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The Emerging “Immigrant-Friendly” City: How and why cities frame themselves as welcoming places to immigrants

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The Emerging “Immigrant-Friendly” City: How and why cities frame themselves as welcoming places to immigrants

College Honors Thesis
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Abstract

Despite the media’s controversial and largely negative portrayal of immigrants and refugees in American society, a growing number of cities have been attempting to attract and support immigrants and refugees through various welcoming initiatives. These cities increasingly seek to be designated as “immigrant-friendly” in various ways and for distinct reasons. Cities often undertake welcoming initiatives as an urban regeneration strategy, often to promote economic revitalization, although in some cases this reasoning has been refuted and critiqued. There is no comprehensive definition for the immigrant-friendly designation, in part, because the criteria are specific to each city’s strategies to attract and support immigrants and refugees. In order to research the ways in which cities frame themselves as immigrant-friendly, I explore this phenomenon on a national, regional, and local level. The national scale analysis looks at broad trends in the demographic and economic characteristics of cities designated as immigrant-friendly. The regional scale analysis focuses on post-industrial cities of the Rust Belt, using three exemplar cities: Dayton, OH; Indianapolis, IN; and Utica, NY. Finally, I focus on Dayton, Ohio as a local scale case study, with an expanded investigation of welcoming strategies to provide insight into the grounded realities of implementing immigrant-friendly polices. Using a mixed-methods approach, this project explores which cities frame themselves as immigrant-friendly, why cities seek the immigrant-friendly designation, what their goals are in doing so, and what tools they use to define and justify their designation as immigrant-friendly.
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Chapter 1 - Introduction

Many cities in the United States have struggled to remain competitive in an increasingly global economy, while, simultaneously, the influx of immigrants in the United States has become the “new socio-demographic reality in the twenty first century,” (Mitnik et al. 2008, 9). While some cities continue to view immigrants as a burden, others have shifted municipal policies to attract or support immigrants and refugees. In this project I explore why some cities choose this path and what the components of “immigrant-friendly” status are through an overview of scholarly research, an analysis of US cities designated as “immigrant-friendly,” and a case study of Dayton, Ohio.

Much of the previous work on immigrant-related development primarily examines why cities would want to attract immigrants and lauds the positive aspects of attracting immigrants to post-industrial cities, especially in terms of the labor force, housing stock, and economic development. For example, many scholars have argued that immigrants can revitalize depressed economies through economic development (Burayidi 2013, Light and Rosenstein 1995, Mitnik et al. 2008). Others argue that immigrant-related development should focus on human rights and the support that cities can provide to them, rather than simply capitalizing on what immigrants can do for the city. Regardless of implementation strategy, “welcoming” initiatives depend on the context of the individual cities, yet share the core themes of welcoming immigrants and improving the city itself.

However, it is important to also entertain a critical view of the arguments and policies advocated by the cities, institutions, and nonprofits that produce this literature; some scholars contend that such economic development efforts can lead to gentrification,
residential displacement, or compounded exclusion and marginalization experienced by minorities for benefits to tourists and non-residents (Lin 1998, Mele 2015). Fleury-Steiner and Longazer argue that immigrants are increasingly seen as “useful invaders,” who find inclusion through economic benefits they bring to the local community, yet they simultaneously experience exclusion, as many communities view immigrants as a cultural threat (2010, 157). If immigrants are to revitalize previously depressed economies, there is a significant burden placed on migrants to succeed amidst financially and socially challenging circumstances.
Chapter 2 – Immigrant-Friendly Cities in a Context of Urban Restructuring

I. Introduction

Where are “immigrant-friendly” cities located? What characteristics do they hold? And what forces and practices lead cities to adopt this designation? In this chapter I begin to answer these questions by framing my empirical research through grounding it in historical context, economic theory, and existing literature on immigrant-related development. First, I look at urban regeneration as a whole, beginning with the historical circumstances that have brought regeneration strategies to the forefront of urban development in many cities. Next, I explore specific urban regeneration strategies, drawing from both national and international examples. After developing a foundation for urban regeneration strategies, I review critiques of the neoliberal city, focusing first on the neoliberal influences that shape urban areas in particular. As a part of this critique, I explore cities’ responses to neoliberalism, and the strategies that have prevailed through this framework. Finally, I delve into the literature surrounding immigrant-related development, and the social, economic, and cultural impetus for cities to seek immigrant-friendly designations.

II. Historical context of urban regeneration

Many forms of immigrant-friendly initiatives operate in the context of urban regeneration strategies. Across the United States, and indeed many parts of the world, urban cores experience deterioration or renovation (and often both simultaneously) as a result of a kaleidoscope of forces including deindustrialization, gentrification, suburbanization, and other forms of capital (dis)investment.
In post-WWII America, urban decline could be greatly attributed to the heightening role of capital in the disinvestment in cities and investment in suburbs. Critics argue that the reliance on the market, and the drive to generate profit, has elevated capital accumulation to the extent that it has disenfranchised human agency. David Harvey summarizes this phenomenon in asserting:

Monetary relations have penetrated into every nook and cranny of the world and into almost every aspect of social, even private life. This formal subordination of human activity to capital, exercised through the market, has been increasingly complemented by that real subordination which requires the conversion of labor into the commodity labor power through primitive accumulation. (Harvey 2006, 373)

Capital flows, through investment or disinvestment, influence and construct both the built environment and the social geographies that unfold through space and time. Harvey further expands on this phenomenon through his theory of the Circuits of Capital. The primary circuit of capital entails the structure of relations present in the process of reproduction. This process necessitates the productivity of labor in the production of values and surplus values, of which a proportion, in turn, sustains the reproduction of labor power (Harvey 1989). The premise of this circuit places the importance of profit at the forefront of the production and reproduction processes as a driving force. The secondary circuit of capital involves the capital flows into fixed asset and consumption fund formation. Because capital investment in fixed assets indicates its immobility, this circuit “entails the creation of a whole physical landscape for the purposes of production, circulation, exchange, and consumption” (Harvey 1989, 64). It follows that the investment in infrastructure and buildings facilitates the flow of capital and its reproduction. The tertiary circuit of capital is twofold: the investment in science and
technology makes the process of reproduction more efficient, and the investment in social programs preserves the well-being of the labor force, and therefore, the production process (Harvey 1989). This theory signifies the dominant role of capital and the quest for profit in influencing, and to some degree, determining both the built environment and the health of its residents.

As a result of investment, or in this case disinvestment, urban restructuring becomes a product of capitalism. Because capital seeks profit-making opportunities, it has little commitment to place. In the context of the Rust Belt, manufacturing firms generally moved to the South or to international locations with more abundant opportunities for profit (Vey 2008). In this regard, capital abandoned industrial cities, setting off new migration patterns and capital-driven policies toward suburbs, other regions of the US, and off-shore locations.

Historically, capital investment and/or disinvestment generated three dominant migration trends: In the early stages of industrialization, there was a growing rural-to-urban migration of households, the majority of which could be considered low- and moderate-income, that poured into industrial cities. Secondly, at the height of industrialization, the migration of racial and ethnic groups (including international immigration and African-Americans moving from the South) into working- and middle-class city neighborhoods led to tensions among urban residents. Lastly, the urban-to-suburban migration of white middle-class residents, many of whom were fleeing the growing minorities in the aforementioned urban neighborhoods, led to disinvestment in the urban core (Gale 1984). These trends obscure the role of the government in its quest for capital, in causing mass migration in displacement through massive urban “renewal”
programs, interstate highway construction, and exclusionary housing practices. The government has since shifted federal policies to promote inner city reinvestment, yet the effectiveness of reinvestment policies remains unclear. These urban policies will be explored in the following section.

On a national scale, the post-WWII era policies of removing urban “blight” and implementing urban renewal strategies through the Housing Acts of 1949 and 1954 tore apart the inner city (Hanlon 2010). In effect, these policies reduced the city to a desolate wasteland, making it difficult to attract businesses and institutions that would foster economic growth. The social vitality of cities in the post-WWII era deflated with the government’s role in incentivizing suburban living through the 1944 GI Bill’s guaranteed mortgages, homeownership-induced tax deductibles, and federal investment in suburban-centric infrastructure (Hanlon 2010). These policies essentially rid the inner city of any attractive qualities, as many of the commercial and business institutions followed the exodus out of the city and into the suburbs. With this exodus, livable qualities also disappeared, including jobs, food stores, decent housing, and good schools.

Arguably the most transformative urban planning issue—resulting in the persistent disenfranchisement of minority populations—involves the racially based housing discrimination that has plagued the nation through its entire urban history, but took new forms in the early and mid-20th C. In the words of Thomas Sugrue,

White real estate brokers shunned black clients and encouraged restrictive covenants and other discriminatory practices that kept blacks out of most of [Detroit’s] single-family houses. Bankers seldom lent to black home buyers, abetted by federal housing appraisal practices that ruled black neighborhoods to be dangerous risks for mortgage subsides and home loans. The result was that blacks were trapped in the city’s worst housing, in strictly segregated sections of the city (1996, 34).
The effects of these housing practices—restrictive covenants, redlining, blockbusting, and other racially discriminatory practices—can still be seen today across the country in thoroughly segregated neighborhoods, and starkly unequal housing conditions, which leave African Americans and other marginalized groups at a significant societal disadvantage. Ultimately these inequitable circumstances hinder communities of color from holding a secure stake in local politics, further rooting municipal decision-making in the hands of the advantaged.

Another major contributor to urban decline was the construction of the US interstate highway system. The expansion of highways began with an effort to make roads more travelable for the distribution of armaments for World War I (Jones 2008). Because individual owners originally kept up rural roads, federal and state involvement came into play with the necessity to transport goods for the war. A post-WWII stimulus plan heavily contributed to the rise of highways through urban areas: “Late in the war, the Bureau of Public Roads was asked to revise its 1939 plan so that it could serve as the centerpiece of the Roosevelt administration’s program of postwar public works,” (Jones 2008, 103). This plan encompassed the construction of a network of defense highways that were to become the Interstate system.

Many urbanists remain critics of the US Interstate system. Kunstler argues that the rise of the automobile and the fall of the streetcar led to “the degradation of urban life caused by enticing the middle class to make their homes outside of town. It began an insidious process that ultimately cost America its cities” (Kunstler 1993, 90). Highway construction was seen to bifurcate urban neighborhoods, and disproportionally destroy neighborhoods with high numbers of racial and ethnic minorities (Kunstler 1993). Others
dismiss these claims as “revisionist” and overly exaggerated. Jones states that “urbanists champion the revisionist view that the interstate was an outsized public works program that propelled the growth of automobile ownership, sapped the vitality of central cities, and spurred suburban sprawl, creating the most auto-dependent nation on earth,” (Jones 2008, 110). Conversely, Jones argues that the interstate system was only one of the reasons for which the United States has become such a heavily motorized country, citing the weak link between highway development and automobile ownership (Jones 2008). Regardless of opinion, highway development did indeed influence the ways in which cities evolved in the post-WWII period.

The return to policies and practices that favor urban areas becomes apparent in President Obama’s Executive Order with the establishment of the White House Office of Urban Affairs. The purported goals of the order involve developing policies that promote smart investment decisions and strategic development plans in urban areas. These plans would help to foster economic health and social vitality, and would supposedly “create employment and housing opportunities and make our country more competitive, prosperous, and strong,” (Obama quoted in Hanlon 2010, 257). Although the Obama Administration’s advances in urban policy have proved to be limited, the present-day national urban policy represents an opportunity for urban revitalization both in terms of improving cities’ economic health through the investment in programs targeting employment and housing options, as well as expanding cities’ social vitality by revisiting and reinvesting in the idea of widely attractive public spaces.

The push for cities to become more entrepreneurial and competitive, however, has had negative impacts on low-income neighborhoods, as they are often cited as areas for
future “global city” developments, while simultaneously displacing the neighborhood’s inhabitants. David Wilson summarizes this phenomenon well in stating, “Most notably, global prognosticators knew that impoverished black neighborhoods were easiest to squeeze to help re-entrepreneurialize the city (in the era of dwindled federal support),” (Wilson 2007, 38). In order to combat this unjust practice of favoring large-scale “spectacle” developments like festival marketplaces or grand stadiums in hopes of becoming a “global city,” at the cost of predominantly African American low-income neighborhoods, I argue that it is more valuable to prioritize reinvestment in these neighborhoods to improve employment and housing opportunities.

The Obama Administration has taken strides toward achieving these traits in low-income neighborhoods through restoring funding to the Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG). This move to increase federal community development funding, in Obama’s words, “provides housing and creates jobs primarily for low- and moderate-income people and places,” (Obama quoted in Hanlon 2010, 204). In effect, this government support for community development will help to improve the economic health of American cities by creating employment and housing opportunities in urban areas previously devoid of these necessary conditions.

Unfortunately, there is a slim likelihood that the federal reinvestment in community development initiatives (like CDBG) will fully revitalize economically struggling cities within the next several years, and even less chance that investments will primarily benefit poor communities. The allocation of funds is heavily politicized, as “powerful political actors in the US House and Senate will steer funds to their districts and states without regard for the benefits of the whole,” (Hanlon 2010, 254).
A. Urban regeneration framework

By no means are the responses and solutions to the disinvestment and decay of urban centers uniform. Urban regeneration strategies range from “revalorizing urban space” (Shaw and Porter 2009, 2) and increasing land values to implementing a social development plan that emphasizes basic needs, individual capacity, and social capacity (City of Vancouver 2005, cited in Colantonio 2010). One attempt at an exhaustive definition for urban regeneration is:

A comprehensive and integrated vision and action which leads to the resolution of urban problems and which seeks to bring about lasting improvement in the economic, physical, social and environmental condition of an area that has been subject to change (Roberts 2000, 17).

