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LOCAL COMMUNITY STRATEGIES FOR IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION

Summary Findings From The New Pluralism Project

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INTRODUCTION

Our nation is now in the midst of a far-ranging political controversy about immigration policy and ways to integrate immigrants into U.S. economic, social, civic, and political life. Some individuals among the local residents in the hundreds of rural U.S. communities with concentrations of immigrants are engaged in these debates. But even more pressing than the national debate about immigration policy for the future is the need for local dialogue about immigrant social integration right now.

> *… at the local level..... dialogue on how to integrate immigrants … is informed by personal experience and practical thinking about a multitude of realities of day-to-day life.*

Immigration policy issues at the national level are contentious and framed in broad generalizations. In contrast, , the issues are, in many senses more pressing because at the local the question is not simply what to do in the future but what to do today and tomorrow as well. They are also more concrete. A great advantage of efforts to move forward at the local level to develop sound social policy vis-à-vis immigrant integration is that dialogue on how to integrate immigrants into local life is informed by personal experience and practical thinking about a multitude of practical realities of day-to-day life.

While the evocative phrase "a pathway to citizenship" is a key rhetorical element in the political syntax of debate about immigration reform, practical insights about strategies for responding to the demographic, cultural, and social change in communities impacted by immigration are most likely to emerge.

Our "New Pluralism" project, initiated in 2001 immediately after the traumatic events of 9/11 has, over the past 5 years, looked at the ways in which immigration is transforming rural communities in

different parts of the United States, what immigrants' experiences settling in the U.S. have been, what native-born residents' experiences have been, and how communities have responded to the challenges of social, cultural, and civic transformation. The communities where we have conducted this multi-year research are: Adel, Georgia, Newton Grove, North Carolina, Marshalltown, Iowa, Marshall, Minnesota, Arvin, California, and Woodburn, Oregon.

Our hope is that our research on the new pluralism in rural communities will contribute to overall understanding, reflection, and discussion rural community development policy and planning. We hope also that it will complement the urban research because the rural social contexts and local economies differ so much from those of urban areas.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Some common strands have emerged from communities' experiences as areas where immigrants settle. It is useful for rural communities to keep these in mind as they address a multitude of day-to-day issues relating to mutual accommodation among diverse groups in the local area.

Community Change Is Usually More Gradual Than It Seems

In the course of this research we have learned that these changes in rural communities, however rapid they may seem, have been underway for decades. In reality, the "new pluralism" we set out to understand is not necessarily so new. But, in the communities we studied, what is relatively new is that communities have now "looked in the mirror" and recognized, sometimes fairly suddenly, that they are now socially, culturally, and linguistically diverse. They recognize that it is time to take initiative in responding to the reality of change.

Some contentious issues, such as availability of blue-collar jobs, which appear—locally and nationally—to be "about immigrants" are actually about macro-level socioeconomic change.

Despite immigration's lengthy history in most communities, we have noted variations in how much long-term community residents recognize the presence of immigrants as a permanent phenomenon.. In some communities, they have been viewed as either a temporary solution to a labor supply problem, as in communities with meatpacking plants, and in others as an annual passage of migrant farmworkers who remain isolated from community institutions. In these cases, however, immigration and diversity both tend to have deeper roots than many residents recognize.

National and Global Change Transform Community Life As Much As Immigration

We have also learned that the "watershed" in the social geography of most of these communities was World War II. For most, the economic, demographic, and social changes that shape civic life today began immediately after the end of World War II. Immigration was an important part of changing community life but changes in agricultural production, overall population growth, rural-urban migration of young adults, new highways and communication infrastructure, changes in fiscal policy which eroded the tax base and legal authority and responsibilities of local municipalities, all had a major impact in changing the nature of community life.

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communities' sense that the local business environment is difficult or "out of their control" is often correct. Immigrant entrepreneurs do play an important role in changing the local business environment. But the overall changes are generally not ones they initiate. Immigrants' contribution to community economics is that they are experts in establishing small businesses with little or no capital; none of the immigrant entrepreneurs we interviewed had ever had recourse to the formal credit system (bank loans or government programs) but, in several communities, they had found municipal authorities helpful in familiarizing them with local regulations and laws.

In some ways, the changes that have taken place in rural communities, particularly with regard to changing physical landscapes with the growth of alternative shopping and housing centers, have benefited immigrant entrepreneurs and the communities in which they live: typically, immigrant businesses move into areas that have been abandoned by local merchants who could not compete with large national retail and restaurant chains. This movement has laid the groundwork for revitalization that is only partially ethnic in character. It has also begun offering local residents a diversity of products and services that they would not have enjoyed without the immigrants.

Diversity Within Households Is As Great As Between Neighborhoods

In each of the communities we studied, there is as great diversity within households as in the community at large. National debate on immigration policy which repeatedly makes reference to the "immigrant population" and the "native-born population" are subtly misleading because so many households in America include both native-born and foreign-born household members.

What is clear in looking at the fine-grained texture of social life in rural communities is that many families--in some communities such as Woodburn and Arvin, the majority of families—are of "mixed" immigration status, including U.S. citizens, legal permanent residents, and unauthorized immigrants. The national policy image of sending unauthorized immigrants back to their country of origin makes no sense in the real life of rural communities because immigration status cuts across ties of kinship and friendship.

There are cultural tensions within rural communities—but these are as often tensions between computer-savvy English-speaking children of immigrants who have grown up in town and a parent who grew up in a rural hamlet working in subsistence agriculture as between neighbors. To be sure, there are also tensions between neighborhoods and in civic life—but they are as likely to stem from demographics (older retired couples vs. younger families with children) or socioeconomic strains as from immigration status or ethnicity. At the community level there is still much work to be done to harmonize different languages and cultural perspectives—but this work is beginning and going on at home, within the walls of each household.

Indeed, we understand that linguistic practice is often a contentious issue between younger and older members of families, and that the tensions surrounding "English only" proposals in state legislatures, bilingual education, and other language issues, often complicate parent-child relationships within households. Those who choose to make language a contentious issue in the immigration debate should consider how these seemingly public debates influence the private lives of immigrant families and how the resulting policies will play out over time in the micro-ecology of family and community life..

