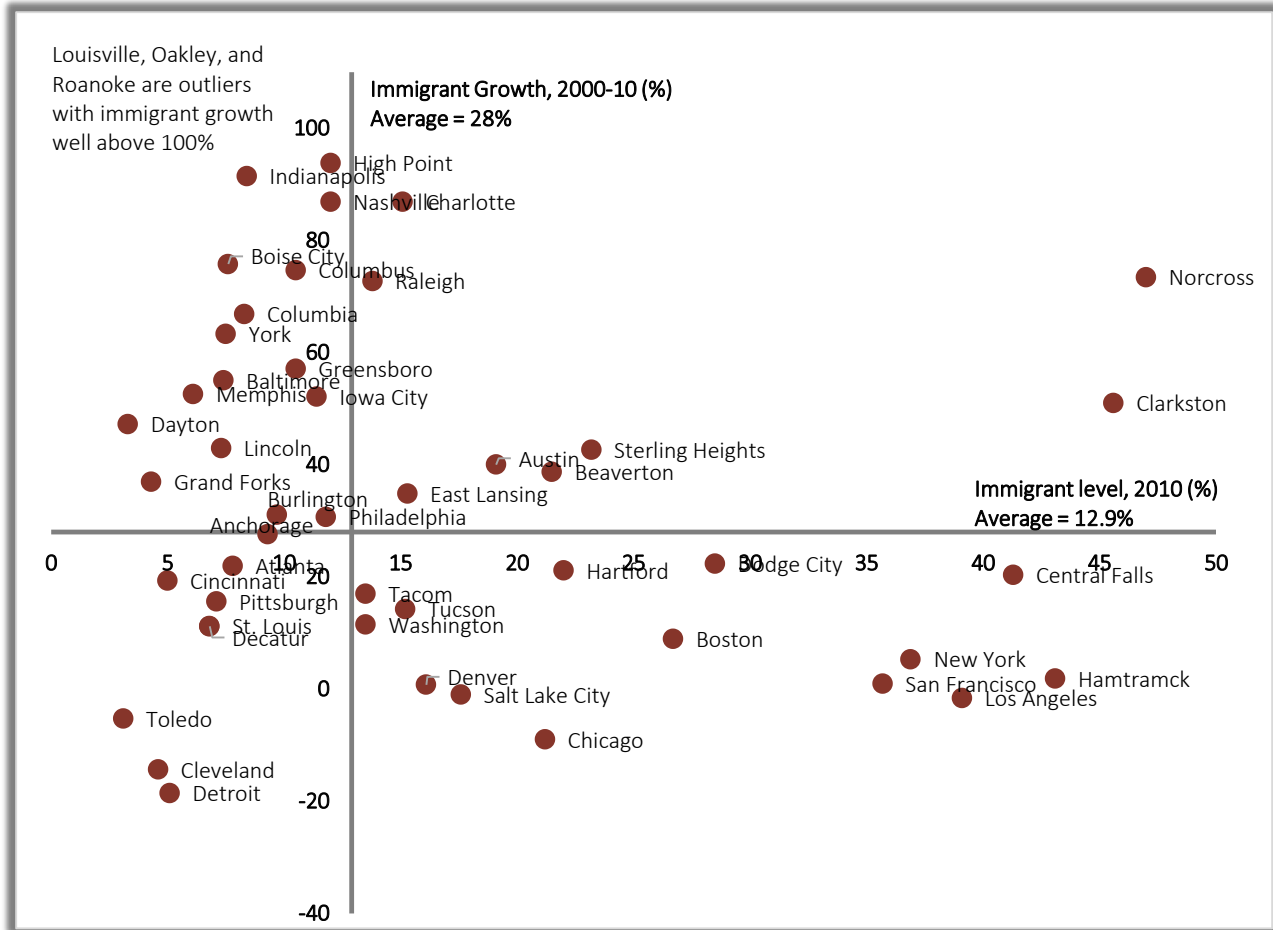
Source: Authors' calculations using data from the 2000 U.S. Census and American Community Survey 2008-12

Policy Areas of Welcoming Cities

Cities adopt welcoming initiatives to achieve multiple goals. For example, Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed believes that by making immigrants feel welcome, Atlanta can strengthen its position as a global hub and boost its cultural diversity and economic competitiveness (City of Atlanta 2013a). Through our review of welcoming cities' documents, we identify four primary areas that these programs focus on: business development, workforce development, community development and public safety (Table 4).