Although it is helpful to have a blanket definition of urban regeneration, it is arguably futile for a single definition to attempt to encompass all of the strategies and intents that exist within the realm of regeneration. Therefore, it can be helpful to identify certain themes that can both incorporate the many strategies and goals of urban regeneration, and elaborate beyond the rather vague aforementioned categories, “economic, physical, social, and environmental.” Colantonio and Dixon (2011, 8) identify six essential narratives of urban regeneration that stand out in the literature:

- Property-led physical approach, where, for example, a major retail-led or mixed-use scheme is expected to have multiplier effects in the local economy (for example, Dixon and Marston, 2003; DTZ, 2009)

- Business-driven approach, which highlights the importance of “underserved markets” particularly in inner-city areas as important foci for regeneration through business investment (for example, Porter, 1995)

- Urban form and design perspective, which highlights the importance of the relationship between sustainable development and urban form (for example, Burton et al., 1997)

- Cultural industries approach, which stresses the importance of creative and cultural media industries as vehicles for regeneration (for example, Florida, 2004)
- Health and well-being perspective, which highlights the role that well-designed spaces can have on neighborhood health and livability (for example, Barton et al., 2003)

- Community-based, social economy approach, which highlights the importance of involving local communities in decision making and developing social capital networks (for example, Thomas and Duncan, 2000)

Of course, these narratives evolve within the context of the dominant political leanings and social responses to issues within the boundaries and conditions of the physical environment (Roberts 2000). To further understand regeneration, these themes can also be organized around three main phases of regeneration: remediation, development, and investment (Colantonio and Dixon 2011). Remediation has been characterized by its capacity to be high cost, high risk, yet produce high returns through activities like site assembly, site remediation, and infrastructure provision. Development, by contrast, can be outlined by its potential to be debt-financed, high risk, with uncertain capital values, and possibly lead to high returns. Often development is dominated by bank lending with narrow capacity for institutional engagement. A common example of development is the construction of property and subsequent renting of the property to tenants. Lastly, investment can be seen as low risk, with low returns, yet it frequently involves secure revenue streams, and is easily accessible by many institutions. Investment often entails selling inhabited property in the investment market (Colantonio and Dixon 2011). These phases do not necessarily occur in uniform sequence, and some regeneration initiatives may not involve all three phases at all. These phases are merely a way of summarizing the conventional steps taken in the process of regeneration.
It has been argued that regeneration is a euphemism for gentrification, or the process of refurbishing urban residences, which results in a general population shift to higher-income households, often displacing lower-income households in the process (Hanlon 2010). However, Shaw and Porter (2009) reconcile regeneration and gentrification through “occupying different spaces on a continuum of social and economic geographic change, where maximum disinvestment, or ‘filtering’ is at one extreme, and ‘super-gentrification’ – where corporate executives displace university professors — is at the other,” (2-3). While regeneration can and does lead to gentrification, it should not be simplified as such. Regeneration has the capacity to lead to more socioeconomically equitable outcomes. However, it would be unrealistic and negligent to avoid discussing the contested viewpoints of urban regeneration.

Urban regeneration is a contested phenomenon with a complex network of actors and interests that exist on different scales. Perhaps the actor most central to urban regeneration is capital. The city itself acts as a tool of capital investment, driven by and dependent on the endless search for profit. Harvey summarizes the city as a vehicle for the interests of capital by describing demand-side urbanization:

New kinds of communities could be constructed, packaged, and sold in a society where who you were depended less and less on class position and more and more on how you spent money in the market. Living spaces were made to represent status, position, and prestige. Social competition with respect to life-style and command over social space and its significations became an important aspect of access to life chances (Harvey 1989, 40).

While the post-war city became a testing ground for consumerism and the capital investment, spatial reorganization emerged out of capital-driven policies and social migrations. As consumer landscapes shifted, inner cities were left to decline while suburbs flourished.
As a product of capital’s influence over the city, several actors become enlisted in the quest for reinvestment, and the rejuvenation of the city. From a governmental standpoint, both local- and regional-scale governance can influence regeneration strategies. Because both scales of governance have specific structures, responsibilities, stakeholders, and visions, it is not uncommon for disputes to arise over boundaries. Kidokoro et al. suggest, “to institutionalize boundary-crossing behavior rather than boundary-managing defensiveness, regional interests must seek and sustain local empowerment,” (2008, 332). This point suggests that local residents’ concerns and suggestions must be taken into account when determining a regeneration strategy, as the public may, and often does, have interests that are distinct from those of the local and regional government. From another standpoint, McGahey argues that efforts should be taken to “align economic and workforce development programs with the regional economy, not with governmental boundaries,” (2008, 24). This point gives greater weight to the economy than to government structures, as fragmented government-run programs can result in wasted resources and duplication of programs.

From a social justice perspective, regeneration schemes often have many local officials, business owners, and developers seeking economic development and reinvestment, while residents who do not own property become vulnerable to eviction and displacement (Ledraa and Abu-Anzeh 2009). An emergent trend from several regeneration strategies has been the focus on physical problems in a city without effectively addressing a city’s socioeconomic issues. Additionally, many urban issues have been compounded by the disintegration of traditional community structures brought on by “the disappearance of traditional sources of employment, the effects of policies
aimed at rehousing urban residents, the impact of infrastructure and commercial property development, the decay of the environment, and the absence of adequate social facilities,” (Roberts 2000, 26). These influences, driven in large part by capital and discriminatory practices that fuel profit-making housing schemes, have contributed toward the spatial segregation/concentration of low-income groups, racial minorities, and new immigrants in inner city neighborhoods. By capitalizing on racial divides and tensions, community networks have broken down, in effect compounding significant racial and ethnic oppression with preexisting urban problems.

**B. Urban regeneration strategies**

Many urban regeneration strategies emphasize the use of policy measures and governance to effect change in the urban realm. While the role of the state in urban regeneration has customarily been grounded in intervention, Roberts argues, “urban regeneration is by its very nature an interventionist activity,” (2000, 21). Many state-led and policy-based strategies for regeneration have outcomes that do not often match the original intentions. There are obviously limitations in the extent to which policies can influence development and construction. The diversity of actors involved in regeneration discourse produces a number of challenges that can delay, sway, or even halt revitalization plans. To illustrate the various approaches to urban regeneration, this section will draw on both national and international case studies, as the process of urban decline and regeneration is part of a global trend.

*State-led and policy-based regeneration schemes:*

Historically, in US cities, much of the state-led intervention has been characterized by massive urban renewal schemes and demolition-based urban
restructuring programs. These regeneration strategies have generally been criticized as negligent of the social and economic problems facing the urban areas, instead opting for approaches that view physical change as the solution to inner city revitalization. While urban renewal schemes of the 1960s created the contemporary urban spaces that are popularly recognized in places like the Rust Belt, these demolition-oriented tendencies have been widely replaced with more policy and program-based approaches to urban regeneration.

In Seattle, for example, a municipal revitalization planning initiative founded on the basis of city-resident cooperation helped to stem out-migration to the suburbs. While Seattle did not face unemployment and population loss to the degree of many Rust Belt cities, massive suburbanization between the 1960s and 1980s contributed toward a need for reinvestment in low-income urban areas. Beginning in the 1980s, out-migration was reversed through a combination of community-sponsored Action Plans that outline land use, housing, and economic development goals, as well as an approach to neighborhood planning through a system of “Urban Villages,” (Bright 2003). This approach concentrates growth in small areas, in effect, empowering communities and encouraging mixed use and mixed income planning. The zoning codes have been revised to reflect these planning goals. Furthermore, the City of Seattle has made a concerted effort to make millions of dollars in public funding available for the development of affordable housing, especially in response to the massive cuts in federal funding in the early 1980s to this end. The State of Washington has also contributed funding for the provision of low-income housing development. Bright (2003, 32-33) offers several takeaways from this case:
- Citywide policies and programs should actively support grassroots neighborhood revitalization efforts in low income areas
- Within low income neighborhoods, a full spectrum of government services should be provided
- A microplanning approach that builds an atmosphere of teamwork and cooperation should be fostered

While this approach worked well in Seattle, it should be acknowledged that the city did not face as tough of an economic downturn with the departure of manufacturing firms as other cities. However, this example serves as a testament to the ability for state-led regeneration strategies, albeit somewhat grassroots in nature, to successfully reverse economic and population decline and counter the market-led decline of poor neighborhoods.

The state can also take a more drastic approach to implementing regeneration schemes through changing planning policies or adjusting legislation to accommodate the scheme’s logistics. Some suggest that the state can ignore public input, or superficially hold a public hearing, while realistically planning to go along with the proposed scheme. Critical urban journalist Jane Jacobs clearly expressed her view of local politicians in stating,

If only well-meaning officials in departments of the city government or in freewheeling authorities knew intimately, and cared about, the streets or districts which their schemes so vitally affect—or if they knew in the least what the citizens of that place consider of value in their lives, and why (1961, 406).

Left unchecked, the state, persuaded by the commanding role of capital, has the potential to dominate the power dynamics involved in development schemes and urban change. Evidence of “top-down” power dynamics can still be seen in the urban fabric today with policies like eminent domain and persistent housing patterns leftover from urban renewal.
The potential for the state’s manipulation of power, policy, and objectives begs the question of accountability. The state can attempt to introduce accountability standards through policy measures aimed at improving urban conditions. For example, under the 2003 Sustainable Communities Plan, developed by the Blair Government in the United Kingdom, four “growth areas” surrounding London were identified. The plan includes public funding for housing and infrastructure in the growth areas, but leaves much of the affordable housing funding to be leveraged through the local planning authorities, or to be acquired through the land value increases of the growth areas slated for development. One accountability strategy has been to require major development projects to agree to construct 20 percent affordable housing on the development site (Colenutt 2009, 64). However, the situation grows more complex with the extent of the property lobby’s weight in development and planning discourse. This recalls the notion of key actors’ influence in regeneration discourse.

Despite policies aimed at increasing the housing stock to match population growth and reflect residents’ demands, middle-income and executive buyers become the target market “to ensure levels of viability demanded by the landowner and developer,” (Colenutt 2009, 67). Ultimately, accountability measures, such as the quota strategy employed in the United Kingdom, become increasingly mitigated by the role of key actors in swaying the state’s actions. Economic interests and competition often inform key actors’ judgments and stakes in regeneration initiatives. Fundamentally, the relationship between the state and the market has grown more interdependent with the rise of globalization and neoliberalism.
Market-led development schemes:

While the state may act as a governance authority in urban regeneration strategies, it has become clear that the interests of capital dictate urban regeneration of any kind, leaving a strategy’s feasibility up to the market. The fundamental concerns of the economic stakeholders involved in regeneration schemes outline the capacity for projects to foster economic stimulation, competition, and financial viability. The narrative underlying urban regeneration seen through an economic lens specifies “realistic cost recovery” (City of Johannesburg cited in Winkler 2009, 31) as the foundation for market-based regeneration efforts. The state sees few benefits from projects that involve long-term investment and management duties with low financial returns, like subsidized housing projects. This narrative has its roots in increasingly popular urban renaissance practices such as, “market-led redevelopments, tax incentives, public/private partnerships, flagship projects, intensive urban management, social mix, middle- and high-income homeownership, and the disintegration of concentrated poverty,” (Winkler 2009, 32), which dominate regeneration schemes in the contemporary neoliberal context.

The growing competition among cities within this neoliberal context has certainly influenced regeneration strategies across the globe. For example, the Pilsen neighborhood in Chicago has found regeneration in the form of white collar-targeted housing developments and cultural spectacle developments in an area plagued by disinvestment. In the late nineteenth century, German and Czech immigrants primarily dominated the neighborhood, but the growth of industry in the 1930s attracted Poles, Croatians, Lithuanians, and Italians to create a working class environment (Wilson et al. 2004). In the 1950s and 1960s, a wave of Mexican Americans migrated to the Pilsen neighborhood,
taking advantage of the inexpensive housing and proximity to factory jobs. In the 1970s, Chicago faced mass deindustrialization, especially devastating the Pilsen neighborhood.

Beginning in 1985, “Pilsen became increasingly attractive for builders and developers. These agents had noticed its proximity to downtown, its low-value land, and sound housing amidst a citywide rise of gentrification,” (Wilson et al. 2004, 1177). Capitalizing on the neighborhood’s proximity to the Loop and its low land values, developers sought to attract the city’s growing white-collar population. In efforts to attract this target group; developers emphasized “local culture” by promoting Pilsen as “an authentically Mexican neighborhood” and “a true Chicago Barrio,” (Wilson et al. 2004, 1177) in effect, commercializing Pilsen’s ethnic heritage and cultural businesses. Perhaps unsurprisingly, these developments gentrified Pilsen, blatantly catering to higher income households and potential investors. Elwood effectively summarizes the effects of these actions by stating that “discourses representing neighborhoods as unhealthy and decaying or as opportunities for capital investment and profit can diminish community organizations’ control over planning policymaking, and development,” (Elwood 2006, 325). These actions not only ignored the social and economic struggles of the neighborhood, and their impact on the Hispanic population, but they caused residents to be priced out of their own neighborhood and displaced.

Grassroots regeneration initiatives

In line with the social capital aspect of social sustainability, grassroots initiatives have been gaining prominence in the realm of urban regeneration. In one situation, following a period of population decline, suburbanization, and the subsequent shrinking tax base, a coalition of residents and merchants in postindustrial Green Bay, Wisconsin came
together to form a regeneration strategy for the CBD. The initial vision statement for the CBD “was sensitive to the need to change the image of the district without producing the negative effects of gentrification, which was a main concern of the local residents,” (Cruz 2009, 113). The group then obtained state funding to improve the CBD, yet the interests and visions of the residents and merchants became increasingly distinct with time.

Although the plan proposed, “new businesses in the district should cater not just for upwardly mobile young professionals but also working-class families,” (Cruz 2009, 116) there was a lack of detail in how to incentivize business to cater to lower-income households. The lack of detail allowed for diverse interpretations of the plan, which ultimately led to development that essentially ostracized the district’s low-income residents. While the plan is comparatively progressive, the vague mission statement has allowed for merchants to capitalize on market-based regeneration in addition to more socially equitable regeneration as recommended by local residents.

In Berne, Switzerland, another grassroots regeneration initiative took hold, which relied more on a policy-based framework. In the 1980s, a growing population of activists, and leftist radicals formed the city’s *alternativszene*, or alternative scene, and resided in the previously working-class inner city Lorraine district. The *alternativszene* lived alongside a high proportion of immigrants in the district, and began to influence the politics of the neighborhood. The *alternativszene*’s most prominent political initiatives included contesting the gentrification-induced housing shortage in the 1990s and reviving the city’s squatter movement. The former involved rallying the government to grant self-governed housing associations a “building lease” which essentially is the rental of real estate on publicly owned land at a fixed rate (Stienen and Blumer 2009). In effect, this
lease allows self-governed housing associations to protect low-income residents from rent increases, and potential displacement. The emerging housing projects that benefited from these building leases responded to “a plurality of lifestyles, some of which were more alternative than others…instead of being displaced, the ‘pioneers’ of Lorraine’s gentrification established themselves in the neighborhood and became firm and powerful contestants of its regeneration (Stienen and Blumer 2009, 218-218). This strategy, although comparatively radical, fostered both public participation and socioeconomic inclusion. It should be noted that the alternative nature of the neighborhood ultimately caused former inhabitants who were decidedly more conservative to move out of the neighborhood, in a unique form of displacement.

III. Critique of the neoliberal city

Neoliberalism gained prominence in the 1980s as part of a broad turn toward laissez-faire market capitalism and the active dismantling of regulatory frameworks, which served to prolong disinvestment in the urban core. The rise of neoliberal ideals developed in response to the weakening Keynesian welfare-oriented policies in early industrial countries, coupled with the declining profitability of mass production (Theodore, Peck, and Brenner 2011). Institutional structures like state-run prisons, labor unions, and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development were strategically broken down to give rise to market-based development in the context of the rapidly globalizing economy. Neoliberalism could therefore be fundamentally reduced to a trilogy of “the individual, the market, and the noninterventionist state” (Hackworth 2007, 9-10), in which the market tends to regulate the state rather than the state regulating the market, and the individual is given the ‘freedom’ to make self-interested decisions (Leitner et al. 2007).
These factors would reign supreme in nearly all neoliberal-related discourse throughout the late twentieth century and into the twenty-first century. In simple terms,

Neoliberal doctrines were deployed to justify, *inter alia*, the deregulation of state control over industry, assaults on organized labor, the reduction of corporate taxes, the privatization of public services and assets, the dismantling of social assistance programs, the enhancement of international capital mobility, and the intensification of interlocality competition, (Theodore, Peck, and Brenner 2011, 15).