Children Are The Future

Our interviews in the New Pluralism project, allowed us to "look into the past" by talking with older local residents and "look into the future" by talking with younger heads of household and, sometimes, with their teenage children. The life stories of those immigrants who were born abroad and grew up in the local community make it clear that many of these "Generation 1.5" immigrants are well-poised to take on the responsibility of bridging divides in the community. Their personal experiences have given them a sound foundation for bringing new immigrants and native-born families together. But the key to success in bringing community groups together is their sociocultural agility, being genuinely bilingual and bicultural. Ironically, efforts to "preserve English" or "save our culture" run directly counter to what is needed—efforts to preserve cultural resources, retain and celebrate diversity, and the flexibility to happily and easily function in the pluralistic society of the future.

Immigrant children's perspectives are strongly shaped by their peers and their experiences growing up. They will, almost inevitably, be integrated into U.S. cultural perspectives and learn English. What is less certain is whether the immigrant integration process will provide them with the skills to thrive in the 21st century economy and whether cultural stresses will separate them from their parents' generation. In all of the New Pluralism study communities, educators are, inevitably, the front-line facilitators of community change. Educators' role is crucial—in preparing the children of immigrants and native-born parents to work together effectively in the future and, in the context of adult learning programs, helping immigrants learn English and learn about U.S. life.

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While educators occupy the forefront of this work, in many of the communities they could not perform as successfully as they have without the assistance of other community institutional resources. In some communities, clergy have been instrumental in facilitating mutual accommodation; in others, local government officials, program heads, and ad hoc committees have worked hard to establish bases for immigrant voices to be heard and for support in establishing and maintaining businesses that serve immigrants and refugees. In looking at the differences between communities with a long history of immigration (such as Arvin, California) and communities with a shorter history of immigration (such as Adel, GA), it appears that there may be may be a natural succession of mediating agencies within the social ecology of community life. This suggests, for example, the need for still more attention to different phases of mutual adaptation as communities evolve.

Mutual Accommodation instead of Immigrant Assimilation

It is important to realize that communities can benefit by adjusting to new immigrant populations as much as new immigrants can benefit by adjusting to the communities where they are settling. While we are not suggesting that communities alter long-standing traditions or belief systems, there are clearly ways that new immigrant cultural practices and social norms may enrich local practices and norms. Most notably, of course, are the foodways new immigrants bring to communities, along with new commercial establishments that deal in immigrant goods and services. Some communities, too, have taken advantage of the presence of new immigrants to develop foreign language capability

in local schools and businesses. As American agricultural production continues to compete within a global food production system, linguistic and cultural agility will increasingly become resources for entrepreneurial success.

PROMISING STRATEGIES

Interviews with local residents, community activists, local government officials and staff, and non-profit organizations in the New Pluralism study communities underscore the fact that no single "grand strategy" for integrating immigrants into local community life will work. The most effective strategies will be those which recognize the specific makeup of each community, specific issues of concern to local residents, and even more importantly the resources and organizational and governmental constraints in each community.

In the course of studying local communities in six different states we were reminded time and again that the scope of municipal government authority is limited because the legal and financial framework for a broad range of local initiatives is part of a framework of federal and state statutes and program regulations. Local communities—municipal government, local public institutions such as schools and libraries, and non-profit community organizations now need to be entrepreneurial and innovative in securing the financial resources to respond to their community's needs and the authority to approach problem-solving in innovative ways.

Informal interactions …almost always lie beneath the more-visible formal actions of elected officials, local institutions, municipal government, and community organizations.

We have learned that local initiatives to integrate immigrants into local community life cannot stem from any single source. Efforts by a wide range of individuals, organizations, and institutions contribute to progress. Few communities discover immediately how to work most effectively in responding to "the new pluralism". One step forward leads to another.

Informal interactions among neighbors and co-workers, as well as a multitude of never-recorded discussions among community leaders, immigrant advocates, teachers, small business people, and members of civic organizations make almost always lie beneath the more-visible formal actions of elected officials, local institutions, municipal government employees, and community organizations. Community responses work best when formal decision-making is responsive to informal input and when formal decisions are made with a firm commitment to fostering community unity amid diversity.

At times, moving forward toward formal decision-making requires an intermediate step of establishing ad hoc or temporary alliances among agency personnel, some or all of whom have direct ties to state and local governing bodies.

In the communities we studied, we found that informal relations between community members and new immigrants, in many cases, were instrumental in the establishment of immigrant businesses, particularly in dealing with the formal structures that establishing businesses often requires. Through these ties, immigrants received assistance in making sense of local systems of licensing, building codes, garbage disposal, and other prerequisites to business practice. In other cases, ties

between established community members and immigrants made it possible for immigrants to buy homes and then begin to rehabilitate them. Small-town residents and immigrants seem more accustomed to interacting within a shared framework of principles of mutual reciprocity than urban residents and this, in turn, facilitates formation of social capital and civic capital.

Here we present summary recommendations for integrating immigrants into local community life—based on the innovations and "lessons learned" in different communities in our study but also on considering opportunities which were missed and some of the endemic problems. These are not definitive; they are the foundation for further discussion, reflections, and imaginative but practical "visioning" of possible futures for rural communities where immigrants are settling.

IN THE POLICY ARENA

1. ***Municipal government and local community institutions should approach the challenge of responding to the social changes stemming from immigration as part of an even-handed, overall policy of "customer-oriented" responsiveness to diverse needs in the community.***

   Public trust in elected officials, government, continues to erode in the first decade of the 21st century—in part because they are perceived as not being responsive to their constituents. Local government and institutions must be accountable to their constituents and responsive to their needs and recognize immigrants as well as native-born community residents as important "customers", stakeholders in community decisions and constituents deserving respectful and responsive attention. Customer-oriented flexibility and responsiveness can provide opportunities to underscore a recognition that shared civic concerns can bring immigrants and native-born residents together.

   Several of the New Pluralism communities have been innovative—thinking "outside the box" about how to modify their ways of doing business to recognize growing diversity. In Woodburn, Oregon, for example, farmworkers can now pay traffic fines on an installment basis (furthering compliance and increasing city revenue). In Woodburn, city government also worked with a community business association including immigrant small business owners to refurbish the downtown plaza, converting a dilapidated parking lot into a small park.

