



## Gainesville Immigrant Neighbor Inclusion Initiative

### March 2022 Blueprint for Immigrant Inclusion Executive Summary

In 2016, the City of Gainesville Commission passed a resolution to join Welcoming America. In the same year, the Alachua County Board of Commissioners followed suit. In 2017, Welcoming America, the national organization that provides guidance and resources for communities interested in building inclusion policies relating to immigrants and refugees throughout the United States, established a Welcoming Standard. This comprehensive road map contains a framework of seven categories to define truly welcoming places for immigrant neighbors. In our Gainesville/Alachua community, immigrants compose nearly 11% (28,900) of our population. In fact, between 2015-2019 immigrants have made up nearly a quarter of the total population growth within the city and county.

The City of Gainesville and Alachua County acknowledge they have not yet reached the required prerequisites to achieving the “Welcoming Standard.” It is the intention of the Gainesville Immigrant Neighbor Initiative (GINI) Steering Committee that this Blueprint offers clear guidance and strategies for policies that achieve certification and are a sustainable model of inclusion and safety in Gainesville and Alachua County for years to come.

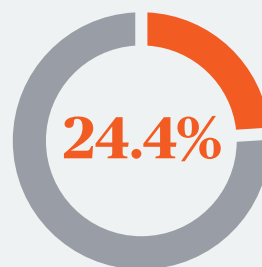
It was in acknowledgment of historical inequities and important opportunities that the Gainesville Immigrant Neighbor Inclusion project (GINI) was launched in 2021. One of these opportunities resulted in a grant that the City of Gainesville was awarded from the Gateways for Growth Challenge, a competitive opportunity created by New American Economy and Welcoming America for local communities around the country to strengthen the inclusion of immigrants and refugees. Gainesville was one of 19 award recipients. With it, the GINI initiative was granted technical and research assistance to help us move towards becoming a more inclusive community. As part of this grant, our community was tasked with creating a Welcoming Plan, guidelines to promote the inclusion and safety of our immigrant neighbors. This has culminated into the 2022 Blueprint.

In order to ensure broad input and a community-focused process, a diverse coalition of 60 community members from different backgrounds and areas of expertise, as well as immigrant residents, were recruited to join GINI’s Steering Committee. Members of the committee were then split into five different GINI Working Groups, each focused on a strategic outcome that best suited their interests, experience and knowledge – i.e. Safety, Civic Inclusion, Language Access, Education, and Health.

These work groups convened monthly over the span of nine months to discuss, in their respective themes, strategies and policy recommendations that the City of Gainesville and Alachua County could adopt to become more inclusive of immigrants and refugees. The full Steering Committee also met monthly over a 16-month period to deliberate over the different ideas that resulted from each working group and discussed how to move forward with a consensus agenda on the most effective proposed strategies and policy recommendations. In fact, during the Steering Committee’s work together since the fall of 2021, the GINI Initiative has already taken great strides in making Gainesville/Alachua County a more welcoming, safer and inclusive community for all.

The issues addressed below have never been more urgent as the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted and left bare the systemic inequities that have prevented many of our immigrant neighbors from feeling included or accessing resources that should be equally available for all who call our community home.

The following 2022 GINI Blueprint was constructed, with guidance from our Gateways for Growth partners, after nine months of listening sessions with our working groups, discussions with the Steering Committee, and over 180 survey responses representing residents from 35 countries and 8 regions. The GINI Blueprint provides an overview of a strategic action plan with goals and recommendations towards an inclusive and safe community for immigrants. Specific metrics for the recommendations, as well as best practices and flow charts are available on the online GINI Blueprint Tool Box: We believe the plan should serve as a foundation for future policies coming from the City and County that are aimed at supporting immigrants.



**24.4% of the total population growth in the city was attributable to immigrants\***

\*Data comes from 5-year samples of the American Community Survey from 2014 and 2019 and figures refer to Gainesville, Florida.

# Safe Communities



**Outcome I:** Increase immigrants knowledge of their legal rights and responsibilities, improving their capacity to effectively respond to threats to their safety

**Outcome II:** Improve the relationship between local law enforcement and immigrant communities throughout the City of Gainesville and Alachua County

**Outcome III:** Improve access to resources for immigrant survivors of crime

**Outcome IV:** Ensure the safety of our Limited English Proficient residents

# Engaged Communities

**Outcome I:** Create position(s) within the City and County that will be tasked with increasing immigrant community engagement and civic inclusion

**Outcome II:** Create a visible Immigrant Inclusion section on the City's and County's websites

**Outcome III:** Ensure the inclusion of limited English proficient speakers and their interactions with community events and services

**Outcome IV:** Increase immigrants' local and national civic knowledge, community responsibilities, and open a dialogue with City and County charters