While neoliberal ideology favors the lack of state intervention, the state necessarily institutionalizes neoliberal policies, in effect transcribing free market ideals and deregulatory legislation that informs and reproduce competitive tendencies across an unevenly developed economic landscape (Theodore, Peck, and Brenner 2011). Simply put, “neoliberalism…both exploits and produces socio-spatial difference,” (Theodore, Peck, and Brenner 2011, 18). There are two major issues at work in facilitating these socio-spatial differences. Firstly, neoliberal ideology projects states and markets as vehemently oppositional entities, rather than acknowledging the political codependence inherent in economic relations. Secondly, neoliberal doctrine operates on a “one size fits all” policy basis. This structure both neglects the diverse conditions of states and the varying levels of developing economies, and assumes that the introduction of market-oriented policies will produce identical outcomes, (Theodore, Peck, and Brenner 2011).

The critique of the neoliberal city seeks to address concerns such as these, and to identify aspects of injustice in urban discourse and policy, which should be adjusted to reflect the interests of contextual diversity in urban areas.
A. Neoliberal influence on urban areas

While neoliberalism advocates a “one size fits all” implementation strategy, market reforms inevitably function in institutionally specific political contexts, and thus require modifications to any contradictions that arise between neoliberalism and the context of economic policies. These modifications may operate on a path-based trajectory, for example:

The transition from the orthodox, radically anti-statist neoliberalisms of Reagan and Thatcher in the 1980s to the more socially moderate and ameliorative neoliberalisms of Blair, Clinton, and Schroder during the 1990s may...be understood as a path-dependent adjustment and reconstitution of neoliberal strategies in response to endogenous disruptions and dysfunctions, (Theodore, Peck, and Brenner 2011, 19).

Although path-dependent neoliberalism indeed exists on a generally national scale, socioeconomic and political context plays a prominent role in its material manifestation, as neoliberalism can be considered “a highly contingent process that manifests itself, and is experienced differently, across space,” (Hackworth 2007, 11). Despite the neoliberal claim that market forces will produce identical results regardless of scale and place, Brenner and Theodore (2002) argue that context matters with their concept of “actually existing neoliberalism.” This notion can be summarized through the emphasis of “contextual embeddedness of neoliberal restructuring projects insofar as they have been produced within national, regional, and local contexts defined by the legacies of inherited institutional frameworks, policy regimes, regulatory practices, and political struggles” (Brenner and Theodore 2002, 351).

Cities themselves exist as the context in which neoliberalism can be tested, implemented, and reproduced. Leitner et al. describe the neoliberal city as “an
entrepreneurial city, directing all its energies to achieving economic success in competition with other cities for investments, innovations, and ‘creative classes,’” (2007, 4). The process behind neoliberalism’s functionality is *creative destruction*. This involves the dismantling of pre-existing Keynesian structures, including artifacts like public housing and public space, policies like food stamps and redistributive welfare, institutions like labor unions and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and agreements like the Fordist labor arrangement and the devolution of power from federal governance to states and cities, (Hackworth 2007). In the (purposely generated) vacuum of political and economic structures and programs, neoliberal interests subsequently builds institutional arrangements and systems to maintain and reproduce neoliberal ideals over time (Hackworth 2007). Local governance is often left to fend for financial resources to recover the “rolled back” governmental programs and practices. In effect, urban policies, development, and regeneration are directly influenced by the implications of neoliberalism on local institutions. It is extremely important to recognize that the effects of these “roll backs” first reach underprivileged groups that often have little or no access to political power (Harvey 2008).

It has become clear that neoliberalism has engendered negative socioeconomic and political conditions, especially in urban spaces, through crippling competition, and the perpetual, often fruitless quest for investment and development opportunities. These conditions have proved to be endlessly unstable, which are attributed to “neoliberalism’s contradictory creativity—its capacity to repeatedly respond to endemic failures of policy design and implementation through a range of crisis-displacing strategies, fast policy adjustment, and experimental reforms” (Theodore, Peck, and Brenner 2011, 24).
Historically, urban regeneration that has largely excluded the input and concerns of marginalized populations has arisen, in part, as a material manifestation of neoliberal doctrine. David Harvey further explains this concept by stating,

A process of displacement and what I call “accumulation by dispossession” lie at the core of urbanization under capitalism. It is the mirror-image of capital absorption through urban redevelopment, and is giving rise to numerous conflicts over the capture of valuable land from low-income populations that may have lived there for many years, (Harvey 2008, 34).

It is this exclusionary individual-centric neoliberal strategy that ignores institutionalized processes of discrimination, and further compounds inequalities within urban space.

As a globally dominant ideology, neoliberalism reconstitutes itself in exclusionary and power-wielding ways. Its dominance is preserved both through its political prominence, which excuses any criticism from serious consideration, as well as its mathematically complex economics, which effectively limits universal comprehension and public participation (Peet and Hartwick 2009). Furthermore, it is important to recognize that “neoliberal social policy has had a fragmenting effect on progressive activism,” (Hackworth 2007, 175), making grassroots initiatives to refute neoliberal doctrine much more challenging. Harvey summarizes this familiar phenomenon in stating “This is a world in which the neoliberal ethic of intense possessive individualism and its cognate of political withdrawal from collective forms of action, becomes the template for human socialization,” (Harvey 2008, 32). Therefore, neoliberalism’s hindrance of collective objection dispossesses disenfranchised populations of their “right to the city” (Harvey 2008).

On the other hand, Leitner et al. argue that cities are more than just incubators of neoliberal policies and practices. Neoliberalism is indeed impacted by contestation, as it
is not only situated in a political and economic context, but also within a social and cultural context. To a certain extent, social and cultural norms drive neoliberal policies, as they “must conform to some degree with social constructions of legality, ethics, and justice to maintain legitimacy, notwithstanding efforts to redefine justice along neoliberal lines,” Leitner et al. 2007, 10). Ultimately, it is necessary to acknowledge that neoliberalism is not an inevitable facet of the global economic and political trajectory. Thus, there are significant social dimensions to neoliberalism’s hegemony and its potential downfall, and the recognition of this fact, coupled with concerted dedication, may present various opportunities for collective contestation. Practices of contestation can be grouped into four categories: direct action, lobbying and legislative action, alternative knowledge production, and alternative economic and social practices (Leitner et al. 2007). Most urban-related neoliberal contestations rely on lobbying and legislative action, which is often grassroots in nature. Strategies such as this will be explored throughout this paper.

**B. Urban strategies and responses to neoliberalism**

Neoliberal-induced competition inevitably leads to the commodification of the city, with businesses, entertainment centers, and shopping malls all catering to the affluence-obsessed consumer. In effect, these economic strategies have exacerbated the class divide, which in turn, has become “indelibly etched on the spatial forms of our cities, which increasingly consist of fortified fragments, gated communities, and privatized public spaces kept under constant surveillance,” (Harvey 2008, 32). Indeed, the repercussions of neoliberal tendencies can be seen in the disinvested, dismissed, and occasionally carceral spaces they create. Mike Davis explores the “deliberate socio-
spatial strategy,” (1992, 229) of cities in separating and limiting the mobility of races and classes within urban boundaries. Through restrictive and surveillance strategies like gating certain communities, restricting pedestrian access to specific urban areas, and installing prohibitive street furniture, cities effectively create discriminatory spaces that favor more affluent classes over less affluent classes to materially reinforce a specific socio-spatial configuration (Davis 1992). Despite the argument that neoliberal urban regeneration strategies decidedly discriminate against certain segments of the population, these strategies dominate the urban planning field.

*Entrepreneurial urbanism and the “creative city” strategies:*

Amidst the precarious conditions brought on by neoliberalism, cities have responded with strategies like the “creative city.” Cities like Baltimore have undertaken a “creative city” approach to what can be called “entrepreneurial urbanism.” This approach promotes the “cultural atmosphere” of a city through actively producing a sense of urban vitality and creativity, coupled with the revitalization of physical spaces to highlight the cultural artifacts of a city (Ponzini and Rossi 2010). This approach is directly informed by urban theorist Richard Florida’s concept of “creative capital,” which from his perspective “represents a competitive advantage for localizing high-tech and highly specialized activities for fostering economic growth,” (Ponzini and Rossi 2010, 1040).

Many regeneration schemes exist as a function of entrepreneurial urbanism and the quest for “creative capital,” as the target audience is often comprised of middle to high-income creative individuals, tourists, entrepreneurs, and potential investors. By default, regeneration schemes such as these cater to business interests and are not concerned with social inclusion (Ponzini and Rossi 2010). Scholars have critiqued the
“creative city” as it “undervalues socio-spatial dynamics that are typical for the kinds of urban development processes it envisages,” (Ponzini and Rossi 2010, 1041), and contributes to gentrification. Entrepreneurialism as a response to the neoliberal-induced competition greatly contributes to the increase in land values, and the resulting displacement of lower-income residents. The fast-paced policy decisions and “creative” development projects inherent in the neoliberal context has led to quick turnover, as described by Harvey:

A “Financial Katrina” is unfolding, which conveniently (for the developers) threatens to wipe out low-income neighborhoods on potentially high-value land in many inner-city areas far more effectively and speedily than could be achieved through eminent domain (2008, 39).

Therefore, creative initiatives which are more concerned with political and economic gain than social inclusion are reinforced by the widening class divide, state support for ‘public-private partnerships,’ and the speed at which neoliberal operatives progress.

In the context of Baltimore, the creative city approach has led to a regenerated physical environment, and the emergence of what scholars call the “shadow government.” The evidence of neoliberalism can be seen in the “shadow government” model, in which municipal government responsibilities are devolved to non-public actors, and regulations become decentralized, while the mayor and political elite manage the city-wide affairs (Ponzini and Rossi 2010). This decentralization of power lends itself to flexibility in development initiatives, namely creative-centric initiatives that often do not accurately reflect the interests of the whole population. The development of a cultural arts district in inner city Baltimore, despite reaching out to local residents, schools, and community associations in the hopes of achieving the image of a “socially mixed and
culturally vibrant neighborhood,” (Ponzini and Rossi 2010, 1051), generated increased property values that out-strip the financial means of lower-income residents.

Another angle on culturally based regeneration initiatives lies beyond the notion of social inclusion, and centers on that of cultural inclusion. As cities increasingly revitalize urban cores through the clustering of cultural attractions and spectacle developments, a politics of cultural production and the beginning stages of gentrification emerge. One such form of cultural production is *ethnic* reclamation through the development of ethnic districts like “Little Italy” or the promotion of cultural artifacts such as historically significant sites and monuments. While these efforts seek to promote ethnic pride and heritage recovery initiatives, one of the major issues with these efforts involves the question of how history is framed, which groups obtain siting for cultural centers, and which layer of a place’s past is the most ‘marketable.’ For example, cultural reclamation activities in Houston romanticize immigrant experiences in the United States when compared to that of Los Angeles:

In Houston (where Mexicans experience conquest and dispossession), although place-based community development is strong in the east end Mexican community, place-based cultural restoration activities are still incipient. By contrast, Los Angeles’ efforts have emphasized the atrocities of Anglo conquest and the stark historical experiences of ethnic eviction, displacement, and internment (Lin 1998, 332).

Therefore, it becomes crucial to consider the historical lens through which culturally based development efforts are instituted, so as not to misrepresent the experiences of ethnic groups. The rapid pace of neoliberal development again comes into play with cultural reclamation efforts such as these.
Resilience vs. resourcefulness strategies:

In the context of global climate change and increasing globalization, cities face new and unfamiliar environmental, economic, and political obstacles possessing the capacity to substantially alter urban infrastructure, both physical and political. MacKinnon and Derickson (2012) maintain that in a society that has increasingly faced crises and emergencies, cities have become caught up in the notion of resilience, in effect, putting practices into place to restore and preserve the previously existing conditions. Agder defines resilience as “the ability of communities to withstand external shocks to their social infrastructure,” (Agder 2000, 361); while Walker and Cooper contend that resilience is “a pervasive idiom of global governance…abstract and malleable enough to encompass the worlds of high finance, defense, and urban infrastructure,” (Walker and Cooper 2011, 144). While resilience has been commonly cited in the ecological literature, its prominence in the geographical and urban development literature is growing in relation to the rapidly globalizing economy. In the realm of ecology, resilience can effectively maintain the integrity of ecological relationships. In this regard, the “status quo” equates to a healthy, sustainable ecological system. However, in anthropogenic terms, the “status quo” refers to an inherently inequitable political, economic, and social system. Scholars argue that the notion of resilience is a product of neoliberal ideals, which promote the maintenance or reproduction of the status quo without regard to the existing political and social systems’ reproduction of structural inequalities (Leitner et al. 2007). A key characteristic of resilience discourse is the practice of implementing policies and infrastructure that have the capacity to be flexible enough to maintain the quest for profit (but not necessarily people's livelihoods) even in the context of unstable
conditions in the global market. This outlook can be extended to the resilience measures required to respond to potential global political or environmental crises, such as the dramatic securitization and surveillance measures that have emerged in the context of contemporary geopolitical apprehension. It follows that “contemporary forms of securitization overlap substantially with neoliberal discourses of competitiveness, which emphasize the need to promote economic growth” (Bristow 2010 quoted in MacKinnon and Derickson 2012).

Neoliberalism, through the prominence given to competition and economic growth, invokes a discourse that encourages the state to develop policies that favor resilience. However, the decentralization of the state also plays a role in resilience thinking through the encouragement of community scale responsibility and risk management (MacKinnon and Derickson 2012). Resilience strategies are by default more socially inclusive than the “creative city” model, requiring the entire community to modify their lives to be more adaptable to precarious market conditions and potential crises. It should be noted community scale resilience strategies are “not only a product of the ‘top down’ strategies of government, but also of the ‘bottom-up’ activities of a wide variety of community groups and environmental campaigns,” (MacKinnon and Derickson 2012, 257). However, the connotations of the “bottom-up” activities involved in resilience strategies can be encapsulated in the conservative ideal of self-sufficiency and the “pull yourself up by your bootstraps” mentality, again mirroring neoliberal doctrine.

Arguably the biggest assumption of both neoliberal and resilience thinking is the acceptance of the market as perpetually unstable and unregulated. MacKinnon and Derickson aptly describe this assumption as it relates to the urban sphere by stating that
“the sources of instability and crisis that affect urban and regional economies can be seen as internal to capitalism as a system, rather than as immutable external forces to which local groups and communities must continually adapt,” (2012, 261). The assumption that a capitalist system and accompanying neoliberal ideology stand as the only viable economic structure places pressure on the government to respond to unforeseen crises rather than to intervene in the very agent that causes the crises.