   A similar process of locally initiated response took place in Marshall, Minnesota, where a group of city and county employees, recognizing the need for translation services, worked with local immigrants to establish a center that provided translations, seeking financial support for start-up costs from a local employer that benefited from immigrant labor. A bilingual program in an elementary school in Marshalltown, Iowa, has been innovative in providing not merely English-language training for the youth of its large Spanish-speaking immigrant population, but providing training in both English and Spanish to a mixed population of students, 50% of whom are immigrants and 50% of whom are natives.

   An outstanding example of responsiveness is that of the Woodburn, Oregon community library. It began, more than a decade ago, to build its holdings of books in Russian and Spanish as part of its response to increasing immigration. Its location in the center of town and its openness to diversity have made it a popular institution among immigrants while remaining an important resource for native-born families and older residents. It also has sponsored multi-lingual reading

programs for children. Ideally, the library might further expand its role as cultural broker by beginning the challenging task of securing Mixtec and Zapotec materials also given the large influx of Oaxacan migrants.

In Arvin, California and in other of the New Pluralism communities, libraries have played an important role in immigrant children's social integration by working with schools to make libraries "friendly" to middle-school and high-school youth as well as children.

Municipal government's success in retaining the support of its non-immigrant residents rests in part on clear communication and action to avert anti-immigrant backlash among residents who feel threatened by changing demographics. In Woodburn, for example, crime is sometimes seen by native-born residents as an "immigrant problem" although it is actually even more of a concern for immigrant households than for native-born households. City government has wisely recognized that there is no utility to posing crime as an immigrant problem or allowing it to become a "wedge issue" and worked aggressively on policing, recognizing that this is a leading concern of immigrant and US-born constituents alike.

In order to understand cultural differences between U.S. and Mexican police practices, as well as gain more awareness about the backgrounds of many of the city's immigrants, Marshalltown, Iowa's Chief of Police was part of a group, accompanied by academics and others knowledgeable about Mexico, that visited the community in Mexico from which the majority of its immigrants originate. The result was increased police sensitivity and tolerance toward immigrant practices such as sponsoring large gatherings for special family occasions, that have the potential to escalate into neighborhood misunderstandings and unnecessary arrests,

Local communities have a tremendous stake in eliminating the dividing lines of immigration status which separate some local residents from others.

There are special opportunities for rural communities to highlight their responsiveness to both immigrant and non-immigrant "customers" by making community facilities easily accessible by walking. One element in the Woodburn library's success in serving both immigrant and non-immigrant patrons is its central location which makes it easily accessible by foot for both non-immigrant and immigrant users who do not have cars. Similarly, the attractiveness of Chemeketa Community College as a venue for learning English (a major immigrant need) or vocational training (more commonly a service for low-income native-born students) is that the low-income students who need these courses can walk to them.

Adapting to the needs of diverse constituents is not difficult when there is a willingness on the part of elected officials and local government staff to adjust their schedule to facilitate communication with their immigrant constituents. For example, Arvin's mayor took the unusual but simple and useful step of scheduling a Sunday afternoon meeting in the local park with immigrant migrant farmworkers to discuss issues relating to management of a local trailer park where migrants live and to the sub-standard condition of some of the trailers.

2. ***Local government officials (municipalities, counties) and local program administrators should actively advocate with state and federal program policy-makers and planners on behalf of their immigrant constituents.***

Local communities have a tremendous stake in eliminating the dividing lines of immigration status which separate some local residents from others. These barriers make it difficult for communities to make full use of the potential human resources available to them (as leaders or as workers) and disrupt family life by making some family members eligible for basic services while others are not.

Community-level advocacy on immigration policy issues should include advocacy for federal immigration reform that recognizes the de facto resident status of local residents. It should also include opposition to proposals specifically designed to disadvantage immigrants, such as prohibitions on bilingual education or efforts to deny immigrants' drivers' licenses.

Erecting barriers to securing drivers' licenses and other necessary documents for auto ownership and use, deliberately inhibiting mobility, impede the effective and efficient use of human resources by restricting the free flow of goods, people, and information within the region. Such barriers also place additional strains on local police, create public safety hazards as immigrants buy unsafe but inexpensive vehicles under the threat of their being impounded, and increase the costs to insured motorists when involved in collisions with immigrants who are uninsured because they are unlicensed.

The community benefits of maintaining the status quo are nil (although there are real fiscal impacts of broader immigrant eligibility for public services). The consequences of the harshest sorts of "immigration reform" policy which entailed deportation of unauthorized immigrants, for example, would be disastrous, disrupting local economic and social stability.

A particular concern relates to unauthorized immigrant students' access to higher education. The most outstanding students in rural communities' classes of graduating seniors each year, are now likely to include several unauthorized immigrant youth who have spent most of their lives growing up in town. (One out of five Woodburn children have only unauthorized legal status). Since lack of legal status make it impossible for these youth to receive federal financial aid for college, few are able to move on into professional careers—and the community at large, not just individual students, lose out.

Proposals to restrict schooling or health care to immigrant youth, for example, fail to recognize that educating undocumented youth and keeping them healthy constitutes an investment in human capital, especially when, as has happened again and again in our nation's history, future legal initiatives may allow currently undocumented immigrants to become work authorized. Even those who return to their homeland more educated than and at least as healthy as they came are likely to promote friendly relations between the United States and their home countries, to buy U.S. goods, to establish businesses that contribute to an increasing quality of life, and so forth.

There should be advocacy as well as for enforcement programs targeting the most common sorts of abuses of immigrants (e.g. sub-standard rental housing, wage-hour violation). An economic or social environment in which immigrant workers or families can with impunity be treated illegally or unfairly undermines the well-being of native-born workers and families and immigrant-headed families alike.

3. ***Local government should expand concepts of citizen participation by seeking to involve immigrants, including non-citizens, on local advisory bodies in areas where there is a high level of shared interest, e.g. Park and Recreation Boards, school boards, small business development.***

The concept of direct democracy need not be simply an empty ritual. There is growing evidence that widespread participation in community discussion, dialogue, and decision-making can have a tangible positive impact on the lives of everyone in the community. These positive impacts are both direct and indirect.

In Southwest Minnesota, the small community of Walnut Grove took a solid step forward in immigrant-native relations when local PTA members, decorating the school for an annual event, solicited the aid of one Hmong student and whatever family the student could convince to help. The student returned with several dozen of the Hmong community, whose participation in the decorating and other contributions to the event impressed all of the native members, showing them that, despite language difficulties, the two groups could work effectively together toward a common goal.