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Many localities have added programs to foster immigrant entrepreneurship in order to encourage local and regional economic development (Wiens et al. 2015). For example, Welcome Dayton (Ohio) features entrepreneurship development as a primary component of its program, which provides training to immigrant entrepreneurs for long-term business success (Welcome Dayton 2015). The city of Atlanta opened resources in the Small Business Enterprise Program to immigrant and minority entrepreneurs, streamlined the government regulatory process and created an online one-stop shop for entrepreneurs. In Baltimore, several programs provide technical assistance and financing opportunities for immigrants, including the BaltimoreMICRO Revolving Loan Fund Program (New Americans Task Force 2014).

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

The workforce development approach of welcoming cities is aimed at connecting immigrants to employment opportunities and equipping them with the skills that local employers seek. Global Cleveland, a program dedicated to regional economic development through attracting and retaining global talent in Cleveland, Ohio, offers programs that assist international students with internship and employment placement (Global Cleveland 2015). The St. Louis Mosaic Project was created out of the concern that the city's slow economic development was due to a lack of immigrants (Strauss 2012). It offers programs specifically targeted at skilled immigrants as well as ones designed to formalize immigrant social networks in career development, such as the Professional Connector Program (St. Louis Mosaic Project 2015).

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

In light of the potential benefits that immigrants can bring to communities (Liu et al. 2014), many welcoming cities have developed plans to attract and retain immigrants. These plans are designed to foster socially and economically vibrant communities. From Austin to Detroit, cities are seeking to revitalize distressed urban areas through immigrants' investments. To do this, they lower the investment threshold and identify key opportunities suitable for EB-5 investors[5] in targeted neighborhoods (City of

[5] Under the EB-5 Immigrant Investor Program, foreign investors and entrepreneurs are eligible to apply for permanent residency if they meet the minimum capital investment requirement of $1 million in a commercial enterprise and create 10 permanent full-time jobs for native-born Americans. This program was created in 1990 to stimulate the U.S. economy through foreigners' capital investment.

Austin 2015; Global Detroit 2015). The city of Atlanta even provides incentives and assistance to immigrant grocers in food deserts (City of Atlanta 2013b).

PUBLIC SAFETY

Most welcoming cities recognize the importance of nurturing the relationship between newcomers and local residents, and try to foster trust between the two communities. In both Dayton and Atlanta, the governments offer programs such as cultural competency training for city employees and work to increase immigrants' access to city services (City of Atlanta 2013b; Welcome Dayton 2015). In Chicago, Mayor Rahm Emanuel declared the city to be a national leader in welcoming immigrants regardless of their immigration status. Chicago's ordinance provides basic protections from unfair detainment and deportation for undocumented but law-abiding Chicagoans (City of Chicago 2012).

Table 4. Welcoming Cities Policy Areas

POLICY AREA	CITY EXAMPLES	SPECIFIC INITIATIVES
Business development	Dayton Atlanta Baltimore St. Louis	• Small business ambassadors programs • Microenterprise training for immigrants • Technical support and micro-financing programs • One-stop shop for start-ups and small minority-owned businesses • Extension of existing small business resources to immigrants • Connecting immigrant-owned businesses to local communities
Workforce development	Atlanta Baltimore Cleveland Detroit St. Louis	• Education workshops on English and employability skills for immigrants • Assistance with job searching • Local credentialing programs for underemployed immigrants • Professional programs linking skilled immigrants to potential employers and matching industries • Community connector programs for family members of global talent • Mentoring, coordinating and coaching programs for employers who want to hire global talent • Assistance with internship and job placement for international students
Community Development	Austin Detroit Atlanta Dayton	• Place-based economic development projects with immigrant outreach • EB-5 Immigrant Investor Program within targeted employment areas (TEAs) • Neighborhood Immigrant Business Program • Programs that address spatially defined city needs and challenges, e.g., Atlanta food deserts
Public Relations and Safety	Dayton Philadelphia Chicago Atlanta	• Community engagement programs • Citizenship and naturalization assistance • Cultural competency training for city employees and improved language access in city governments • Law enforcement cultural awareness training • Protections for undocumented immigrants from unfair police treatment • Multicultural liaison units to improve police-community relations