The question of how governance can better manage resilience strategies has been debated and studied by numerous scholars. Three elements have been determined that could effectively contribute to the role of governance in resilience policy: public participation and deliberation; polycentric and multi-layered institutions; and accountable and just institutions (Lebel et al. 2006 quoted in MacKinnon and Derickson 2012). These elements can be more effectively supported through the notion of resourcefulness. MacKinnon and Derickson explain that resourcefulness is “meant to problematize both the uneven distribution of material resources and the associated inability of disadvantaged groups and communities to access the levers of social change,” (2012, 263). Thus, resourcefulness calls for a representative group of community activists who can identify locally specific needs and concerns within the framework of acknowledged systems of discrimination propagated through political and economic institutions. Four dimensions of this process have been identified to implement a politics of resourcefulness: equitable distribution of resources, technical knowledge, indigenous and folk knowledge, and cultural recognition (MacKinnon and Derickson 2012). Of course, all of these dimensions are sources of contention, as grassroots and community initiatives nearly always have a plethora of opinions at odds with one another. However, it bears
great importance that public participation as a part of the democratic process ensues within the resourcefulness discourse.

As a product of both resilience and resourcefulness, it seems logical to turn to immigrant-related development initiatives to examine a contemporary approach to community development. Immigrant-friendly policies seem to be gaining traction in the United States, whether as economically based, human rights based or as a combination strategy for community development and/or urban regeneration. Often operating in the context of neoliberal-dominated urban policies, immigrant-friendly initiatives have both reinforced existing neoliberal formations, and have challenged them. Many cities see immigrants as sources of entrepreneurship, and implement economic support programs and incentives, seizing the opportunity to tap into creative capital with a cultural twist. Whether through ethnic businesses or ethnic reclamation developments, many cities see these entities as displays of cultural celebration with a functional aspect of economic promise. From a critical standpoint, these entities operate as neoliberal devices within a capital-driven urban framework. However, in response to these neoliberal frameworks, plenty of cities use immigrant-related development initiatives to implement policies that emphasize inclusion, empowerment, and the cultivation of a sense of belonging. Several of these development initiatives will be outlined in the following section.

**IV. Immigrant-related development**

A growing number of cities have sought to be designated as “immigrant-friendly” (IF) to attract, support, or appeal to immigrant and refugee populations in the United States. Although these designations look different in different cities, the general trend of cities rebranding themselves as *welcoming* has taken hold all across the country. These
initiatives take place in the face of a growing influx of immigrants and refugees into the United States, which shows no sign of diminishing. A Brookings Institute report found that “immigrants in the United States in 2010 were more likely (65 percent) to have been in this country for a decade or more than immigrants living here in 2000 (58 percent)” (Wilson and Singer 2011, 6), suggesting that immigrants are increasingly permanent residents rather than temporary settlers. Additionally, in the first decade of the 21st century, these immigrants have increasingly settled in smaller cities and suburbs within a greater metropolitan region, which tend to be non-traditional immigrant gateways (Wilson and Singer 2011). These conditions offer cities the opportunity to factor immigrants into part of a long-term plan, and accordingly seek out migrants for settlement, or conversely, to continue to perceive migrants as a drain on social and economic resources, and subsequently adopt policies to deter migrants from permanent settlement. Considering the polarized national debates about immigration today, this topic is timely and important.

Regionally, post-industrial ‘Rust-Belt’ cities have long been seeking ways to revitalize their economies. Poverty rates in older industrial areas are 23%, compared to 15% in other cities (Blackwell and Fox 2008), much of which is rooted in unemployment resulting from outsourced manufacturing jobs (Wolman et al. 2008). Therefore, post-industrial cities must turn to creative strategies to foster economic development, population stability, and neighborhood revitalization.

Immigrants have generated economic revival for ailing cities across the country by augmenting the labor force, preserving manufacturing jobs by adding new skills, boosting entrepreneurship by starting businesses, and contributing to the local economy
as consumers (Vigdor et al. 2013). However, the municipal policies to facilitate these advances differ on an individual basis. Dayton, Ohio has a comparatively established IF program, offering a strong case from which to examine local policy implementation.

Housing is often seen as one of the initial considerations in the process of moving to a new city. Because immigrants tend to seek less expensive housing, cities with major housing affordability issues have seen a decline in the number of immigrants moving there in the past decade (Vigdor et al. 2013). Affordable housing stock has become a common trait of post-industrial cities, as they have seen significant declines in housing values and rise in numbers of vacant residential buildings (Wolman et al. 2008). However, it is important to note that the areas in which late 19th and early 20th C. immigrants settled during the industrial boom of urban areas were initially seen as transitional housing arrangements, and thus were disproportionately targeted for slum clearance in the mid- and late-20th century (Lin 1998).

Today, immigrants reside in places that “are now more ethnically polyglot with nonwhite immigrants,” (Lin 1998, 325), meaning that ethnic residential areas are more diverse than ever, and many of these areas have established networks further integrating ethnic social and working relations. Mitnik et al. (2008) argue that cities can establish strategies and policies to strengthen the overall cohesion of neighborhoods, especially in terms of immigrant and refugee inclusion. Strategies to advance this objective include municipal support of housing programs that provide shelter for homeless immigrants, assistance for day laborers dealing with landlord issues, the establishment of tax incremental financing to sustain ethnic communities, and supporting initiatives to expand the availability of public housing.
In terms of how cities become IF, the common trajectory blends national-scale organization allegiance with local policy implementation. When cities sign on with national organizations, such as Welcoming America or the National League of Cities’ “Municipal Action for Immigrant Integration”, they pledge to follow the specific guidelines of that organization. For example, Welcoming America designates an IF city as one that plans to involve nonprofits, government, and others, commits to enforce inclusive strategies, builds community among old and new residents, communicates themes of unity through the media, and sustains IF practices (Welcoming America 2015). Cities claiming IF designation implement these criteria in diverse ways. In Dayton, Ohio, the municipal government adopted an IF program called Welcome Dayton, while Indianapolis established a nonprofit Immigrant Welcome Center to act as service headquarters (WE Global Network 2015). Ultimately, national IF designation looks different in every city’s local IF policy implementation based on local history and context.

Urban scholars and social scientists have suggested many different ways in which post-industrial cities can foster immigrant-friendly economic development. Blackwell and Fox (2008) contend that minority business enterprise, which provides comparative advantages to minorities, can especially gain from community benefits agreements (CBAs). In more political terms, Mitnik et al. (2008) agree that CBAs greatly benefit minority entrepreneurs, but that greater political steps need to be taken to incentivize immigrant settlement, including the establishment of a city wage floor, financial support for immigrant worker centers, and limiting employers’ misuse of DHS’s Basic Pilot Program, which provides incentives for periodically checking employees’ work status.
Middletown, Connecticut goes beyond these initiatives with an affirmative action plan that actively seeks to support the equal opportunity employment environment (Burayidi 2013).

Proactive immigrant-related development is a relatively new approach to community economic development and revitalization initiatives. Therefore, the breadth of literature on the topic has proved to be somewhat limited. This thesis aims to fill a gap in the literature to assess the immigrant-friendly initiatives at work on a national, regional, and local level. The following data collection and methodology section will address the scope of the research involved in this thesis.
Chapter 3 - Data Collection and Methodology

I. Introduction

In order to discern the characteristics of immigrant-friendly cities, their locations, and the reasons for which cities adopt this designation, I employ a mixed-methods, multi-scalar approach. By using several sources and analysis methods, I address the project’s more detailed research questions as follows:

1) Which cities frame themselves as IF? What are their demographic and economic characteristics and patterns?
2) Why do cities want to attract immigrants? What sorts of social and economic goals do they hope to accomplish?
3) What tools do cities use to become IF? How do cities use these tools to define and justify their designation as IF?

The national-scale analysis will determine the scope of immigrant-friendly (IF) cities, while the regional level analysis focused on the Rust Belt will identify trends of deindustrialization and population loss, and their connection to IF designation. The local-scale analysis will focus on the case study of Dayton, Ohio to examine the actual implementation of IF policies.

This chapter incorporates the multi-scalar discussion into a framework organized by data source. First, I discuss the census data collection and statistical analysis used on all three scales. Next, I consider the media sources used in this project, including the discourse analysis and qualitative coding used to organize and analyze media-based data. Finally, I review the interview process, the interviews themselves, and the qualitative coding that I used to analyze these data.
II. Census data

Census data collection:

As a secondary data source, the U.S. Census data provides a quantitative component to this project. This data source informs the national, regional, and local scale analyses, beginning with broad population data trends on a national scale. For the regional section, I analyze population data over 15 years (2000-2015) to identify the trends and characteristics of both the native-born and the foreign-born population (typically used to measure immigrant statistics) of the three Rust Belt cities chosen for this project. The local scale analysis will involve an extended census analysis of Dayton, Ohio to further explore the demographic context of the city.

The indicators selected for the census analysis were chosen to provide an extensive background on the existing conditions for each of the Rust Belt cities studied in this project. The following indicators are used in this project:

- Total population
- Race
- Median age by sex
- Highest educational attainment for population 25 years and over
- Unemployment rate for civilian population in labor force 16 years and over
- Industry by occupation for employed civilian population 16 years and over
- Median household income in [survey year] dollars
- Occupancy status
- House value for all owner-occupied housing units
- Median gross rent
- Nativity by citizenship status
- Year of entry for the foreign-born population

It should be noted that the years examined shifted slightly, in order to preserve the consistency of the indicators. While the Decennial Census could be used for the year
2000, the US Census Bureau adjusted the survey strategy for the 2010 Decennial Census, making it short form only. In its place, the American Community Survey (ACS) derived more detailed data through a long form survey. The ACS is conducted every year to a small percentage of the American population on a rotating basis (U.S. Census Bureau 2016). The 3-year estimates for the ACS average the data across three years, making the data more accurate, and more representative of the overall population. Additionally, 3-year estimates provide data for cities with populations of 20,000 or more, while the 1-year estimates only provide data for cities with populations of 60,000 or more, rendering the latter survey inappropriate for Utica, New York (U.S. Census Bureau 2016). The first release of the ACS 3-year estimates included the years 2005-2007, which is used in this project to represent the midway point of the years 2000 and 2010. To maintain uniform indicators, the ACS 3-year estimates for the years 2010-2012 are used in place of the short form 2010 Decennial Census.

Additionally, the Economy-Wide Key Statistics table of the US Economic Census has been included to examine the shifts in the cities’ industries. The US Economic Census analyzes the American economy, business, and industry in 5-year increments (U.S. Census Bureau 2015). The US Economic Census does not utilize the “place” format, so the Metropolitan Statistical Area geographic format was used instead. The US Economic Census is available for the years 2002, 2007, and 2012, which overlap with the latter two years of study through the ACS.

**Statistical analysis of Census data:**

In order to quantitatively compare common trends and differences across time scales and geographic scales, it was necessary to employ a statistical analysis of the collected
Census data. A simple comparison of the aforementioned indicators through percentages, change over time, and summary statistics all contributed toward a greater understanding of the national, regional, and local contexts (see Appendix for comprehensive census tables).

III. Media

**Media data collection:**

This project relies heavily on media sources for a qualitative take on the social, political, economic, and cultural contexts of the various geographical regions being examined. Sources range from government documents to immigrant-related development reports to newspaper articles and organization webpages. I found many of the media sources through keyword searches, which effectively queried pages referencing cities using IF terminology. In somewhat of a snowballing manner, many media sources linked to other media sources, and further informed my analysis. Media sources have proved useful on a national and regional scale in revealing various narratives and accounts of individual cities, as well as the ways in which immigrants are discussed. On a local scale, media sources helped to cultivate a sense of the city’s attitudes and practices around immigration, and informed the way in which I framed the interview questions for the Dayton case study.

**Discourse analysis:**

To use discourse analysis as a research method, the researcher must recognize the power of language. In short, discourse analysis is the “method of how to study saying, doing, and being in language,” (Gee 2011, 3). Because language is not absent of bias, it can be an effective indicator of general perceptions or commonly held claims about a given
topic. In general, there are two types of discourse analysis: descriptive and critical. The former’s objective is to “describe how language works in order to understand it, just as the goal of the physicist is to describe how the physical world works in order to understand it,” (Gee 2011, 9). Thus, descriptive discourse analysis seeks to find meaning in and explanation for the way things work. By contrast, the latter additionally aims to explore how the meanings and reasoning can practically contribute to social and political issues in the real world (Gee 2011). Critical discourse analysis arguably seeps into the more “scientific-oriented” descriptive discourse analysis because “language itself is…political,” (Gee 2011, 9). Politically motivated critical discourse analysis has the capacity to bring to light the ways in which “particular knowledge systems convince people about what exists in the world (meanings) and determine what they say (attitudes) and do (practices)” (Waite 2010, 218).

Language has been argued to construct seven different “building tasks,” as aspects of an individual’s reality. Gee (2011) cites these “buildings tasks” below:

1. Significance
2. Practices (activities)
3. Identities
4. Relationships
5. Politics (the distribution of social goods)
6. Connections
7. Sign systems and knowledge

In order to study language’s “building tasks,” Gee argues that researchers should utilize the following tools of inquiry:

A. Social languages: the various styles of language that are used for different purposes
B. Discourses: the use of language in conjunction with specific ways of thinking, acting, interacting, valuing, feeling, or believing
C. Conversations: the use of language to imply pre-existing debates, themes, or motifs
D. Intertextuality: the use of language to relate to words that others have already said or written

These tools of inquiry can lead to a broader understanding of a specific “discourse.”

From a Marxist point of view, discourse misconstrues reality, and discourse analysis can be considered “a tool for uncovering certain hegemonic ways of thinking and talking about how things should be done that serve certain vested interests,” (Lees 2004, 102). Related, Foucault sees discourses as capable of producing their own “regimes of truth,” as an objective “truth” does not exist (Lees 2004). Waitt summarizes Foucault’s views that discourse can be “all meaningful statements or texts that have effects on the world; a group of statements that appear to have a common theme that provides them with an unified effect; the rules and structures that underpin and govern the unified, coherent, and forceful statements that are produced,” (Waitt 2010, 218). Discourse analysis can then arguably uncover power and knowledge dynamics through the conceptualization of discursive structures. Foucault holds that discursive structures are the written and spoken ideas that influence and dictate common understandings the networks of people, places, things, and nature (Waitt 2010).

In the context of urban geography, discourse can play an extremely significant role on the events, policies, and ideas that govern the city. This project utilizes the aforementioned tools of inquiry to explore the existing immigrant-related development discourses in the Rust Belt. It is important to recognize that projects such as this one, that relate to urban social justice, have often fallen into a rhythm of discussing issues without actually acting on them (Lees 2004). Therefore, the challenge of relegating critical discourse analysis to practical urban applications still remains. In the regional scale
analysis of immigrant-friendly initiatives, it will become clear that the discourse analysis used in this project reveals that contemporary immigrant-related discourse has already led to action—it has become the subject of this thesis.