More community discussion and involvement, when structured to focus on problem-solving not controversy for its own sake, can lead to effective and innovative strategies for addressing common civic concerns. Indirectly, more involvement in civic dialogue and decision-making strengthens local residents' commitment to pitching in and helping out to make the community better.

The concept of direct democracy need not be simply an empty ritual.

Immigrants' civic engagement and participation is constrained by the understandable feeling they are not invited or "not supposed to" participate in local decision-making. Where not legally prohibited by state or federal status, local communities can and should seek to encourage participation of immigrants, irrespective of legal status, in local civic decisions—informally through participation in hearings, forums, and community meetings and formally through invitation, appointment or election to sit on established decision-making bodies. Efforts to nurture immigrant civic involvement can be expected to bring both short-term benefits and, in the long-run, contribute to building strong community leadership for the future.

4. ***Rural communities with strong migration network ties should establish linkages with migrant-sending villages in Mexico as a means to help local government better understand newly-arriving Mexican immigrants and to involve government and programs in migrant-sending communities to begin orienting migrants to life in receiving communities before they arrive.***

Transnational networking and collaboration should include contacts between municipal governments in migrant-sending and migrant-receiving communities as well as collaboration semi-formal village and state networks of migrants.

Because Mexico-U.S. migration is so extensive, Mexican migrant-sending communities and states have grown increasingly responsive to their transnational constituents. At the same time,

"hometown associations" (*clubes de oriundos*, *asociaciones civicas*) have grown up to maintain social networks and strengthen emigrants' social ties to sending communities. These groups are now seeking ways to work in a truly binational way—addressing civic issues Mexican migrants confront in the U.S. as well as in their communities of origin.

Of the New Pluralism study communities, to date only Marshalltown, Iowa has initiated municipality-to-municipality collaborations. However, Marshalltown's efforts, which have included exchange visits among community leaders and municipal officials, have been very useful. They have helped local government in Marshalltown better understand immigrants and they have helped leaders in Villachuato, Michoacan, the main community of origin for Marshalltown migrants, better understand their binational community.

In several of the states in the New Pluralism study, grassroots organizations representing immigrants, academics, government officials, and others have worked to foster a greater appreciation of immigrant contributions to local economies, at times with the assistance of employers of large numbers of immigrants. University-based programs in Iowa, North Carolina, and Minnesota have worked to sponsor conferences, produce written materials of use to both immigrants (e.g. how to prepare for tornadoes) and natives (e.g. how churches might reach out to immigrants), and generally foster increased cross-cultural understanding. In some communities, day-long exhibitions, food shows, and other events focusing on immigrant culture have been effective in reducing xenophobia about immigrants and increasing local appreciation for what immigrants can bring to the local economy and society. Venues featuring the art and music of immigrants have also been useful.

Rural communities in U.S. states with high influxes of Mexican migrants working in agriculture may find it useful to work with state authorities and institutions to establish state-level collaborative linkages. This may be especially useful when the Mexican immigrants in their communities come from a major migrant-sending state such as Michoacan, Jalisco, or Oaxaca because these states have established Migrant Commissions.

Transnational collaboration may also involve specialized programs and institutions. Migrant Education programs have, for more than a decade, worked productively with their counterparts in Mexican schools to address curriculum issues and facilitate student record transfer and the University of California has led efforts to establish transnational collaboration in higher education.

5. ***Municipalities and local institutions should recognize the high proportions of "mixed status" families in which some family members are U.S. citizens, others are authorized immigrants, and others are unauthorized immigrants. To the extent permissible under federal law, they should then determine service eligibility on "family status" as community residents rather than by determining the individual legal status of each family member.***

Human service programs are most effective when they respond directly and rapidly to human needs. Unfortunately, the current funding structure for most social service, some public health, and some education programs condition service eligibility on immigration status. Denial of service or limitations on service make service delivery needlessly complex administratively, contributes to situations where minor problems evolve into major problems, and impedes

immigrant integration by convincing immigrants that service programs are unfair and discriminatory.

One of the problems that arises when health departments differentiate among immigrants based on legal status is that it pushes immigrants toward hospital emergency rooms for care. In the South in particular, where high numbers of citizens have no health insurance, emergency rooms are already overburdened. Working in the Shenandoah Valley, Micah Bump reported two cases of immigrant women dying in childbirth due to their lack of access to adequate prenatal care. Although we did not encounter cases such as these in our case studies, the reluctance of local health departments, physicians, and other health professionals to engage the immigrant community creates a public health risk for the entire community.

None of the local communities in the New Pluralism study had found entirely satisfactory ways to address this issue, since the power to decide on immigration issues and on most funding is federal, not local. However, we saw instances where hard work by local service agencies have made real progress by focusing on equitable service delivery.

In Arvin, California the local collaborative Family Resource Center is a member of this alliance and plays an important role in immigrant social integration. The Kern County Network for Children, a county-wide consortium of health, education, and social service agencies was formed over a decade ago based on a commitment to provide comprehensive services to children and families. This network has worked to provide services to all children, regardless of immigration status. Early efforts in this mission have made it possible for Kern County to secure major funding from a very large foundation, The California Endowment, to provide a mix of private-public funding which funds health care for all uninsured children, irrespective of immigration status.

In part because of the aging of the populations of Minnesota and Iowa, educators in Marshall and Marshalltown have taken steps to ensure that immigrant children, regardless of legal status, receive a quality education. Marshall educators view this as "growing their own," or preparing students with the skills and motivation to stay in southwest Minnesota and contribute to its long term development. Marshalltown educators have established the bilingual program, noted elsewhere in this document.

Because many education and childhood development programs (e.g. pre-school programs such as Head Start, Even Start, primary and secondary education) provide service without requirements to determine children's immigration status, these programs play very important roles in immigrant integration—especially when the menu of services provides family services to children and their parents.

FOSTERING COMMUNICATION AND POSITIVE SOCIAL INTERACTIONS

1. ***Local institutions—municipal government and others-- should hire bilingual-bicultural personnel who are responsive to diverse immigrant groups in key department and programs, e.g. Schools, Park and Recreation Department, Business Licensing, Police/Traffic Departments, and in pre-school, K-12, and adult education programs. Similarly, the staffing of public health, family service, affordable housing, employment***

training and other community development programs such reflect the diversity of the community.