Source: Authors' analysis of welcoming city documents

Rationales of Welcoming Cities

Several factors can motivate local governments to adopt immigration policies, including demographic changes, economic conditions, fiscal health and the local political context. We compare the sample mean statistics of various city characteristics for welcoming cities and other cities in Table 5 to provide some understanding of these motivations. We expect that a city decides to join the initiative in response to changes in city characteristics in the past decade (2000-10) and recent local conditions (2010). The city of Clarkston is excluded from the analysis because we restrict the sample to cities with at least 10,000 residents. Cities in Alaska are also excluded from the final sample because voting data are unavailable. Our final sample contains 48 welcoming cities and 2,879 other cities.

With regard to demographic characteristics, we focus on the growth and size of the immigrant population and the total population, the share of minority residents and the average education level of the local population. Compared to other cities, welcoming cities in 2010 on average had a higher concentration of immigrants (15.4 percent compared to 12.0 percent), measured as the foreign-born share of the total population in a city. They had a lower average immigrant growth rate from 2000 to 2010 (43.2 percent compared to 80.1 percent), but the difference was not statistically significant.[6] In terms of city size, welcoming cities are markedly larger than other cities with an average population of 635,000 people versus 46,000 people in other cities. Their population growth was on average slower between 2000 and 2010 (10 percent compared to 22.2 percent, not statistically significant). Their populations are also substantially more diverse and more educated. In welcoming cities, 24.9 percent of the local population is black compared to 11.7 percent in other cities. The percentage of the population with at least a bachelor's degree is 34.3 in welcoming cities, higher than the percentage in other cities (30.6 percent on average).

---

[6] Statistically significant differences in the means from the two sample groups are indicative of differences between the population means.

Table 5. Characteristics of Welcoming Cities versus Other Cities

VARIABLES	WELCOMING CITIES	OTHER CITIES	DIFFERENCE
Demographic Characteristics			
Percent foreign born (2010)	15.43	12.01	3.41**
Foreign-born growth (2000-10)	43.17	80.08	-36.91
Total population (in 10,000) (2010)	63.53	4.61	58.92***
Total population growth (2000-10)	9.97	22.16	-12.19
Percent black (2010)	24.86	11.74	13.12***
Percent bachelor's degree or higher (2010)	34.34	30.62	3.72*
Economic Conditions			
Labor force participation (2010)	65.86	64.90	0.96
Change in labor force participation (2000-10)	0.99	0.38	0.61
Unemployment (2010)	11.42	9.45	1.97***
Change in unemployment (2000-10)	3.99	3.55	0.44
Median household income (2010)	$43,044.94	$51,534.15	-$8,489.21
Manufacturing share (2010)	9.70	11.55	-1.85**
Manufacturing growth (2000-10)	-14.89	-3.95	-10.95
Fiscal Health			
Government revenue per capita (2007)	276.71	140.28	136.43***
Percent own-source revenue (2007)	75.97	80.55	-4.58**
Political Climate and Civil Society			
Percent voting Kerry (2004)	57.79	46.42	11.36***
Unreformed government (2015)	0.60	0.39	0.22***
Immigrant-serving organization density (2010)	0.17	0.07	0.11***
Geographic Controls			
Central city (2010)	0.79	0.16	0.63***
N	48	2,879	--