III. Interviews

Interview data collection:

Finally, interviews provided a more individualized qualitative data source for this project, detailing the specific discourses and attitudes present in the local case study, Dayton, Ohio. In using interviews as a research method, there arise numerous strengths and weaknesses. One of the most important aspects of interviewing is to “fill a gap in knowledge that other methods such as observation or the use of census data are unable to bridge efficaciously,” (Dunn 2010, 102). This will be the primary use of interviewing within this project, as well as ensuring that the complex goals and implementation methods of IF strategies will be explained.

One of the largest areas of weakness for interviewing involves flaws in the interview’s design. If the questions are too vague, the respondents will be confused, or offer short, simplistic answers. If the questions are too broad, the respondents may go off on a tangent with information that is not as closely related to the research topic, as the researcher would like. In terms of this project, these two factors were considered in developing the interview questions to prevent vague, unhelpful responses. It was challenging to find the balance between specific questions that spark rich, in-depth answers, and questions that are open-ended enough that the respondent had room to elaborate on his or her own terms to provide a more extensive explanation.
Contacting interviewees:

Before conducting the interviews, I filled out an application and developed a recruitment script to be submitted to the Institutional Review Board. After obtaining an exemption certification, due to the fact that my research would be conducted within interviewees’ professional capacity, and I would not be releasing any specific names, I was able to reach out to my contact in Dayton, Ohio. My first communication with my contact in Dayton, through email, centered on research logistics, such as the research questions and background, potential dates that I would travel to Dayton, and the number of interviews I was hoping to conduct. Following a short email exchange, I spoke on the phone with my contact, who was able to give me a more extensive background on the roots and community perceptions of the IF initiatives in Dayton, as well as other existing strategies in the region that have augmented and/or informed the strategies that exist in Dayton. Most importantly, my contact asked me if I had a list of specific individuals whom I would like to interview. I had a short list of six potential interviewees, and my contact provided me with contact information and historical context for several, and suggested additional individuals to whom I should reach out.

From there, I sent emails to seven potential interviewees using a modified version of the recruitment script I developed for IRB submission. I used Robertson’s (1994, quoted in Dunn 2010) four elements of contacting informants: introducing myself and establishing my bona fides; describing the way in which I obtained the informant’s name and contact information, detailing the reasons for which I would like to interview the informant and the significance of my research, and the estimated length of the interview. I tailored each email to fit the individual’s connections and expertise, and explained my
overall research topic and primary research questions. Additionally, I included the dates I would be in Dayton. Because much of my focus in the case study was on *Welcome Dayton*, I framed several of my research questions around the *Welcome Dayton* initiative. This decision was both misinformed and confusing to contacts, and many contacts referred me to the *Welcome Dayton* coordinator rather than recognizing the value of their own views and experiences in the broader realm of immigrant-friendly initiatives. This was my fault, and I should have been clearer in my intentions to reach out to a wider range of individuals to gain a diversity of insights.

After establishing the first few interview appointments with the contacts from my initial contact in Dayton, I reached out to them for other potential interviewees’ names and contact information. I gained numerous connections this way, and contacted them by email. In total, I sent out emails to 24 individuals, and received responses from 14 of them. Ultimately, I set up seven interviews with nine individuals, as two of the interviews included two informants.

**Interview process:**

The interviews conducted in this project were instrumental in obtaining a more in-depth narrative of participants’ perspectives on the *Welcome Dayton* and related IF initiatives employed in Dayton. These interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format, through use of a recording device, so as to ensure for an accurate, extensive account of the interview. Participants were first briefed on the project’s research outline and general objectives. Next, I described the informant’s rights through a “research deal,” (Dunn 2010), by explaining that I would not use the individual’s name in my thesis, but that I would identify their organization. Additionally, I asked whether or not the
informant would allow me to record the interview, and if so, that I would send them a
transcription of the interview for their review before using any content in my thesis.

Then, informants were asked a list of 15-20 primary questions, with multiple
follow-up questions stemming from the informant’s response. Due to the semi-structured
format, in which the “interview is organized around ordered but flexible questioning
(Dunn 2010, 110), the interview questions I initially developed were often reworded or
skipped to maintain relevance and “flow” with the informant’s answers.

Transcription process:

For six of the interviews, direct transcriptions can be requested from the author.
The seventh interview has a modified transcription, as the recording of the interview was
lost due to technical difficulties with the recording device. In the weeks following the
interviews, I transcribed the interviews with the help of software called InqScribe, which
includes a function to slow down recordings to help the transcriber keep up with the
recording. Although the process took many hours, transcribing the interviews myself
allowed me to include unspoken sentiments in the interviews from memory that may
have been lost if a transcription software had been used. Dunn aptly describes the benefit
of transcribing interviews by hand in stating, “immersion in the data provides a
preliminary form of analysis,” (Dunn 2010, 121). Upon completion, these transcriptions
were sent to the informants for accuracy review.

Qualitative Coding:

I primarily employed qualitative coding techniques in conjunction with nearly all other
research methods used in this project. It should be acknowledged that both discourse
analysis and qualitative coding have a common goal: to identify themes and differences
in the data. However, the functionality of the two differs. Qualitative coding can be more flexible, and can be tailored to fit a specific desired outcome, rather than simply assessing the general discourse trends of a dataset. Regardless of the method’s intentions, discourse analysis and qualitative coding inform one another, and both prove to be useful in projects such as this.

In developing a coding structure, I used both descriptive codes and analytic codes. The *in vivo* codes that I used represent themes or phrases that were explicitly stated in an interview, and serve as both descriptive and analytic codes (Cope 2010). By contrast, the analytic codes that I developed reflected “a *theme* the researcher is interested in or one that has already become important in the project, (Cope 2010, 283). Both types of codes assisted me in data reduction, organization, and analysis. Data reduction can be summarized as the process of paring down the interview content to that which is relevant and prime for interpretation (Cope 2010).

In terms of organization, I developed spreadsheets that organized the data through several categories. For example, when organizing interview transcriptions, I created a matrix listing the name, date, organization, summary, quotes, and insights from which to draw descriptive and analytic codes. I organized these codes around four themes identified by scholar Anselm Strauss as helpful in discovering important patterns in the data: conditions; interactions among actors; strategies and tactics; and consequences (Strauss and Corbin 1990 cited in Cope 2010). The initial themes of a dataset can first be informed by the conditions, or context that may have influenced the interview content. By acknowledging the informant’s circumstances based on geographical context or major life events, the researcher may be better able to contextualize codes that emerge from the
data (Cope 2010). Interactions among actors can also contribute to developing sound codes by opening up the researcher’s view of the connections between people, places, events, and phenomena. Strategies and tactics can also inform the researcher’s coding, as informants’ intentions and reasoning can be identified. This theme can be difficult to analyze, as “respondents do not explicitly state their reasons for certain actions but a connection emerges through observation, review of interview, text, or other data,” (Cope 2010, 289). Coding for consequences can also prove to be a challenging process, as the discussion of results from a given action may be subtle and vague. Ultimately, once a coding structure has been established, it becomes possible to compare differing opinions on a given topic and to develop a better understanding of issues and perspectives related to the research topic.

In summary, the coding analysis process can be seen as “a recursive juggling act of starting with initial codes that come from the research questions, background literature, and categories inherent in the project, and progressing through codes that are more interpretive as patterns, relationships, and differences arise,” (Cope 2010, 285). Indeed, the initial codes that I had developed for almost every data source evolved as I delved into the data. The progression of the codes used in this analysis allowed for data reduction to effectively inform the patterns and conclusions that I ultimately made in my analysis.

IV. Justification of methodology

These research methods were chosen to address the various scales and data sources involved in this project, which have revealed the diverse contexts of the examined locations. The use of mixed methods rather than multiple methods demonstrates the
interconnectedness inherent in the methods’ functionality. Instead of simply reporting on quantitative data analysis as separate from qualitative data analysis, these methods have informed one another, making the analysis stronger and tailored to the requirements of each section. For instance, on a scalar basis, the national level analysis informed the regional scale analysis, which in turn, informed the local scale analysis. The Census data revealed the specific economic and demographic context of Dayton, which contributed to the points that I wanted to include in my interview questions. Similarly, the interview questions revealed trends and issues that informed the regional scale discourse analysis. Ultimately, the distinction between utilizing multiple methods and mixed methods proves to be important to both the research process itself, as well as the project’s outcomes.
Chapter 4 - Findings and Discussion: National Scale

I. National context of welcoming initiatives

The first step to examine the nature of immigrant-friendly cities and their characteristics is to identify where these cities are located. In this section, I first identify the cities that are commonly recognized as welcoming. Next, I explore their characteristics by grouping them into various categories that represent the cities’ character or geographic location. In order to position this examination in a national context, I begin by describing the circumstances in which immigrant-friendly initiatives have developed.

The emergence of immigrant-friendly development initiatives has taken hold across the United States as a positive way to interact with recent immigrants and refugees. The objectives and operations of such welcoming initiatives can range from a political statement to a form of urban regeneration. Existing immigrant-friendly initiatives operate amidst a nationally contested immigration debate. Because the federal government holds control over immigration rights, privileges, exclusivity, and legislation, immigration is a national scale issue, further supported by the 1976 DeCanas v. Bica ruling, which proclaimed that immigration regulations shall remain in the hands of the federal government (Nguyen et al. 2015). Since then, several sub-federal immigration laws have been passed, and challenged in the courts due to the inconsistency with the DeCanas v. Bica ruling.

Much of the sub-federal immigration legislation has been anti-immigrant, like Arizona’s State Bill 1070, which requires immigrants to carry “adequate” documentation at all times. The bill, passed in 2010, continues to promote discriminatory policing, allowing police officers to “make a reasonable attempt to determine the immigration
status of a person” upon a police stop (Harwood and Lee 2015, 238). On a local level, Hazelton, Pennsylvania passed the Illegal Immigration Relief Act in 2006, restricting landlords from renting to illegal immigrants, and prohibiting employers from hiring illegal immigrants. Although the Illegal Immigration Relief Act and parts of Arizona SB 1070 have since been struck down due to their sub-federal status, the enactments of such policies have left immigrants feeling unwelcomed and out of place (Harwood and Lee 2015). However, responses to immigrant and refugee inclusion have varied considerably across the country. As will be the focus of this section, a movement to welcome immigrants has gained attention and momentum throughout the United States.

![Map of Immigrant-friendly cities in the U.S.](image)

*Figure 1 Immigrant-friendly cities in the U.S.*
Map by Erika Shepard, base map generated by ArcGIS Online, data compiled from the White House Task Force on New Americans, Welcoming America, and the National League of Cities.
II. Immigrant-friendly cities in the United States

The list of cities in the United States that have been designated “immigrant-friendly,” “welcoming,” or “pro-immigrant” has been evolving based on the existence of national organizations supporting welcoming initiatives, the momentum of the movement, and the ambiguous definition of “immigrant-friendly” (see Fig. 1). Keeping in mind that designations of immigrant-friendly cities vary from place to place, it was necessary to narrow the focus to cities affiliated with national scale organizations and those that have otherwise gained recognition for their welcoming efforts through reports on the topic.

One organization that has stood out as the cornerstone of immigrant friendly development discourse has been Welcoming America. The organization claims to be “leading a movement of inclusive communities across the nation becoming more prosperous by making everyone who lives there feel like they belong,” (Welcoming America 2016). This organization has identified itself as a connector for municipal governments and nonprofit organizations, as well as acting as a resource in the development of welcoming plans, policies, and programs. Welcoming America has recently drafted a set of standards through which municipal governments can assess their immigrant friendly initiatives. The organization claims that

By establishing clear and measurable requirements for community level immigrant inclusion, Welcoming America, its stakeholders, and partners will take an important step toward meeting a number of strategic goals including equipping communities with a roadmap for success; recognizing and rewarding effective immigrant inclusion; and elevating immigrant welcome as a serious policy matter and ensuring its future success (Welcoming America 2016).

The public has been asked to comment on the draft, to ensure that the standards will be pertinent and effective across the whole country. The standards that have been identified in the first draft include:
**Government Leadership** - policies and programs that provide an encompassing umbrella of inclusion and establish municipal support for immigrant inclusion

**Equitable Access** - policies and programs that ensure equitable access to services, highlighting Health, Transportation, Housing and Justice

**Civic Engagement** - policies and programs that promote civic engagement

**Connected Communities** - policies and programs that foster connection between immigrant and receiving communities, including participation in government and civic life and support for naturalization.

**Education** - policies and programs that promote childhood and adult education

**Economic Development** - policies and programs that promote employment and entrepreneurship

**Safe Communities** - policies and programs that foster safety, addressing accessibility of services, education about the law and promoting cultural awareness among service providers.

These standards seem to address several areas of concern in the community development realm, and have already proved to be essential to current *Welcoming America* member municipalities. I used the list of *Welcoming America*’s member municipalities as the primary source in compiling a comprehensive list of immigrant-friendly cities. In addition, I included cities that have been commonly highlighted as exemplary immigrant-friendly places in reports by the White House Task Force on New Americans and the National League of Cities, as well as in books like Susan Eaton’s *Integration Nation* and Michael Burayidi’s *Cities and the Politics of Difference*. I cross-referenced the cities highlighted in all of these sources to ensure that the list was exhaustive but not repetitive.

The list of the immigrant-friendly cities included in this project can be found in the appendix. Figure 1 spatially exhibits the cities, and demonstrates how truly widespread the welcoming movement has become.

**III. Grouping immigrant-friendly cities**

The range of cities that have worked to become immigrant friendly has proved to be diverse in terms of size, history, and geography. In order to make sense of the welcoming movement, I identify common characteristics of existing immigrant friendly cities to gain
insight on the approaches and reasoning behind the welcoming initiatives that individual cities have established. Several general trends among the immigrant friendly cities can be identified.

First, many of the immigrant friendly cities can be considered *traditional immigration gateways*. These cities have a long history of integrating immigrants into their communities, and are generally large metropolises that are situated as ports to major bodies of water. Examples of such cities include New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, and San Francisco.

Another theme that seems to emerge from the list of immigrant friendly cities is *college towns*. As generally liberal areas, college towns often have a more dynamic activism culture or engaged community than most other cities, and often have a built-in population of foreign students to present an initial, well-educated face to the notion of ‘immigrant’ in locals’ experience. Perhaps this characteristic has set movements like immigrant friendly development initiatives in motion, especially with the political backing that may otherwise ignore or block such initiatives. Examples include Durham, North Carolina, Iowa City, Iowa, and Boulder, Colorado.

*Non-traditional immigrant gateway cities* have also emerged as a distinctive pattern within the list of welcoming cities. In order to accommodate unprecedented numbers of resettled refugees and secondary immigrants, these cities have almost by necessity undertaken immigrant-friendly programs and policies. Examples of such cities include Boise, Idaho; Burlington, Vermont; and Dalton, Georgia.