Institutions in all of the New Pluralism case study communities, municipal government, but, also schools, libraries, and community non-profits have been moving toward hiring bilingual and bicultural staff to facilitate communication with immigrants. Not surprisingly, local non-profits have often been leaders in responding to demographic change but public institutions have generally been willing to move forward also.

A key element in success has been recognition that immigrants are, themselves, important resources in responding to immigrants' needs. Primary care health providers, schools, vocational training programs, city government offices, and a wide range of local businesses have learned that effectiveness in a job rests on individual job applicants' actual skills and motivation more than formal qualifications and have been particularly successful when they have taken the trouble to develop job descriptions which focus on "the necessary skills" for quality work performance.

A key element in success has been recognition that immigrants are, themselves, important resources in responding to immigrants' needs

The Woodburn Policy Department has moved, under the leadership of a non-immigrant Chief of Police to proactively diversify the Police Force. The city, for example, demonstrated its commitment to diversifying the police force by establish a differential pay scale in recognition of the additional job-related skills of bilingual personnel.

Marshalltown, Iowa has also hired a Latino police officer.

Progress in this realm requires both commitment and patience. Success in hiring bilingual and bicultural personnel to assure customer-responsive services for local residents has more to do with finding ways to increase the pace of change than to lack of recognition about how important this is. When Arvin, California finally recruited a Latino police chief, there was administrative leadership with concrete ideas about how to improve community policing. Speaking Spanish is, for example, now a job requirement but with limited funding, hiring new bilingual/bicultural police officers is moving slowly because new openings only appear as a result of staff attrition.

Hospitals and other health centers in the two Midwestern and two Southern communities have hired translators, although most of these work on an "on-call" rather than permanent basis. The quality of translations, too, has been highly variable. In some cases, health professionals have relied on the U.S. citizen spouses of immigrants who profess to speak fluent Spanish but actually have rudimentary skills with the language. The emphasis on translation has, however, moved local professionals toward seeking out bilingual physicians and others to assist them with translations. In North Carolina, at least one rural hospital that caters to large numbers of Latino immigrants has sought the assistance of a Honduran physician who, although he cannot practice medicine in the United States, has been able to advise hospital staff on the appropriateness of intake forms and other written documents.

In Woodburn, Oregon, in response to rapidly growing numbers of indigenous-origin migrants the Oregon Law Center's Indigenous Farmworker project has provided interpreter training to Spanish-speaking indigenous-origin immigrants who are native speakers of 11 different indigenous languages (including Mixteco Alto, Mixteco Bajo, Triqui, P'urepecha, Zapoteco, Nahuatl, Akateco, Kanjobal, Q'uiche, Mam) so they can provide translation assistance in interactions with both health clinics and with the judicial system. None of the communities in our study has yet recognized the unique skills of immigrant youth who lived in their hometown community long enough to learn an indigenous language such as Mixteco, who also learned Spanish, and who have lived in the U.S. long enough to learn English well. They are an extraordinary resource and it would make a great deal of sense for local communities to work hard to identify such trilingual individuals and provide those who are interested with technical/professional training as interpreters/translators.

2. ***Local public and non-profit institutions should work collaboratively, pooling resources, to provide multiple learning alternatives for immigrants to learn English.***

In both Woodburn, Oregon and Arvin, California, local community institutions were responsive to immigrants' top service priority—programs to learn English. In Woodburn, a community college campus near the downtown plaza and easily accessible for immigrants without cars made ESL very accessible. In Arvin, a family resource center operated by the school district took the lead in offering classes for the mothers of pre-school and school-age children.

In Oregon, the fact that community colleges have primary responsibility for adult education programs made this effort more straightforward whereas, in California English classes were supported by special funds allocated by State Proposition 200 to assist parents learn to help their children learn English (although the reality is usually that immigrant children learn English more rapidly than their parents).

One of the key issues facing immigrants who are also family breadwinners has been finding time and convenient locations for ESL classes, particularly when they must be squeezed in among not only work schedules but also the myriad tasks associated with maintaining a family (visiting laundromats, grocery shopping, shuttling children to school and sporting events, assisting other immigrant families, etc). Several employers of immigrants, particularly in Minnesota and Iowa, recognizing the need for establishing convenient spaces where immigrants can learn English, have allowed ESL instructors to hold classes at factories or other work places. One Minnesota employer provides company scrip (coupons for purchasing discounted company products) to immigrants who attend ESL classes on their premises.

However, despite a burgeoning national movement to create community information technology centers, we have seen no programs which offer Internet-based or other modalities of ESL distance-learning. Nor have we seen any community where there was the full spectrum of programs needed to provide each distinct group of immigrants a way to learn English which was suited to their particular needs.

3. ***Local public institutions should proactively seek to engage immigrants, irrespective of legal status, in dialogue on issues of public concern. A key first step is to provide minority language outreach about public events and provide simultaneous interpretation in areas where there is interest.***

Wherever possible, public events and public hearings should be publicized and conducted in both English and the language(s) of major immigrant groups in the community. Involving first-generation immigrants in civic dialogue, working with their neighbors to address common concerns, and in contributing time and ideas to making local life better is feasible only if immigrants are "invited to the table".

Part of an "open door" policy in civic life is to find common ground for public discussions, meetings, and events which make both immigrants and non-immigrants feel at home. Efforts to involve immigrants in community issues have been advanced significantly, for example, by a farmworker housing project, La Esperanza, including a community meeting room and the willingness of local school officials and police department representatives participating in meetings in this venue, in addition to meetings in more formal institutional settings.

Immigrant leaders do not always hold formal positions of leadership, such as ministers in churches or teachers, but are often simply individuals whom other immigrants perceive as influential, successful, and who have earned the respect of others.

It is important to recognize that informal leaders within immigrant communities already exist, yet they are often an untapped resource by the local native community leadership, such as mayors, police chiefs, city managers, and so forth. Immigrant leaders do not always hold formal positions of leadership, such as ministers in churches or teachers, but are often simply individuals whom other immigrants perceive as influential, successful, and who have earned the respect of others. Generally they are fully or partially bilingual and occasionally well-educated.

Along the same lines, in most areas with large numbers of immigrants, grassroots organizations—some small, some large—have emerged to address problems facing immigrants. In North Carolina, for example, an organization called AMEXCAN, founded by a turkey factory employee with the help of his employers, focuses on education, culture, and leadership among immigrant Latinos in the state. In Woodburn, Oregon, PCUN, which is now a fairly large organization began as a grassroots initiative by native-born residents and immigrant farmworkers.