Note: Restricted to all cities with populations of 10,000 or more in 2010

*** $p<0.01$, ** $p<0.05$, * $p<0.1$

Labor force participation rates, unemployment rates, manufacturing shares and median household income are used to capture local economic conditions. Welcoming cities had a slightly higher labor force participation level in 2010 (65.9 percent vs. 64.9 percent) and a faster rise in labor force participation from 2000 to 2010 (1.0 percent vs. 0.4 percent). However, these differences are not statistically significant, and welcoming cities performed worse than other cities on other economic dimensions. For example, they had an average unemployment rate of 11.4 percent in 2010, higher than the unemployment rate of 9.5 percent for all other cities. Although not statistically significant, the unemployment rate grew by 4.0 percentage points, also surpassing the national rate of 3.6 points. These statistics indicate sluggish local economies in the welcoming cities and a greater need for economic development efforts. The median household income in welcoming cities was $43,045 in 2010, almost $8,500 lower than the average for the other cities. Welcoming cities also had a smaller manufacturing share in 2010, with manufacturing jobs comprising 9.7 percent of local employment compared to

11.6 percent in other cities. This may be because welcoming cities tend to be central cities[7] with a smaller manufacturing presence than suburban communities.

Per capita general revenues are a measure of the overall spending capacity of a city, and the ratio of own-source revenues to total revenues captures the city's fiscal independence. Table 5 shows that welcoming cities have higher government revenues per capita than other cities, $276.71 versus $140.28. They also have a greater share of intergovernmental funds in their revenue portfolio, as own-source revenues make up a smaller share of the total revenues in the welcoming cities (76.0 percent) than in other cities (80.6 percent). These findings are consistent with the argument that fiscally better-off jurisdictions have greater financial capacity to engage in innovative policy activities (Thompson 1965; Feiock and West 1993). Although these results may seem contradictory to the earlier finding that welcoming cities generally struggle economically, total revenues per capita are indicative of more than just economic condition. Holding economic conditions constant, larger municipalities have greater institutional and financial capacities to experiment with new approaches and programs. Cities that receive more intergovernmental transfers may have higher total revenues, but higher total revenues do not necessarily indicate better economic conditions.

We also assess the differences in the political context between welcoming cities and other cities. In 2004, 57.8 percent of local electorates in welcoming cities on average voted for the Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry compared to 46.4 percent in other cities. A higher percentage of John Kerry voters signals greater political liberalism and possibly a more tolerant view of immigrants and immigration. Regarding the form of municipal government, 60 percent of the welcoming cities have an unreformed (also known as mayor-council) type of government, compared to 40 percent of the other cities. Unreformed governments are characterized by stronger local leadership than reformed (council-manager and commissions) governments (Feiock and West 1993; Clingermayer and Feiock 2001).

The number of immigrant-serving organizations per 10,000 persons measures the strength of interest groups and local support for this issue. Welcoming cities on average have a denser network of immigrant-serving nonprofit organizations than other cities (0.17 per 10,000 persons versus 0.07 per 10,000 persons).

Finally, we look at the local context in terms of whether the jurisdiction is a central city or a suburb. Central cities are historically more diverse and tolerant to minorities and immigrants, and hence more willing to welcome immigrants. Approximately 80 percent of the welcoming cities are central cities, whereas contemporary American cities are largely suburban.

In addition to sample mean differences, we also conduct a logit regression analysis to determine which factors play a role in program participation, while controlling for other variables. Our results indicate that large, economically troubled cities with an educated and liberal population are more likely to become welcoming cities. Regression results are available upon request.

---

[7] Central cities are defined by the "principal cities" definition of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) in 2000.

Conclusion and Discussion

In this report, we examined a new wave of local government responses to immigrants: welcoming cities. We explored the spatial and temporal patterns of the group of cities that have joined the Welcoming Cities initiative as well as specific policy initiatives and city characteristics associated with such policy adoption. Through participation in this initiative, local leaders express their stance on immigrant issues and their commitment to immigrant-integration practices.

We identify four primary sets of strategies these cities employ to attract and retain the immigrant population: business development, workforce development, community development and public safety. In addition to traditional integration efforts that focus on legal status and the rights of immigrants, this new wave of policies emphasizes economic integration of immigrants and their contribution to community development and economic revitalization in cities.

As of July 2015, 50 cities from 31 states had formally joined the Welcoming America initiative as "welcoming cities." These cities vary by region, size and immigrant profile as well as in their economic, fiscal, and political contexts. We find that, on average, these cities differ systematically from other cities in demographic characteristics, economic conditions, fiscal capacity and political orientation, suggesting that participation in the Welcoming Cities initiative is a complex decision conditional on a series of urban realities.