Another trend in the list of immigrant friendly cities, which will provide the basis for the remainder of this project, includes *post-industrial cities* located in the Rust Belt.
As will be elaborated upon in later sections, post-industrial cities have generally experienced the departure of factories, manufacturing plants, and other major employers, which has effectively resulted in population loss, rising unemployment levels, and rising numbers of building vacancies. Some Rust Belt cities have seen immigrants and refugees as a regeneration strategy, while others have simply enacted immigrant friendly initiatives to make residents feel like they belong in order to preserve a sense of community. Examples of such cities include Dayton, Ohio, Indianapolis, Indiana, and Utica, New York.

IV. National Organizations

In 2014, the Obama Administration established the White House Task Force on New Americans to improve immigrant and refugee integration and inclusion in the United States. The Task Force published a federal strategic action plan in 2015, of which the first suggested action was the “Building Welcoming Communities” campaign. As a part of this campaign, the Task Force would enact a Building Welcoming Communities Challenge that would support existing welcoming initiatives and encourage other municipalities to engage in immigrant-friendly development. Additionally, the campaign would provide resources for municipalities to develop and implement immigrant-friendly frameworks through a toolkit created by the Task Force. Finally, the campaign would allot a certain number of AmeriCorps VISTA members to serve through immigrant-friendly initiatives across the country (White House Task Force on New Americans 2015).

Several national organizations signed onto the campaign to provide support as part of a “public private partnership which [offers] technical assistance and support from
federal agencies, as well as from national non-governmental partners led by *Welcoming America* (Welcoming America 2015). The other national organizations that support this campaign include National Skills Coalition, National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials, Cisneros Center for New Americans, World Education Services—Global Talent Bridge, IMPRINT (Immigrant Professional Integration), Welcoming Center for New Pennsylvanians, Partnership for a New American Economy, World Education, YMCA of the USA, National Council of La Raza, and the National Partnership for New Americans (Welcoming America 2015).

As previously mentioned, *Welcoming America* is the leading national organization in the realm of immigrant-friendly initiatives. As a part of the *Welcoming America* network, the organization provides resources and services to foster immigrant-friendly initiatives on both regional and local scales. Member municipalities of *Welcoming America* seem to hold the most official immigrant-friendly designation in existence, as the organization seems to be the only major national organization pursuing standards to support immigrant-friendly claims. In addition to member municipalities, *Welcoming America* also partners with nonprofit organizations across the country to provide support for welcoming initiatives on a local scale. These nonprofits range in purpose from immigrant community associations to voluntary agency field offices to local libraries. Perhaps most telling of regional-scale immigrant-related development is *Welcoming America’s* partnership with the Welcoming Economies Global Network, which provides support to Rust Belt cities that are engaged in welcoming initiatives. This organization will be expanded upon in the regional section.
Other national organizations that focus on immigration discourse have published reports that informally designate cities as immigrant-friendly simply by mentioning their specific welcoming initiative as a successful model. For example, the National League of Cities published a report titled “Municipal Innovations in Immigrant Integration: 20 Cities, 20 Good Practices” which highlights 20 cities that could be considered immigrant-friendly. Other cities that emerge as immigrant-friendly often surface through journal articles, think tank reports, or through the mainstream media. As a timely, popular topic, immigrant-friendly cities have found designation in diverse ways that hold various meanings. Because the welcoming movement is still relatively new, immigrant-friendly cities have yet to develop extensive designation standards.

V. National immigrant-friendly discourse analysis

Nationally, immigrant-friendly initiatives have become a popular topic in the mainstream media. *Welcoming America* has gained national and international recognition through awards, conferences, and related publicity. In 2014, the organization won the Intercultural Innovation Award, presented by the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations and the BMW Group. The award grants the organization a year of support from the presenters, as well as international acclaim and publicity.

On a national level, the Obama Administration has taken significant measures to introduce welcoming initiatives as a nationally recognized immigrant integration strategy. The aforementioned Building Welcoming Communities Campaign targets three core areas: civic, economic, and linguistic inclusion. Despite listing three core areas, the general federally expressed sentiments surrounding this campaign emphasize the economic component with statements like “building welcoming communities is not only
the right thing to do; it’s also vital to our economic future,” (White House Task Force on New Americans 2016), followed by statistics on the projected rise of the immigrant population in the United States.

As will be expanded upon in the regional section, mainstream media articles tend to focus on the economic benefits of welcoming initiatives as well. Additionally, media sources typically place the welcoming movement in the center of the immigration debate, by highlighting the polarization of local policies. For example, the majority of articles “ground” the spotlight on immigrant-friendly cities with strikingly anti-immigrant cities like Hazelton, Pennsylvania or with the State of Arizona as a whole.

This analysis has demonstrated that there are immigrant-friendly cities across the United States, ranging from large, historically multi-cultural cities to smaller non-traditional gateway cities like. While the cities that have sought the “immigrant-friendly” designation are diverse, there are significant patterns that emerge, allowing for further analysis to be done on cities with common traits. The Rust Belt cities that have established welcoming initiatives will be explored in the following chapter.
Chapter 5 - Findings and Discussion: Regional Scale

I. Regional urban regeneration context

Stalling economic performance in the United States has become a contemporary trend in the context of a globalized economy, with the increasing mobility of capital and international scope of corporations, banks, and major financial investors. Simultaneously, national macroeconomic policy regarding trade, immigration, and federal taxation and regulation shape economic discourse on many scales. National economic problems often disproportionately affect older industrial areas that have had trouble recovering from past economic difficulties. For instance, out of the forty-nine largest American cities in 2006, unemployment was the worst in Detroit, with other former manufacturing cities to follow, including Milwaukee at forty-seventh, Oakland at forty-sixth, St. Louis at forty-fifth, Baltimore at forty-third, and Philadelphia at fortieth (McGahey 2008). Vey (2008) summarizes the significant forces behind former industrial cities’ vicious cycle of decline in three points:

- The shift from a manufacturing economy to a knowledge-based one has left many older industrial cities still grappling to find their economic niche.
- Extreme economic and residential decentralization has left the poor and minorities isolated in the urban core, spatially ‘cut off’ from education and employment opportunities.
- Sixty-plus years of federal, state, and local policies have largely stacked the deck against cities, undermining their ability to attract and retain businesses and residents.

Another major force contributing to urban decline in these cities was the continual investment in peripheral (sub)urban areas (Hanlon 2010). These forces have resulted in the all-too-recognizable characteristics of post-industrial urban cores: population loss, economic stagnation, and the decay of the built environment. Many of these post-
industrial cities have followed the same trajectory, and are located in close proximity to one another in a region known as the “Rust Belt.” The Rust Belt has come to summarize the shared state of post-industrial cities in the United States. This label’s notion of a shared history has allowed for post-industrial cities to organize networks in which urban regeneration, economic stimulation, and community development objectives can be discussed, and solutions can be shared in a mutually beneficial, collaborative manner. While Rust Belt cities share many qualities, many revitalization efforts have developed in an uneven pattern, with gentrification developing in some cities, and limited regeneration in others. For example, while cities around the Great Lakes like Detroit, Michigan and Gary, Indiana have struggled to acquire restoration capital to recover from deindustrialization, other cities, like Pittsburgh have found success doing so. Yet again, context is crucial to the revitalization process. The political and economic resources available in Pittsburgh allowed for reinvestment unseen in other postindustrial cities (Metzger 1992). Overall, regional trends can bring about collaboration, yet geographical unevenness persists, especially in the context of regional competitiveness fostered by neoliberal policies and devolution. Cities within the same region become competitors for jobs, corporations, and investment through the promise of tax abatements, utility provisions, and the like. These circumstances enable some cities to regenerate more successfully than others.

II. Regional data findings

Despite their uneven post-industrial trajectories, there are significant commonalities between Rust Belt cities that bear further examination. To explore some of the urban regeneration strategies used in Rust Belt cities, I look to three sample cities in particular
for insight: Dayton, Ohio; Indianapolis, Indiana; and Utica, New York. These cities were chosen in an effort to represent a small, medium, and large city, with special consideration given to the various sizes and proportions of each city’s immigrant population. The choice to research three cities arguably makes this study more rigorous, as multiple cities offer diverse perspectives with different immigrant influx trends, population differences, and regional variations in policies and context. I use census data for each city to cultivate a general idea of the demographic, economic, and social context. Specifically, I explore each city’s trends and characteristics of the native-born and foreign-born population, economic conditions and labor force trends, and housing patterns through the following Census data tables.

Figure 2 Rust Belt Map (Trowbridge 2012)
In order to explore common trends and perceptions of immigrants and refugees, as well as welcoming initiatives, I used discourse analysis to understand media representations and claims. After surveying a range of news stories, outreach publications, government documents, and social movement campaign materials (which can be found in the reference list), several themes, outlooks, and dialogues emerged. In order to organize these patterns, I developed a matrix to document each source, as well as its summary, key themes, implications for the target audience, and quotations. I coded these properties, and analyzed them to discern any common trends. The following sections detail the key findings that I discovered through the census analysis and discourse analysis.

Table 1 Comparative foreign born populations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Foreign Born Populations</th>
<th>Indianapolis city (balance), Indiana</th>
<th>Utica city, New York</th>
<th>Dayton city, Ohio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>2000 Census</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE:T201. Nativity By Citizenship Status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Population:</td>
<td>782,414</td>
<td>60,679</td>
<td>166,193</td>
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<td>Native Born</td>
<td>746,347</td>
<td>53,448</td>
<td>162,948</td>
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<td>Foreign Born:</td>
<td>36,067</td>
<td>7,231</td>
<td>3,245</td>
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<td>12,100</td>
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<td>1,386</td>
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<tr>
<td>Not a Citizen</td>
<td>23,967</td>
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<td>1,859</td>
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<td><strong>2007 American Community Survey</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE:T130. Nativity By Citizenship Status</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Population:</td>
<td>790,815</td>
<td>60,177</td>
<td>146,762</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Born</td>
<td>736,745</td>
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<td>143,746</td>
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<tr>
<td>Foreign Born:</td>
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<td>7,721</td>
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<td>791</td>
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<td><strong>2012 American Community Survey</strong></td>
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<td>SE:T148. Nativity By Citizenship Status</td>
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<td>Not a Citizen</td>
<td>51,312</td>
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<td>3,977</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
III. Dayton, Ohio

A. Demographics

In the initial census data overview for Dayton, Ohio, it became evident that the city serves as a mid-sized example when compared with the other Rust Belt cities included in this project. In terms of population size, the total population continues to decline between 2000 and 2012, from 166,179 in 2000, to 146,762 in 2007, to 141,690 in 2012. However, the proportion of foreign-born residents increased within this time span from 2.0 percent of the population in 2000, to 2.1 percent of the population in 2007, to 3.8 percent of the population in 2012. This spike in the foreign-born population is extremely significant for the purposes of this project, especially in regard to the more recent increase in foreign-born residents. Notably, 14.7 percent of the foreign-born population entered the United States in 2010 or later.

B. Economics

Historically, manufacturing comprised a significant part of Dayton’s economy. Indeed, in 2000, the proportion of the labor force 16 years and over employed in manufacturing (13.3 percent) was second only to education, health care, and social services (23 percent). In 2007, manufacturing continued to employ 13.7 percent of the labor force 16 years and over despite the number of manufacturing firms declining from 1336 in 2002 to 1214 in 2007. When in 2012, the number of manufacturing firms fell to 1048, the proportion of the labor force 16 years and over employed in manufacturing fell to 10.6 percent. It could be assumed that the aftermath of deindustrialization played a role in the decline of this segment of the economy, dovetailing with the general disinvestment in the inner city. These processes seem to be manifested in the rising unemployment rate, the
abandonment of urban housing (as seen through the decline in white residents and the decrease in occupancy levels), as well as the shifting labor force, with sectors like retail trade, and arts/entertainment/recreation, accommodation, and food services taking the place of manufacturing. While the economy seems to have diversified through the *types* of firms infiltrating the city, it should be noted that this slice of the service industry has historically offered fewer benefits to the labor force in terms of salaries, benefits, and job stability due to the general absence of labor unions, and the lower skill requirements (Nord 1989). The succession of service industry jobs also indicates a deepening reliance on neoliberal ideals, evidenced by greater competition, short-term economic investment goals, and a lower level of economic sustainability.

Dayton’s labor force changed significantly across this time span. For instance, the highest educational attainment for the population 25 years and older increased, while median household income increased from 2000 to 2007, but decreased from 2007 to 2012. Compared with the national median household income, these amounts are relatively low, with the national amounts totaling $41,994 in 2000, $50,007 in 2007, and $51,771 in 2012 (U.S. Census Bureau). It should be noted that across this time span, the number of white residents steadily declined, indicating a “white flight” process of sorts. However, the proportion of black residents also steadily declined between 2000 and 2012, suggesting the existence of a sizeable migration pattern. Throughout the course of these demographic patterns, the unemployment rate for the civilian population in the labor force 16 years and over dramatically increased during this time span. This trend falls in line with the shifts in industry between 2000 and 2012.
In terms of Dayton’s housing stock, homeownership, measured through owner-occupied housing units, steadily declined between 2000 and 2010. Perhaps unsurprisingly, housing values dropped in 2012, probably due in large part to the 2008 housing and mortgage crisis. In 2012, the majority (52.9 percent) of owner-occupied housing units’ value fell between $50,000 and $99,999, with 21.7 percent of owner-occupied housing units’ value falling between $20,000 and $49,999, and 12.5 percent of owner-occupied housing units’ value falling between $100,000 and $149,999. Concurrently, the median gross rent for Dayton increased between 2000 and 2012, from $448 in 2000 to $580 in 2007, to $630 in 2012. These housing value trends occurred in the context of rising occupancy levels, which rose considerably between 2000 and 2012.

C. Media Portrayals and Discourses

In the past decade, Dayton has emerged as a nationally recognized self-proclaimed immigrant-friendly city. The common story explaining Dayton’s claim as a welcoming community begins with a description of the city’s decline in terms of population and job prospects, prompting the city’s necessity for some form of urban regeneration. Dayton lost nearly 100,000 residents between 1960 and 2000 (from 262,332 to 166,179), due in large part to the rapid decline in jobs, as several of Dayton’s signature manufacturing plants moved elsewhere in the country (U.S. Census Bureau 1998). Retold stories have painted Dayton as an ailing city in desperate need of regeneration. With the rise in the immigrant and refugee populations, many community members saw the economic promise of encouraging immigrant and refugee families to reside in Dayton. In general, several sources purported that Dayton residents voiced approval of initiatives to welcome and support incoming immigrant and refugee populations (Frolik 2015). Exceptions
included some pushback from African-American residents and residents who felt as though they were not receiving the same support from the city despite having a longer history of residence in the city. One source included a resident’s quote describing his rejection of the idea to welcome immigrants and refugees: “Dayton resident David Dewberry said city officials should be aware that some black residents feel the same ‘welcome mat hasn’t been extended to them,’ but he supported the plan, saying many people are simply afraid of change,” (Kelley 2011).