4. ***Local institutions, programs, and organizations should promote a vision of their local community as part of a "new pluralism", part of a diverse but integrated society. Local institutions should sponsor a range of events to recognize and celebrate cultural diversity—bringing immigrants to events celebrating traditional American cultural values and vice versa. This vision of "unity in diversity" must also include outreach efforts to fully involve immigrants in community service, volunteerism, and support of charitable causes.***

Cultural diversity must be celebrated, not simply tolerated. Although rural communities have not found it easy to address the multitude of tensions and conflicts inherent in cultural pluralism. However, they must continue to push forward in this challenging task although this is a realm which is difficult for public institutions to work in but some efforts seem particularly promising.

Cultural identity is an inevitable area of tension. In each local community in the New Pluralism study, we heard of simmering domains of conflict which, at times, involved municipal government or other institutions, including the education system and local media outlets. While municipal government has no statutory framework or direct role in the arena of managing cultural conflict its role can be important. Individual community leaders and other institutions can also help to mitigate or exacerbate these conflicts.

Arvin, California has been supportive of efforts by local civic groups to celebrate both immigrant and traditional holidays. In Arvin, California there a celebration of the Patron Saint Day of a major local network (San Juan Bautista, patron of the migrant-sending community of San Juan Mixtepec) began in 2002 and is now an annual event.

In Woodburn, Oregon there is an annual celebration of the 16 de Septiembre, a major Mexican holiday. We have not seen large amounts of cultural cross-over, only a few mestizos and non-Latinos at the predominantly Mixtec Arvin celebration and few non-Latinos at Woodburn's downtown event. However, the events have been peaceful, enjoyable, and provide an opportunity for non-immigrants to feel more at home with immigrant culture. It seems that, over time, thee pleasant events will come to celebrate pluralism.

Cultural identity is an inevitable area of tension

In nearly all the study communities, festivals celebrating immigrant culture have been established and already repeated on an annual basis. In Marshall, a diversity day celebration featured the food, dress, and other cultural attributes of its large Somali population, and Southeastern North Carolina, with the help of local schools and other institutions, annually holds a *Festival de La Raza* that celebrates Latino culture while inviting service providers to set up booths about services Latinos can take advantage of. Similar, smaller festivals have been sponsored by community colleges as well.

ACTIONS TO ADVANCE IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION

1. ***Municipalities and other local institutions should seek opportunities to prevent or resolve conflicts between native-born and immigrant groups. These efforts should include proactive initiatives to build local awareness of community diversity.***

An important element in Woodburn's response to growing community diversity has been to hire a Community Liaison Officer charged with the responsibility of decreasing tensions between immigrants and non-immigrants which arise. The first assignment for the new staff person after he was hired in 2002 was to orient immigrants to a new municipal noise ordinance (passed in response to complaints by non-immigrant families about Mexican immigrants' parties for large groups of extended family and friends). City government wisely recognized that it would be difficult to specify a priori exactly what activities would be involved in the liaison function and it was agreed the staff person would be encouraged to explore a range of activities and determine priorities in consultation with the City Administrator.

Community-based non-profits can play an important role in building understanding and acceptance of cultural diversity. Although Arvin, California and Woodburn, Oregon are both

communities with large influxes of indigenous-origin immigrants, primarily Mixtecs, there is still limited awareness of the cultural diversity of Mexican immigrants. In both communities, migrant legal services providers (California Rural Legal Assistance in Arvin and the Oregon Law Center in Woodburn) have been pioneers in developing "indigenous projects" to respond to the needs of local farmworkers. Their role in each community has been a "community-building" one-- as much or more oriented toward fostering community recognition of diversity and responsiveness to the needs of indigenous migrants as toward legal intervention. Because they have seen their role as mediators and intermediaries they have made major contributions to immigrant integration.

In the school environment, some facets of Migrant Education program staff and bilingual teaching personnel's roles relate to conflict prevention and resolution. One of the successes of communities such as Arvin and Woodburn is that they have not experienced gang problems or ethnic conflict of the sort that is all too often part of urban life. School personnel have played important roles in fostering a positive school environment in both communities. The immigrant and non-immigrant children and youth alike were mostly happy in school and their parents were, by and large, very pleased with their children's school experience.

In every community we studied, liaison people and organizations had emerged who had taken it upon themselves to reach out to the immigrant population in ways that made them feel more welcome. The Welcoming New Iowan and North Carolinian programs at University of Northern Iowa and UNC Greensboro, respectively, have worked to locate people who can occupy liaison positions. They are not alone. In Marshall and Marshalltown, the Catholic Church has been a strong proponent of new immigrants' rights, and in North Carolina the Episcopal Church. University, secondary educational, and elementary educational personnel in Marshall and Marshalltown have moved into similarly advocacy positions.

2. ***Local communities should seek out, establish communication with, and support immigrant advocacy and immigrant membership organizations so that they can then be called upon as resources for conflict mediation, for facilitating communication, and to contribute to the process of immigrant social integration.***

In Woodburn, Oregon, a local community group, Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste (PCUN) played an important role in helping Mexican immigrant farmworkers achieve legal status under IRCA—helping low-literate farmworkers prepare and file their applications and teaching them English. This was, for many, their first step in settling into the community and an extremely positive experience since, in most cases, the help they got in dealing with the complexity of immigration paperwork was provided by non-immigrant volunteers. As PCUN evolved into a local, regional, and nationally prominent labor organization, it had an important impact on the wages and working conditions of Willamette Valley farmworkers and, thus, on the majority of Woodburn immigrants' well-being. It has contributed to local immigrant leadership development but has not yet played a major role in local civic life.

In Arvin, California more than a decade ago, California Rural Legal Assistance (CRLA) played an important role in overcoming what had been, until then, a major problem for immigrants settling into the community. The problem related to policy targeting Mexican immigrants for traffic stops and issuing citations for minor violations of the vehicle codes. As a result of CRLA advocacy, this practice stopped; interviews with local immigrants show that this had been seen

by immigrants settling in town as a major issue of racial discrimination and that the resulting change significantly shifted their attitudes toward local government and community life. CRLA and similar organizations play an important role as the incubator for developing immigrant leadership. For example, CRLA's community legal worker in Arvin, a Mixtec former farmworker, recently ran for office and won a seat on the elementary school board.