There are strong economic development rationales behind this policy innovation, which deviates from earlier policies that focused on public safety and law enforcement. This close link with economic development has not been seen in previous local immigrant-related policies and is most evident in Midwestern cities, central cities and cities experiencing economic distress. As the Welcoming Cities initiative continues to expand its reach to many more jurisdictions, our analysis can serve as a framework through which to understand the various motivations, contexts and processes associated with joining this program. Our framework would also be helpful to future research examining the dynamics of policy adoption, comparing different policy areas and eventually evaluating the impacts of these policies. Such an understanding is important as governments at various levels continue to design and implement policies to cope with immigration and its many economic and social impacts.

References

Christopherson, S., Michie, J., and Tyler, P. 2010. Regional resilience: Theoretical and empirical perspectives. *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society* 3(1): 3-10.

City of Atlanta. 2013a. Mayor Kasim Reed and city of Atlanta join Welcoming America Initiative [Press release]. Retrieved from www.atlantaga.gov/index.aspx?recordid=2368&page=672.

City of Atlanta. 2013b. Mayor Kasim Reed announces results of Welcoming Atlanta working group [Press release]. Retrieved from www.atlantaga.gov/index.aspx?page=672&recordid=3041.

City of Austin. 2015. EB-5 immigrant investor program. Economic Development Department, City of Austin. Retrieved from austintexas.gov/eb-5.

City of Chicago. 2012. Mayor Emanuel introduces Welcoming City Ordinance [Press release]. Retrieved from www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/mayor/press_room/press_releases/2012/july_2012/mayor_emanuel_introduceswelcomingcityordinance.html.

Clingermayer, J. C., and Feiock, R. C. 2001. *Institutional constraints and policy choice.* Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

Ellis, M. 2006. Unsettling immigrant geographies: U.S. immigration and the politics of scale. *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie* 97: 49-58.

Feiock, R., and West. J. 1993. Testing competing explanations for policy adoption: Municipal solid waste recycling programs. *Political Research Quarterly* 46(2): 399-419.

Filomeno, F. 2015. The migration-development nexus in local immigration policy: Baltimore city and the Hispanic diaspora. *Urban Affairs Review,* 1-36.

Fitzgerald, J., and Leigh, N. G. 2002. *Economic revitalization: Cases and strategies for city and suburb.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Global Cleveland. 2015. Hiring international talent. Retrieved from www.globalcleveland.org/for-employers/training-programs/hiring-international-workers#.

Global Detroit. 2015. EB-5 investor visa. Retrieved from www.globaldetroit.com/partner-initiatives/eb-5-investor-visa.

Lewis, P., Provine, D., Varsanyi, M., and Decker, S. 2013. Why do (some) city police departments enforce federal immigration law? Political, demographic, and organizational influences on local choices. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 23(1): 1-25.

Liu, C. Y., Miller, J., and Wang, Q. 2014. Ethnic enterprises and community development. *GeoJournal* 79(5): 565-576.

Massey, D. 2008. *New faces in new places: The changing geography of American immigration.* New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Migration Policy Institute. 2015. State Immigration Data Profiles. *MPI Data Hub.* Retrieved from www.migrationinformation.org/DataHub/acscensus.cfm.

National Conference of State Legislatures. 2008. 2007 enacted state legislation related to immigrants and immigration. Washington, D.C.: National Conference of State Legislatures. Retrieved from www.ncsl.org/Portals/1/documents/immig/2007Immigrationfinal.pdf.

New Americans Task Force. 2014. *The role of immigrants in growing Baltimore: Recommendations to retain and attract new Americans.* Baltimore, MD: The Mayor's Office and The Abell Foundation.

O'Neil, K. 2011. *Challenging change: Local policies and the new geography of American immigration* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertation and Theses. UMI Number: 3481709.

Parrado, E. A. 2012. Immigration enforcement policies, the economic recession, and the size of local Mexican immigrant populations. *ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 64(1): 16-37.