Another pattern of note was the distinction between Dayton residents and people from outside the area commenting on and intervening in welcoming initiative discussions. Several sources mentioned that those who opposed welcoming initiatives most strongly were either from distant cities in Ohio or from out of state. Statements from the municipal government especially seemed to emphasize this point, arguing that the decisions made in Dayton regarding immigrants and refugees do not concern residents from places like Cleveland or Arizona (Frolik 2014). The Cleveland-based Ohio Jobs and Justice PAC seemed to be especially vocal about condemning immigrant-friendly discourse, such as the Welcome Dayton plan, the move to implement a municipal ID card program, and the Mayor’s statements supporting Syrian refugee resettlement in Dayton (Kelley 2011, Smith 2011, McCord 2012, Frolik 2014). The organization’s reasoning ranged from reserving jobs for American citizens to fears surrounding Dayton becoming a sanctuary city¹ (Smith 2011, McCord 2012). Municipal government officials responded to and dismissed these concerns using diplomatic language that focused on immigrants

¹ “Sanctuary city” is a highly politically charged term. Immigration adversaries often use the term to describe cities using community-policing policies, which are said to afford “sanctuary” to undocumented immigrants. However, many immigration proponents and researchers reject the term and its political connotations (Tramonte 2011).
and refugees as a positive force for Dayton. For instance, former Dayton Mayor Gary Leitzell countered notions of Dayton as a sanctuary for illegal immigrants by emphasizing the benefits of legal immigrants:

The Welcome Dayton plan is about creating something we all agree Dayton needs: jobs, jobs, jobs...By attracting America’s legal immigrant entrepreneurs, we can strengthen Dayton’s economic recovery. To those new citizens who come to Dayton seeking their success and piece of the American Dream … welcome (Leitzell 2011).

Such rhetoric has proved to demonstrate the local government’s firm stance on maintaining Dayton’s reputation as an immigrant-friendly city. Perhaps in the interest of presenting multiple perspectives on the topic, news sources have highlighted a rift between out-of-state dissidents and local government officials that may not exist as such a highly divisive dispute within Dayton itself.

Generally, the majority of the sources conveyed a sense of unification among Dayton residents in support of welcoming immigrants and refugees. The Dayton community’s generally inclusive behavior can be seen in community projects like the local film “Where the Rivers Meet.” This film, produced through group of artists, Create Dayton, and directed by David Sherman, acts as a music video of sorts, including a range of musicians and dancers from diverse backgrounds performing in various parts of the city. The song itself conveys an inclusionary message with lyrics like “we all came here from somewhere, and we’re all coming home” (Sherman 2013). The concept behind the video also seems to express an inclusionary community, as the video description declares, “Dayton sits at the convergence of rivers—a perfect metaphor for the blending of people, cultures and ideas,” (Sherman 2013). Therefore, the video demonstrates a general interpretation of the city’s geography and cultures as a setting for which people from all
backgrounds can be welcomed and included, providing context for the city’s focus on mutual recognition in the broader theoretical framework of resourcefulness versus resilience. While not all residents necessarily agree with these views, the video represents an important discursive clue to the official ‘framing’ of the city through media.

Additionally, multiple media sources depict Dayton residents as generally unified in political contexts. In regard to the acceptance of Syrian refugees, one source portrayed Dayton residents in opposition to state and federal level skeptics by describing, “During the public input portion of Wednesday’s [City] commission meeting, speakers condemned federal and state elected officials who want to refuse asylum-seekers who are fleeing a bloody war,” (Frolik 2015). As immigrant and refugee related matters continue as a contested topic, news sources seem to sensationalize the debate by including strongly worded quotes that set residents against residents. Inflammatory statements like “You see people out on the street and you know they're illegal,” (Sewell 2011) eclipse positive resident claims like “it seems to me anyone in opposition [to welcoming Syrian refugees to Dayton], that’s based on fear,” (Frolik 2015).

Such dramatic media representations have caused the Dayton Human Relations Council to address the matter by making it an objective to “monitor warmth of welcome by scoring the tone of media articles” (City of Dayton 2015). Several other publications and announcements produced by the City help to convey this sense of welcoming through the inclusion of ethnically representative photographs and headings in multiple languages. For example, a recent flyer listing the details for the Youth World House Party in remembrance of Martin Luther King Jr. includes three languages in addition to English. Another handout inviting residents to consider becoming Welcome Dayton
Ambassadors includes multiple photographs of Dayton’s cultural and ethnic diversity, while simultaneously using inclusive language that implies the positive connotations of making Dayton more immigrant-friendly (Human Relations Council 2016) (See Figs. 3 and 4). From a political standpoint, City Commissioner Matt Joseph speaks in support of welcoming immigrants and refugees, but neutralizes the debate, saying “before we pat ourselves on the back too much, it’s in our own interest too,” (Frolik 2015). Statements like this ground Dayton’s widespread humanitarian and “do-gooder” rhetoric in the beneficial economic realities that surround Dayton’s welcoming discourse.

Despite the occasional mention of the social and community building contributions of immigrant and refugees to the Dayton community, media sources primarily highlight the economic benefits of welcoming immigrants and refugees. From the common journalistic method of situating Dayton in the context of economic recession
following massive deindustrialization to the emphasis on presenting immigrants as an “underutilized resource” (Sewell 2011) or the investment in Dayton’s immigrant-friendly framework as an “investment in the city” (McCord 2012), several sources present welcoming initiatives like Dayton’s as a necessity for the future. One article purports that “just about every city in the Rust Belt is now trying to attract more immigrants to reverse decades of population decline. This trend started in 2011 with Welcome Dayton; Mosaic in St. Louis and Global Detroit recently launched to do the same thing,” (Semuels 2015). Adopted as a “framework for action,” the Welcome Dayton plan entails five focus areas (business and economic development; local government and the justice system; social and health services; and community, culture, arts and education) in which community groups, government agencies, and local businesses and organizations are encouraged to undertake immigrant-friendly initiatives. The Plan seeks to “make Dayton not only a welcome place for new residents from other countries but also a center of world commerce” (Human Relations Council 2011, 3). Syntax such as this indicates that welcoming initiatives have become an established regional trend in the interests of revitalizing stagnated post-industrial economies. The emphasis on economic benefits to welcoming initiatives will be examined later on in the discussion section.

IV. Indianapolis, Indiana

A. Demographics

When compared with both Dayton and Utica, Indianapolis acts a significantly larger Rust Belt city from which to draw Census data. In contrast to Dayton, the total population of Indianapolis rose significantly between 2000 and 2012. Similar to Dayton, the proportion of white residents living in Indianapolis fell between 2000 and 2012, indicating another
case of potential white flight. Simultaneously, the proportion of black residents increased during this timeframe. The foreign-born population also grew during this time span, comprising 4.6 of the total population in 2000, 6.8 of the population in 2007, and 8.4 percent of the population in 2012. In 2012, the proportion of foreign-born residents who entered the United States in 2010 or later was 7.7 percent, which is noticeably less than in Dayton and Utica. This difference is likely contingent on the relative total population, which is much larger in Indianapolis than the other cities.

**B. Economics**

In terms of industry, a trend similar to that of Dayton occurred. The retail trade, and the professional, scientific, and technical services industries displaced the prominence of the manufacturing industry between 2000 and 2012 both in terms of the proportion of the labor force, and by the number of the respective firms. Perhaps most significantly, the number of firms in Indianapolis in the professional, scientific, and technical services industries increased during this timeframe in contrast to the continuous decline of such firms in Dayton. The rise of this sector may simply be attributed to the greater prevalence of firms like these in larger cities, as well as its status as the state capital, which seems to guarantee a certain number of professional jobs and associated services. The typical deindustrialization, disinvestment and decline trajectory in Indianapolis effectively explains these trends, while the sheer size of Indianapolis can confirm the heightened resilience to the negative consequences.

The labor force in Indianapolis shifted between 2000 and 2012 as well. In general, educational attainment rose. Interestingly, Indianapolis has much higher levels of educational attainment than both Dayton and Utica. Additionally, the median household
income was higher in Indianapolis than in Dayton and Utica. Following the same general trend as housing, the median household income rose between 2000 and 2007, and fell by 2012, with unemployment rising throughout the entire timespan. While the unemployment rate in Indianapolis paralleled that of Dayton and Utica, the degree to which it increased paled in comparison to the smaller cities. This could be attributed to the city’s comparatively diversified economy, with the fall of the manufacturing sector failing to strike as large a blow to income and unemployment as was the case in Dayton and Utica.

The housing stock in Indianapolis seems to have been significantly impacted by the 2008 housing and mortgage crisis. While the number of owner-occupied housing units rose from 2000 to 2007, homeownership fell from 2007 to 2012. Furthermore, the value of owner-occupied housing units followed a similar pattern of increase and subsequent decrease. Median gross rent also increased across this time span, rising from $567 in 2000, to $677 in 2007, to $754 in 2012. At the same time, vacancy levels rose from 9.2 percent in 2000, to 14.3 percent in 2007, to 14.6 percent in 2012.

C. Media Portrayals and Discourses

Indianapolis has clearly attempted to distinguish itself as a welcoming city to immigrants and refugees. The establishment of the Immigrant Welcome Center (IWC) in 2006 provided the basis upon which community organizations and social services could convene in one location for new residents to find their bearings. The IWC provides information and connections to community partners in six general areas: language needs, legal services, housing, health care, employment, and transportation (Immigrant Welcome Center 2015). The emphasis on free referrals, in concert with the availability of
documents and materials in multiple languages, provides evidence of the IWC mission to remain accessible regardless of background.

IWC Executive Director Terri Morris Downs frames existing welcoming initiatives as a strategy for economic development. Using rhetoric that calls for a more aggressive IF framework, she explains, "Why all this effort? Because immigrant entrepreneurs are a big part of the Midwest's economic recovery. They are creating new jobs, invigorating neighborhoods, and preparing our children for a global workplace," (Downs 2013). She challenges the Indianapolis community to utilize local strengths to further develop existing welcoming initiatives, citing the need to remain competitive in a region that seeks similar methods of economic development (Downs 2013). This viewpoint reifies the neoliberal influences that pit cities against each other in hopes of attaining capital reinvestment.

Municipal political actions have demonstrated the city’s drive to promote an immigrant-friendly reputation. Mayor Gregory Ballard penned the City of Indianapolis proclamation that designated the city as the 51st *Welcoming America* city, further committing the city to maintain and develop immigrant-friendly infrastructure through its new relationship with the national *Welcoming America* organization. The Proclamation, signed in the year of the IWC’s tenth anniversary, emphasizes Indianapolis’s history as a “hospitable and welcoming place” and uses inclusive political language to promote a citywide culture of inclusion and expansion of opportunity (Ballard 2015). Perhaps unsurprisingly, the IWC widely publicized this Proclamation to advance its mission of further integrating immigrants and refugees into the Indianapolis community. The IWC applauded the city leaders behind the Proclamation, stating that,
By seeking this designation, Mayor Ballard extends this welcoming hand to immigrants who enrich our community civically, economically, culturally and socially. We are looking forward to working with leaders from the public and private sectors on policies and best practices that ensure immigrants thrive in Indianapolis (Immigrant Welcome Center 2015).

Due to the proactive rhetoric in this statement, the IWC makes clear its goals to build upon existing welcoming infrastructure. Furthermore, the takeaway from the statement suggests that readers in the Indianapolis area take the designation seriously and align community actions with this immigrant-friendly framework. Another political move to further solidify Indianapolis as a welcoming city involves the development of an Immigrant Integration Plan (Bondus 2015). In a news article that describes the growing immigrant population, particularly Hispanics, Indianapolis’s immigrant-friendly infrastructure is said to be lacking in the ability to keep up with expanding immigrant communities’ needs. While the article’s rhetoric portrays the increasing Hispanic population as a positive force, the article includes IWC representatives’ quotes about Indianapolis being behind other Midwestern cities in providing services to immigrants (Bondus 2015).

It is clear from the discourse regarding the increasing immigrant and refugee population in Indianapolis that there exists a multi-scalar debate on their integration. On a local level, there seems to be a generally positive view of immigrants and refugees adding to the Indianapolis community. With resources like the Immigrant Welcome Center to organize outreach and educational events, opportunities for American-born residents to connect with new community members have arisen. For instance, as part of its Latino Outreach Initiative, the Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department (IMPD) met with Hispanic residents to build community-police relations and educate new
residents on laws, procedures, and discourses. The phrasing used in the article seems to match trust with knowledge, to be attained through education, painting immigrant residents as “eager to learn,” (Mackin 2014). Although the article’s content seemed to focus on educating immigrant communities, the event was spun as a mutual learning opportunity, briefly citing the IMPD initiative to train officers working in a specific district in Spanish.

Another article addresses the need for both new residents, and members of the receiving community to adapt in order to ensure that immigrants can find success in Indianapolis. The article quotes Rachel Peric, deputy director of Welcoming America, stating that “Communities should strive to actively welcome — not just tolerate — immigrant students…‘For a long time, in general, we've approached immigrant integration as a one-way street, so a lot of the onus has been put on newcomers to adapt,’” (Wang 2015). Beyond touching on the importance of mutual effort, the article acknowledges existing tensions in local public schools among native-born and foreign-born students. In addition to English as Second Language (ESL) training for faculty members, widely mentioned in the city’s adaptation strategy (Elliott 2015), the article calls for expanding “cultural competency,” in public schools’ curriculums. On a local level, discourses such as these indicate a general accommodating approach to welcoming immigrants and refugees. However, immigrant-friendly strategies remain contested at higher scales of governance.

It is important to recognize that local welcoming initiatives are situated within a broader political context, with state and federal level statutes that may or may not interfere with municipal policy and discourse. The most common intersection of various
scales of governance is the interpretation of immigration policy, specifically federal immigration standards. While local welcoming initiatives such as Welcoming Indianapolis may work to provide resources to all immigrants and refugees regardless of their country of origin or documentation status, state and federal levels of government generally take a more conservative standpoint on these issues. For instance, state-level funding in Indiana has limited the ability for local governments to provide services to immigrants, such as ESL programming in public schools. Specifically, one article highlights this discrepancy in accommodation objectives by stating:

Since 2006, two-thirds of Indiana schools have seen an increase in students learning English as a new language. The number of English language learners attending Marion County schools has more than tripled, to about 13,000, since 2001. At the same time, legislators cut state funding to support that kind of instruction nearly in half (Elliott 2015).

While state level funding may limit the provision of local resources in Indianapolis, this has not seemed to restrict local welcoming initiatives. Perhaps the most telling example of the divergence in state and local governance political objectives is the recent controversy over the resettlement of a Syrian family in Indianapolis. Following recent events linked to terrorist attacks in Paris, Indiana Governor Mike Pence declared that Indiana would suspend the resettlement of Syrian refugees (Wang 2015). The local response involved the Archdioceses’ decision to resettle a Syrian family in Indianapolis despite the governor’s orders (Wang 2015). The Archbishop of Indianapolis released a statement describing the Catholic value of welcoming those fleeing from violence, specifically stating:

Three years ago, this family fled the violence of terrorists in their homeland of Syria. After two years of extensive security checks and personal interviews, the United States government approved them to enter our country. The Archdiocese of Indianapolis was asked to help resettle this family through its regular
participation in a program that is a public-private partnership between the federal government and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and its Migration and Refugee Services (Brosher 2015).