In Woodburn, Oregon, the Oregon Law Center played an even more proactive role in working with municipal government and small immigrant entrepreneurs in the downtown area to address widespread concerns about crime (drug-dealing and prostitution) by nurturing a Downtown Association and planning which led to revitalization of the downtown area by converting a parking lot into a park/community event area.

In North Carolina, the Farm Labor Organizing Committee has advocated on behalf of immigrant farmworkers, as have the Episcopal Church and Student Action for Farmworkers (housed at the NC Department of Labor).

3. Municipalities should be welcoming to immigrant entrepreneurs by facilitating licensing efforts and approach code enforcement with some flexibility, educating immigrant entrepreneurs about regulatory expectations and facilitating new business startup.

Immigrant entrepreneurs can contribute a great deal to assuring a healthy economy in rural communities which are being buffeted by macro-level economic change as part of the globalization of agriculture. Our studies were not designed to quantify the impact of immigrant businesses in local communities but it is clear that they generate significant numbers of jobs and tax revenue in communities which have a fragile economic base.

None of the immigrant entrepreneurs we interviewed had been able to secure loans from local banks and they had set up the small businesses they were running relying entirely on loans from family, fellow immigrant business people, or, in some cases, extended family networks. Those we talked to had made a go of it by working long hours and relying on family members to keep their enterprise running through hard times. Without their proprietors' skill and social network resources to draw on, these businesses could not have survived or thrived. We were pleased to hear that local government staff in regulatory roles such as zoning, business permit offices, enforcement of health and sanitation codes had all adopted a strategy of helping owners to comply with applicable regulations rather than enforcement-only.

This has been the case in Southeastern North Carolina, where Clinton city managers report that immigrant demand for licenses and other business paraphernalia has been increasing steadily over the past decade. Initially slow to respond, their offices have been more and more interested in meeting immigrants' needs to establish businesses, particularly impressed with the range of businesses immigrants are seeking to establish.

Woodburn, Oregon has become a regional center for services and retail merchandising for Willamette Valley immigrants in part as a result of Mexican immigrant entrepreneurs setting up a range of retail stores: restaurants, clothing stores, bakeries, grocery stores, real estate agencies. A local Mexican immigrant entrepreneurs now produces music CD's and sells them throughout the state. Russian immigrant entrepreneurs have joined native-born families in operating farms—

even in a difficult economic environment. A local immigrant-operated business provides driving instruction in Spanish.

Arvin, California has a weaker local economy than most of the communities in our study but most of the non-agricultural businesses hiring local residents are run by immigrant entrepreneurs. The City of Arvin contracted with a well-know Los Angeles-based economic development organization, TELACU, to secure funding for a small business incubation project, which had not, during the course of our study, had a noticeable impact on the local economy. The effort, nonetheless, has some promise—certainly more than an earlier less culturally responsive effort to develop a golf course on a hot, ugly hillside south of town more than 20 miles from the nearest freeway.

Immigrant entrepreneurs often occupy niches in local economies and societies that have been abandoned by native businesses as unprofitable. In most of our case studies, immigrant entrepreneurs we interviewed founded their businesses on family labor, using their own savings, and often subsidized their businesses with continued work in the formal economy as wage or salary workers. These attributes of immigrant businesses, combined with their tendency to locate in areas that have often been abandoned or are in decline (strip malls in small town downtowns), make them more resilient to economic downturns and assure that they will likely continue diversifying the local economic base. In Walnut Grove, Minnesota, locals celebrated the founding of an Asian grocery store by a Hmong immigrant, and look forward to having an Asian restaurant there in the near future.

Immigrant entrepreneurs often occupy niches in local economies and societies that have been abandoned by native businesses as unprofitable

Our impression from the New Pluralism study communities is that the sort of project in community economic development which "made sense" to federal funding agencies had little to do with the practical exigencies of creating or maintaining local jobs. More work is clearly needed to help these communities with a faltering agribusiness economic base find innovative solutions to jobs creation.

Immigrant entrepreneurs appeared to be as likely as native-born entrepreneurs to contribute to local charities, community organization, and institutions such as schools.

4. *Local banks should, to the extent possible, develop strategies to identify sound candidates for business loans among immigrant entrepreneurs.*

Talking to bankers and business people underscored the fact that in the current business and regulatory environment, that local bankers in rural communities do not have the flexibility to make loans to immigrant entrepreneurs who seldom have the sort of business track record or financial assets to support a good loan package/application. While many immigrant small businesses survive and thrive without access to commercial credit, their businesses would probably have expanded faster and more would have succeeded with even modest access to credit.

Local strategies akin to "micro-finance" projects in developing countries might be appropriate. In Arvin, California, for example, informal extended family networks provide loans to assist small grocery store owners weather the ups-and-downs in cash flow typical of a seasonal agricultural communities; the community as a whole, as well as the small business owners, benefit.

With few exceptions, in Iowa, Minnesota, North Carolina, and Georgia, immigrant entrepreneurs approached banks for small business loans but were turned away. Instead they relied on their own savings, the assistance of family, and other sources (such as continued employment). Some reported that, like dealing with the Small Business Administration, banks required complex business proposals prior to lending, yet they failed to provide any training in how to complete such a proposal.

5. Local municipalities should work collaboratively with non-profit and for-profit organizations providing low-income housing to facilitate housing development and to avoid residential segregation.

Most, though not all, immigrants to rural U.S. communities are farmworkers and sub-standard housing has, for many years been one of the primary problems they face. When farmers stopped (about 20 years ago) providing housing for migrant family farmworkers, these families were forced into living in crowded households in run-down houses in town. Provision of adequate affordable housing is important for immigrants, almost all of whom are low-wage working poor.

While some rural communities have been hostile to non-profit affordable housing developers, municipal government in Woodburn, Oregon has worked closely and effectively with Farmworker Housing Development Corporation (FHDC) to develop four clusters of housing more than 100 housing units. There was recognition by both city government and the housing developers of the desirability of distributing housing which would be occupied primarily by immigrant families to avoid de facto housing segregation. FHDC has also assisted low-income families, both immigrants and non-immigrants, in buying their own homes.