Passel, J. S., Lopez, M. H., Cohn, D., and Rohal, M. 2014. *As growth stalls, unauthorized immigrant population becomes more settled.* Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center's Hispanic Trend Project.

Peri, G. 2010. *The impact of immigrants in recession and economic expansion.* Washington, D.C.: Migration Policy Institute.

Peri, G. 2013. Do immigrant workers depress the wages of native workers? *IZA World of Labor.*

Ramakrishnan, S. K., and Wong, T. 2010. Partisanship, not Spanish: Explaining municipal ordinances affecting undocumented immigrants. In Monica Varsanyi, ed. *Taking local control: Immigration policy activism in U.S. cities and states.* Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press.

Schildkraut, D., and Grosse, A. 2014. *21st century Americanism: Nationally representative survey of the United States population, 2004.* Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research. doi: 10.3886/ICPSR27601.v3.

Singer, A., Hardwick, S. W., and Brettell, C. B. (eds.). 2008. *Twenty-first century gateways: Immigrant incorporation in suburban American.* Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press.

St. Louis Mosaic Project. 2015. *Get connected.* Retrieved from www.stlmosaicproject.org/empoweren37623.html.

Steil, J., and Vasi, I. 2014. The new immigration contestation: Social movements and local immigration policy making in the United States, 2000-2011. *American Journal of Sociology* 119(4): 1104-1155.

Strauss, J. 2012. *The economic impact of immigration on St. Louis.* Kansas City, MO: William T. Kemper Foundation. Retrieved from www.stlmosaicproject.org/cmss_files/attachmentlibrary/EconomicImpactExecutiveSummary.pdf.

Thompson, V. A. 1965. Bureaucracy and innovation. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 10(1): 1-20.

Walker, K. E., and Leitner, H. 2011. The variegated landscape of local immigration policies in the United States. *Urban Geography* 32(2): 156-178.

Welcome Dayton. 2015. Areas of focus. Retrieved from www.welcomedayton.org/about/areas-of-focus/.

Welcoming America. 2015. Welcoming Cities and Counties initiative. Retrieved from www.welcomingamerica.org/get-involved/cities.

Wiens, J., Jackson, C., and Fetsch, E. 2015. Immigrant entrepreneurs: A path to U.S. economic growth. Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, *Entrepreneurship Policy Digest.* Retrieved from www.kauffman.org/~/media/kauffman_org/resources/2015/entrepreneurship policy digest/january 2015/entrepreneurship_policy_digest_january_2015_immigrant_entrepreneurs_pathtouseconomic_growth.pdf.

Wilson, J., and Singer, A. 2011. *Immigrants in 2010 metropolitan America: A decade of change.* Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution.

About the Authors

Xi Huang is a Ph.D. candidate in the joint doctoral program in public policy through Georgia State University and Georgia Institute of Technology. She received her master of public administration degree from the Andrew Young School of Policy Studies at Georgia State University. Her primary research interests include urban policy, particularly immigration policy and poverty issues, and policy analysis and evaluation.

Cathy Yang Liu is an associate professor of public management and policy in the Andrew Young School of Policy Studies at Georgia State University. She is the managing editor for the Journal of Urban Affairs. Her research areas include community and economic development, urban labor markets, and immigration, and she has published extensively on these topics. Recent works examine immigrant entrepreneurship, innovation, and China's urbanization. She holds a Ph.D. from the University of Southern California.

About the Center for State and Local Finance

The Center for State and Local Finance's (CSLF) mission is to develop the people and ideas for next generation public finance by bringing together the Andrew Young School's nationally-ranked faculty and the broader public finance community. CSLF conducts innovative, nonpartisan research on tax policy and reform, budget and financial management, education finance, and economic development and urban policy. Additionally, it provides premier executive education in public finance for state and local finance officials and works with local and state partners on technical assistance projects on fiscal and economic policy.

CSLF maintains a position of neutrality on public policy issues. However, in order to protect their academic freedom, authors may express a wide range of viewpoints in CSLF's publications. The research, interpretations or conclusions in CSLF publications should be understood to be solely those of the author(s).

For more information on the Center for State and Local Finance, visit our website at: cslf.gsu.edu.