



February 6th, 2024

RE: Immigrant Task Force

Dear Honorable Council,

As you are aware over the past year the City of Findlay has seen an increase in immigrants coming to our community. My understanding is that these individuals are coming here for a variety of reasons, some have had ties or knew of our region because of past agricultural work, some are here with a staffing agency or work visas, some have found our community as they looked for a safe community with good jobs, and others are here because they were able to find housing and are working in surrounding communities (Upper Sandusky, Bowling Green, Carey, etc.)

I know this is a topic that is being brought up frequently and I wanted to provide a couple of points of clarification as well as an update on how we, as a community, are trying to wrap our arms around this new challenge.

First, I want to clarify that the City of Findlay is in no way bringing these immigrants here. They are not being bussed here by Biden, the City is not paying for them, and we are not a "Sanctuary City". As I have shared in the past, if the City interacts with an individual who cannot provide proper paperwork, and we cannot confirm its existence with proper authorities, we notify ICE. If we believe the individual is a threat to the public, we would detain them until ICE arrives. Fortunately, to my knowledge, we have not had any such situation. My goal is that the City of Findlay is a welcoming place without inviting large populations that may cause challenges to our community.

Second, there are multiple types of immigrants currently in our community. Some are here on work Visas, some are at a state in the immigration process in which they can work, and there is a population that is in the immigration process and is not able to work (this is, in my opinion, a large flaw in the immigration system, unless the immigrant is here on certain types of visas they are unable to work for the first year they are here.). Yes, there are, some individuals that are here illegally, and if law enforcement interacts with them we notify the proper authorities. As a municipality, there are limited steps beyond that that we can take. I believe it is worth noting here that the majority of our immigrant population is here legally. I also believe that significant federal reform on border security and immigration is needed and that we can both advocate for those improvements while treating individuals in our community with dignity and respect.

Third, there are at best guess between 300-500 individuals that are in our community, either living, working, or both. This may fluctuate and may grow over the next few years but this is not a goal of mine as has been inaccurately stated.

This brings me to the Immigration Task Force. As I shared a few weeks ago, the City of Findlay recognizes the challenges of seeing a larger immigrant population and though it is not one we created it is one that we must address. Yesterday, I hosted the first “official” meeting of the Immigration Task Force. This is a group of approximately 60 individuals or agencies who interact with the immigrant population regularly. Below is an outline of what I shared and what we discussed at the meeting. These reports will be provided to you on a regular basis moving forward.

Community Priorities:

- The City of Findlay wants to continue to be a safe community, that provides opportunities for a better life, and treats everyone with dignity and respect.
- Recognize that the majority of challenges faced by our immigrant population are the same challenges faced by many others in our community and that by improving these systems we are helping our community as a whole.
- Ensure managed use of resources to meet the needs of local residents while also supporting the increased demand from the immigrant population to ensure there is not a ripple effect of issues due to homelessness, inadequate healthcare, or food insecurity.

Prior to hosting yesterday’s meeting, Jaclynn and I met with our established Coalition Leaders to understand what each of their coalitions was seeing. Out of these conversations, we identified the following primary areas for discussion at our Immigration Task Force, Language, Culture, Housing, Transportation, and Food Security. Below are a few initial notes on each topic.

Language:

- Continue to provide ESL classes. Expand locations through volunteers to help increase capacity.
- Nonprofits can utilize Canva for free to translate documents. Identify a few resources that can review the translations for accuracy.
- Identify local translators who can get certified rather than utilizing pricey tele-translation services.

Culture:

- Educate the population that nonprofit services are not for everyday use but for use when in need.
- Educate on laws around domestic relations.
- Educate on health screening
- Educate on the necessity of consistently using one legal identification
- Determine most appropriate ways that immigrants and community members can support each other in understanding and engagement

Housing:

- Lack of available housing at affordable price points.
- Concerns by landlords due to no credit history, lack of access to a background check
- Educate on restrictions with the number of individuals or families living in a single-family residence

Transportation:

- Coordinate with the State and DMV to get the drivers' manuals translated into other languages.
- Investigate fixed routes from denser population points to employment areas.

Food Security:

- Educate the population that nonprofit services are not for everyday use but for use when in need.
- Identify if there are specific foods that are desired more due to cultural differences
- Identify distributions and communication to ensure food is getting where it is needed.

We have asked each agency to identify what is working in their process, what issues they are seeing, solutions that could be offered, and what long-term success looks like. The administration is serving as the convener and facilitator of these conversations to ensure that the collective action items move forward. Out of the initial discussion, below are some action items that were presented by the groups.

Language:

- Create cards for people to have in their offices or to carry that include various common phrases.
- Create a resource summary document on the different language applications and translation services.
- Create an informal translators list (individuals qualified to help in situations that do not require certified translators).
- Create a formal translators list (certified translators).

Culture:

- Focus on community-based education regarding the immigration process and understanding of cultural differences.
- Provide support to Cultural Connections, Borderless Connections, the Black Heritage Library & Multicultural Center, and the Arts & Heritage Council.
- Promote events and activities that celebrate cultures.
- Reinforce the importance of separating the national immigration reform challenges from what the needs of our local community are.

Housing:

- Encourage landlords to work with employers to get background check information.
- Educate the immigrants on housing culture and regulations.
- Translate leases so that immigrants are aware of what they are signing.

Transportation:

- Explore the possibility of fixed-routes for better access to work, medical appointments, etc.
- Explore ways to begin providing transportation for 2nd and 3rd shift employees.

Food Security:

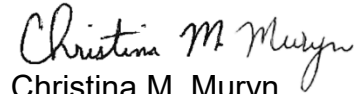
- Plan a resource fair similar to the “No Wrong Door” event with translators present so that individuals are able to learn about the community and resources available to them in one place.
- Create a translated pamphlet of community information that can be provided by employers to individuals.

I understand that this is a topic with varying opinions and many levels of complexity but I believe if we ground ourselves in the following we will be able to address the challenges in a manner in which we can all be proud.

- 1) Treat humans as humans.
- 2) Look for efficiencies in our existing system
- 3) Engage the local community of volunteers
- 4) Advocate for immigration reform at the federal level

Thank you for your understanding and support as we address this challenge.

Sincerely,



Christina M. Muryn
Mayor