City government in Arvin, California, has also been friendly to affordable housing developers and, working with Kern County government, the community has, over the past decade, added several hundred units of new housing to what was once primarily dilapidated housing. The Arvin mayor worked informally but diligently to encourage weekend rehabilitation and clean up of dilapidated housing. Recent increases in the availability of housing affordable for the two-thirds of Arvin households who work in farmwork show the importance of county government collaboration with federal funding agencies and the importance of political will to make progress—as the housing issue was pushed hard by the county supervisor for the district, a Mexican-American former farmworker program administrator, who was born in Arvin.

Housing has been one area where immigrants have, historically, been taken advantage of. In North Carolina and Georgia, local landlords, some immigrants or the descendants of immigrants themselves, have established labor camps that offer new immigrants substandard housing for high rents. By contrast, in Marshalltown, immigrants have been able to purchase homes through the work of immigrants who have become realtors themselves. In some cases, these realtors have taken steps to instruct potential immigrant homeowners in the steps they need to take to

establish credit histories, the cash they will need for closing costs, and other aspects of buying a home. Latino/a realtors provide similar assistance in Woodburn, Oregon.

6. ***Local churches should be recognized as resources for immigrant social integration and be encouraged to take initiative in addressing not only the spiritual dimensions of immigrants' experience but also in facilitating social and civic integration.***

Another example of the ways in which semi-formal social networks can play a role in addressing immigrant social and civic integration stems from our observations about churches' role. In both Woodburn, Oregon and Arvin, California local evangelical churches have been open and welcoming to immigrants. Because evangelical Christian sects have relied so heavily on lay ministers and because of a tradition of encouraging the formation of new, small congregations, these religious networks have rapidly responded to the influxes of immigrants. Particularly in Arvin, California they have moved rapidly to find ways to respond to the personal and social pressures immigrants face in adapting to life in the U.S.—providing family counseling, recreational events, in addition to the traditional charitable food assistance and second-hand clothing provided by traditional churches.

Despite the Catholic Church's political commitment to its immigrant parishioners, in neither Arvin nor Woodburn has the local church been as active as the smaller, newer Christian "store front" churches. An important lesson to be learned from this is the utility of immigrants shaping their own institutions.

The same cannot be said of Catholic Churches in Marshalltown and Marshall, where bilingual sisters have made exceptional efforts to address immigrants' needs. The Baptist Church in Marshalltown and the Episcopalian Church in North Carolina have been similarly proactive. These churches have been instrumental in facilitating immigrant integration, addressing needs that extend far beyond the spiritual needs of immigrants and embracing social justice issues and social service needs. In most cases, the immigrants they assist need not be members of their congregations nor even Christians; the Marshall Catholic Church, for example, has assisted Muslim immigrants as much as members of their congregations.

7. ***Rural communities where immigrants have settled and where immigration continues should explore ways to better share information, insights, and innovative strategies for addressing common challenges.***

Because rural communities have been proactive in developing various distinct "home grown" strategies for facilitating immigrant integration, information-sharing and efforts to facilitate learning from each other have great promise.

Networking among communities might be facilitated via professional associations of municipal government personnel and, perhaps, also by specialized professional associations of educators and health service providers. Current networks of this sort such as the National Association of Community Health Care clinics, Migrant Education, and Migrant Head Start associations, the Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs play a valuable role in this sort of information-sharing and peer technical assistance among non-profit service providers but our study showed that it might well b e useful for there to be attention to networking at the

community-to-community level—since, as might be expected each of these networks had a program-oriented focus.

Existing federal institutional networks such as USDA's Agricultural Extension Service which are now providing extensive technical assistance to agricultural producers are becoming increasingly involved in community development issues and represent a possible locus for community-to-community help in addressing the challenges of immigrant integration in rural communities.

The International City/County Management Association (ICMA) has sponsored as part of its national conferences strands focusing on the situation of communities which are changing as a consequence of immigration. This group probably represents a valuable resource for effective networking among small rural communities.

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Mainstream federal programs such as the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and Community Service Block Grant (CSBG) are recognized by some community development specialists as important resources but, from the community-level perspective, the programs have not been particularly responsive to rural communities' needs. The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has experimented with regional programs fielding "community-builders" but these have not had a noticeable presence in the New Pluralism study communities.

SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS

Each of the rural communities in the New Pluralism study had developed its own distinctive response to community diversity. For each, the first step in effective community response was to recognize and embrace diversity. The crucial second step was the decision to seek positive, proactive ways to move forward together, recognizing that all community residents—immigrant and native-born—would benefit.

In each community, the specific local institutions and organizations which organized the most proactive response were different and, thus, no single community had an entirely "comprehensive" response—although some communities were more proactive than others. The fact that each community actually has a slightly different range of issues to address, different resources to draw on, and a different way of framing initiatives to advance overall community well-being in the face of change makes it clear that communities can learn from each other. At the same time, this finding underscores the need for social policy in general to address issues at the "micro-level", that is, in terms of the specific day-to-day interactions among community residents, not simply in broad generic strokes. While, there is no single "best solution", the general principles outlined in this short piece may provide a useful reference for community reflection and efforts to think through "next steps" in making civic life better for everyone in a community.

In considering community attitudes toward immigrant integration, it is worthwhile to consider as well the broader social context in which immigration has taken place, both to identify the structural barriers to integration and to assess the prospects for community members to welcome or reject new immigrants. The two Midwestern communities have experienced population loss in the past few decades, for example, which predisposes them to any increase in their populations that they may experience; their emphasis is now toward retaining the immigrants they have. In the South, by contrast, the same economic growth that has attracted immigrants has also attracted U.S. citizens from the Northeast and Midwest. The robust population growth of Southern states has created jobs for immigrants, but its legacy of racism and its residues (segregated neighborhoods, poor funding for public parks and services, the siphoning off of public school education funds for private schools, suspicion of nonwhites by whites, etc.) will continue to reduce the extent to which new immigrants feel welcome.

We are impressed that even within the small sample of six rural communities in our New Pluralism study there was a wealth of promising approaches to immigrant social integration and that traditional small-town openness to individual, informal initiatives to "make things better in the community" was a real resource for these communities. Broader state-level and regional community-to-community collaboration in moving forward proactively to address the challenges of immigrant integration may well be the next step—whether or not federal-level legislative efforts result in genuine immigration reform and national-level leadership in immigrant social and civic integration.

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