**Outcome V:** Increase immigrant participation in community events and foster an environment of inclusivity at City, County and school system-sponsored events

How can the community improve inclusion?<sup>\*30</sup>



\*Respondents were able to select more than one option

# Equitable Access

**Outcome I:** Compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act. Programs receiving federal funds, including public schools, are required to provide meaningful access to essential services, benefits, and programs for limited English proficient speakers

**Outcome II:** Establish language access protocols across all services within the City and County, with the help of community organizations

In 2019, immigrant households in Alachua County earned

**\$940 million\***



- \$186.8 million went to federal taxes
- \$57.1 million went to state & local taxes
- \$696.1 million was left in spending power

\*Findings from The Gainesville Immigrant Neighbor Inclusion Initiative (GINI) research report

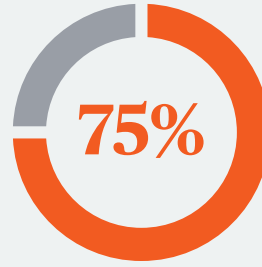
# Healthy Communities

**Outcome I:** Ensure access to healthcare-related resources for limited English proficient speakers and immigrant neighbors

**Outcome II:** Increase access to healthcare for immigrant neighbors who have limited economic means and/or no health insurance

**Outcome III:** Reduce language, transportation, and identification barriers that prevent immigrant neighbors from accessing healthcare

**Outcome IV:** Increase the number of health-related events for immigrant and LEP neighbors and improve their participation in these events



**75% of respondents want more opportunities to access healthcare in their language\***

\*Finding from the GINI Immigrant Welcoming Survey 2021-22

# Equitable Education



**Outcome I:** Ensure equitable access to education and school resources for immigrant and limited English proficient students and their families

**Outcome II:** Increase ESOL staffing (liaisons, paraprofessional aids, counselors, teachers) to support the multiple needs of an increasing immigrant student community

**Outcome III:** Simplify the registration process for immigrant parents and children entering into schools and programs such as summer activities, clubs etc.

**Outcome IV:** Foster an environment that recognizes and addresses barriers experienced by immigrant families and train those involved in the education system on how best to support these community members

**Outcome V:** Require the transportation center to fulfill the same requirements of language access and fluid communication with LEP families

**Outcome VI:** Support English Language Adult Programming

# Next Steps



The GINI Blueprint is a living document. The Steering Committee has already seen the group's influence on improved safety and inclusion efforts of immigrant neighbors taking root within the community. As such, the Steering Committee recognizes that, while we expect some recommendations outlined in the GINI Blueprint will take time to implement, many are actionable strategies that can and should be taken promptly by the City of Gainesville, Alachua County, and our school board. These steps will serve to solidify their commitment to the inclusion of immigrant resident and advance community efforts towards becoming a more Welcoming City. For the three government entities who are at the heart of the Blueprint, the city, county and school board, we urge swift action towards two key recommendations:

- 1. Contracting, training and comprehensive use of telephone-based language services**
- 2. Hiring of Immigrant Liaisons who will work to shepherd language access, institutionalize practices and to increase immigrant safety and civic engagement opportunities between their entities and the community.**

## Next Steps (cont.)

To date, the staff and leadership at the city and county have been instrumental to GINI's work. It is the hope of the GINI Steering Committee that these key players will continue to work with immigrants, their allies and community organizations as we move toward the implementation of the Blueprint recommendations. To this end, we have created the GINI Toolbox. This resource will contain step-by-step implementation guides for the Action Steps, metrics for success, essential resources, and examples of best practices from across the nation. The city and GINI Steering Committee will continue to work together to inform the community on our progress via the GINI website (hosted by the City of Gainesville), social media, as well as through GINI's partner organizations who are working together on this impactful project.

Are there elements key to creating a sense of belonging for immigrants that are missing? Of course. As the Steering Committee continues and grows, we anticipate a deep discussion on entrepreneurship and job training, access to affordable housing and a welcoming center, just to name a few. The GINI Steering Committee will serve as an invaluable and sustainable resource of guidance for the city, county, school board, and community agencies committed to adopting new practices aimed at inclusion. The Committee will continue to meet on a monthly basis to build on our goals, ensure implementation, and continue our advocacy work. Because becoming a Welcoming Community will require just that – a united effort to ensure everyone living in Gainesville and Alachua County is welcomed and feels a sense of belonging.



**Contact us:**

**[GINI@rwhp.org](mailto:GINI@rwhp.org)**

**GINI Toolbox (available in April 2022):**

**[www.cityofgainesville.org/CityCommission/CommunityInterests/ImmigrantNeighborInclusion.aspx](http://www.cityofgainesville.org/CityCommission/CommunityInterests/ImmigrantNeighborInclusion.aspx)**