Simultaneously, the governor’s authority to make this claim was being questioned. This inter-scalar debate remains, and contributes to a broader trend of progressive local policies within a conservative-led state (Capps 2015).

V. Utica, New York

A. Demographics

Utica, New York represents the smallest Rust Belt city to be examined in this project. The total population of Utica did not change as significantly as Dayton or Indianapolis between 2000 and 2012, slightly increasing from 60,651 in 2000 to 62,006 in 2012. However, when compared with Dayton and Indianapolis, Utica’s foreign-born population comprises a much larger segment of the total population. Of the foreign-born population, a large proportion entered the United States in 2010 or later. Like Indianapolis, the proportion of white residents of Utica fell considerably from 2000 to 2012. Simultaneously, the proportion of black residents grew significantly, again signifying evidence of white flight and the subsequent increase in minorities living in the urban core.

B. Economics

The economic conditions in Utica differ from Dayton and Indianapolis in terms of median household income, as it steadily rises between 2000 and 2012, despite starting lower than both in 2000. However, it should be noted that median household income remained much lower than the national median household income in each survey year. Despite the increase in Utica’s median household income, unemployment in Utica
steadily increased during this time span, which was possibly due to the rising incomes of some households, which skewed the median, even as unemployment grew.

In terms of industry, it should be noted that Industry By Occupation data for Utica is absent for the 2005-2007 American Community Survey. However, economic indicators can be found in the 2007 US Economic Census. Like Dayton and Indianapolis, the industry in Utica employing the greatest proportion of the labor force 16 years and over was educational services, health care, and social assistance for both 2000 and 2012. Despite dropping in terms of the number of firms and employees, the manufacturing industry employed the second highest proportion of the labor force in 2000, dropping only to third in 2012. The fact that the manufacturing industry weakened, yet managed to remain the third largest industry suggests that Utica’s economy has struggled to diversify in the face of decline. To expand on this point, the arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food services industries saw an increase in the proportion of the labor force employed during this time range, employing the second highest number of workers. This trend indicates a strengthening service sector in the presence of a declining, yet persistent manufacturing industry.

Utica’s labor force changed in a stratified manner compared to Dayton and Indianapolis within this time frame. Overall educational achievement increased between 2000 and 2007, but the rates stratify in 2012 to demonstrate that a greater percentage of the population had less than high school as the highest level of educational achievement, but also a greater percentage had some college or more.

Much like Dayton, the housing stock in Utica grew more vacant between 2000 and 2012, with fewer owner-occupied housing units. Interestingly, housing values in
Utica seem to have generally risen between 2000 and 2012, with a growth in the proportion of owner-occupied housing units falling within higher value ranges. The explanation for this may simply be the construction of luxury housing, or the documented decrease in the number of owner-occupied housing units overall. Unlike Dayton and Indianapolis, occupancy rates in Utica steadily declined between 2000 and 2012, despite starting at a higher rate in 2000 than the other cities. This could be a reflection on the growing total population, albeit marginal.

C. Media Portrayals and Discourses

Utica, New York has one of the highest proportions of foreign-born residents in the United States, comprising 17.6% of the total population (Mohawk Valley Resource Center for Refugees 2016). Priding itself on a history of migration, Utica has been dubbed the “Town That Loves Refugees” by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Following a similar downturn as Dayton and Indianapolis, Utica has been largely characterized as a Rust Belt city in search of urban regeneration after suffering from deindustrialization and accompanying economic recession; its population declined from 100,410 in 1960 to 60,651 in 2000 (Mohawk Valley Resource Center for Refugees 2016). However, the city has found revival in the increasing immigrant and refugee populations. Several media sources have recounted Utica’s welcoming initiatives as a success story, attributing its progress to a specific set of characteristics: its history as an immigration city, the availability of low-skilled jobs, and the abundance of affordable housing (Wilkinson 2005).

For the past few decades, Utica’s local politicians have typically been in support of welcoming immigrants and refugees. Former Republican Mayor Tim Julian has
demonstrated his opinion of welcoming refugees to Utica by stating “The town has been hemorrhaging for years. The arrival of so many refugees has put a tourniquet around that hemorrhaging. They have saved entire neighborhoods which were ready for the wrecking ball. As a city, we can’t put a price on this,” (Wilkinson 2005, 9). City Councilor Joe Marino has also spoken favorably about immigrant and refugee contributions to the city: “This city that we have now, these new refugees really, really rebuilt the city,” (Delaney 2013). Marino goes on to explain that “if we’d had one more steep decline in population, we were liable to lose federal funding,” (Delaney 2013). The general rationale behind these proposals involves social interaction across cultures, which seems to indicate that cultural integration would follow.

In order to implement these largely positive perspectives of immigrant and refugee populations, the City of Utica first performed a Community Needs Assessment. The findings of this Assessment informed some of the points in the City’s 2-year Action Plan to be submitted to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The Community Needs Assessment found a local demand for several initiatives that can be considered immigrant-friendly, although they lack this exact terminology. Examples range from providing support to establish a “New Arrival” Resource Center to funding a cultural arts project to showcase Somali Bantu art and culture through dance (City of Utica 2015). These needs extend beyond the commitment to maintaining and expanding the existing housing, economic, and employment resources and support network available to immigrants and refugees.

These political views and policies tend to align with those of native-born Utica residents. This population has generally been supportive of welcoming immigrants and
refugees to the city. According to a recent survey of longtime Utica residents, 80 percent of respondents want to see the immigrant population to grow or stay the same (Zogby 2013). This study also found that Utica residents “appear to be very proud of themselves: the story of America has always been from the outset underscoring the values of ‘opportunity’ and a ‘second chance.’ Uticans seem to have internalized the sense that this community is responding in the best of both traditions,” (Zogby 2013, 12). The community’s largely positive perspective of the growing immigrant and refugee population has undoubtedly contributed toward Utica’s narrative as a success story.

Furthermore, there seems to be a broad sense of comfort and community among the immigrant and refugee communities in Utica, in contrast with many other towns and cities in which social isolation remains a limiting factor in newcomers’ integration. Because Utica’s foreign-born population is so large, many immigrants and refugees have expressed their comfort in Utica, as “having an accent or dressing differently is the norm,” (Delaney 2013). This “norm” facilitates an ease of social connections and expression in the city, for instance, it creates space for camaraderie in the workplace, which can contribute to a feeling of inclusion. One refugee aptly describes this feeling by saying that aside from the lengthy shifts at a local factory, she enjoyed her job there: “We had two families – our Chobani [Yogurt] family and our home family,” (Hartman 2014). While Utica itself seems to possess a general sense of inclusion for immigrant and refugee residents, this is not the case for surrounding areas. Another immigrant describes this phenomenon by explaining, “some small towns, I can feel like people can really see [me]. Most of the time I don’t remember I’m different. Most of the time I don’t really [hear] my accent, but there are certain places that remind me of that,” (Delaney 2013).
This wording implies that Utica is unique in the fact that immigrants and refugees are able to access sense of belonging that is otherwise absent in many other cities.

While the majority of the discourse surrounding Utica’s growing immigrant and refugee populations has been positive, more recent news sources have unveiled structural inequalities that further disadvantage immigrants and refugees, which has fostered a sense of discontent among immigrants and refugees and the municipal government. Two major lawsuits have emerged involving the Utica School District: one that claims that Utica and similar smaller cities’ public school districts have suffered from underfunding from the state of New York; the other proves significantly more inflammatory.

Officially filed in April 2015, a group of refugees organized to sue the Utica School District for denying older refugee students the right to a high school education. In short, the method by which the City has chosen to educate non-English speaking refugee students involves an English-intensive program separate from the City’s traditional public schools. Upon completion of this alternative program, the District claimed that several refugee students were too old to enroll in high school. The class-action lawsuit has claimed that the District has discriminated against refugees over age 16, who by law, are not required to go to high school. While students could technically earn a GED, they would not be able to earn a high school diploma (Wang 2016). Many refugee students feel that even when on track toward an equivalency diploma, they are falling behind (Scott 2015).

An attorney with the New York Civil Liberties Union representing the students describes the formerly accepted sense of injustice by stating, “It was an open secret that refugees just knew within the community that once you were at a certain age and you're
arriving in the country, you're just not going to get a chance to go to high school,” (Wang 2016). Perhaps unsurprisingly, Utica Superintendent Bruce Karam responded to these claims by saying “We have never denied any student entry to our schools. We provide a quality education to all our students,” (Scott 2015). While the alternative ESL programs were implemented as a foundational learning resource for refugee students, the lawsuit claims these programs are “roadblocks to nowhere” (Scott 2015). This lawsuit has brought about a debate that seems to place an underfunded district on the defensive while already disadvantaged refugee students attempt to fight for access to a traditional high school education and diploma. Both of these phenomena are the direct results of the neoliberal doctrine that both limits the provision of public funding to public school districts, and upholds the status quo and its inherent structural inequalities. Regardless of the outcome, the lawsuit seems to have driven a wedge between refugees and the municipal government.

V. Discussion

a. Demographics and economics

All three cities that I examined in this chapter have a distinct demographic make-up, yet each city has a growing foreign-born population that has come to comprise a significant proportion of the city’s population. Although the population sizes differ from city to city, and the growth rate for each is distinct, all three cities saw a decline in the number of white residents in the city. Simultaneously, the cities saw an increase in the number of black residents living in the urban core between 2000 and 2012, with the exception of Dayton, whose number declined from 2000 to 2012.
The three cities generally held similar regional characteristics. As a part of the Rust Belt, the cities all had strong industrial backgrounds, with the manufacturing sector bolstering the economy. However, in each city, manufacturing jobs declined between 2000 and 2012, and unemployment rose during the same time frame. Homeownership in the three cities increased between 2000 and 2007, but declined between 2007 and 2012 likely due to the 2008 housing and mortgage crisis. Between 2000 and 2012, median gross rent steadily increased across all three cities.

In general terms, all three cities seem to fit the post-industrial city schema, with a declining manufacturing sector, rising unemployment, declining homeownership, evidence of white residents leaving the urban core, and a population that is still struggling to overcome decades of decline. These characteristics situate the cities in need of some form of urban regeneration.

b. Media Portrayals and Discourses

Across these three cities, several themes emerge from the discourse analysis. As expected, all three cities seemed to have a theme of upholding a reputation as an inclusionary community. Sub-themes include the notion of immigrants bringing positive economic realities to Dayton, finding a mutual learning opportunity among immigrants and native-born residents in Indianapolis, and the general native-born community opinion to increase the number of immigrants and refugees in Utica.

By contrast, rejections of these cities’ inclusionary reputations became a significant motif in all three cities as well. In Dayton, out-of-state dissidents and local minorities expressed reservations about welcoming immigrants and refugees to the city, while in Indianapolis, state-level government disapproved of the city’s welcoming
initiative. In Utica, the structural inequalities that have recently surfaced from municipal government-related decisions seem to clash with the city’s purported goals of remaining inclusive and welcoming to immigrants and refugees. Dayton’s local media have given the impression of having significant influence over immigrant-related discourse. This may be due to the nature of Dayton’s immigrant infrastructure. While Indianapolis and Utica have a physical center for immigrant and refugee resources and services, Dayton’s approach remains far more oriented toward public relations and community-based action. Sanctuary city concerns seem more apparent in Dayton, which likely persist due to the city’s acceptance of alternative forms of identification. A significant theme that seems especially pertinent to Utica’s discourse is the sense of place that immigrants and refugees have discussed. The same degree of comfort may not exist in Dayton and Indianapolis because the proportion of foreign-born residents to native-born residents is not as great. A broad conclusion to draw from these themes is that context plays an important role in the ways in which immigrant-related discourse unfolds in a city.

However, these three cities demonstrate the internal similarities of their shared region. Maciag describes the region’s uniform economic and demographic conditions in relation to immigrant-related development by stating:

Some urban areas, particularly in the Rust Belt, continue to record population declines as factories close and residents pack their bags. These same areas, though, are welcoming large numbers of immigrants, a facet that’s emerged as a key component of policymakers’ strategies to stabilize regions that are struggling both economically and demographically (Maciag 2014).

As the tendency to attract immigrants grows in Rust Belt cities, so have the resources available to both municipal governments and community organizations. To compensate for the lack of jobs once abundant in the manufacturing sector, Rust Belt cities have
projected themselves as places of entrepreneurial potential for incoming immigrants and refugees (Peters and Nicas 2013). Rust Belt cities have increasingly encouraged immigrant entrepreneurship through programs that offer small business loans to immigrants, and through business training sessions (Guth 2015). Welcoming Economies otherwise known as WE Global Network is a regional organization that has emerged to unify Rust Belt cities seeking to welcome immigrants and refugees. The organization targets economic development initiatives in a 10-state region throughout the Rust Belt. In particular, the organization proclaims:

The Network is designed to strengthen the work, maximize the impact, and sustain the efforts of individual local initiatives across the region that welcome, retain, and empower immigrant communities as valued contributors to local economies (WE Global Network 2016).

Affiliated with Welcoming America, the organization has become a significant actor in immigrant-friendly initiatives, especially by capitalizing on the similar economic, social, and geographic traits of the Rust Belt. At the annual WE Global Network convening, member cities discuss successes and challenges of their respective immigrant-friendly frameworks, access research tools and technical resources specific to welcoming economic development initiatives, all through a regional Rust Belt lens.

Ultimately, the three cities I explored in this chapter are part of a broader regional trend toward welcoming immigrants and refugees, often as an urban regeneration strategy. This analysis has demonstrated that Rust Belt cities with common economic and demographic traits comprise a large proportion of the cities that seek the immigrant-friendly designation nationwide. The economic revitalization benefits of welcoming immigrants have certainly played a role in this regional trend toward immigrant friendly development, situated in a broader context of urban regeneration. However, it has also
become clear that there are social and human rights goals that may outweigh the economic objectives of Rust Belt cities’ welcoming initiatives. The implications and intricacies of the regional themes that have arisen in this chapter will be explored in greater detail through the Dayton case study.
Chapter 6 - Findings and Discussion: Local Scale

I. Political, Economic, and Cultural Issues in Dayton

Background on Dayton, Ohio

To explore the characteristics of immigrant-friendly cities, as well as the reasons for which they adopt this designation, I use Dayton, Ohio as a case study. I attempt to answer several sub-questions as well, including: Why do cities want to attract immigrants? What sorts of social and economic goals do they hope to accomplish? What tools do cities use to become IF? How do cities use these tools to define and justify their designation as IF?

A local case study serves these research questions well, because in addition to the broad patterns on national and regional scales, specific processes and actors can be identified and examined on a local scale.

As a former industrial center, Dayton, Ohio has followed the typical trajectory of a Rust Belt city. Founded over 125 years ago in Dayton, National Cash Register was one of the city’s largest employers and was a major actor in the manufacturing industry. In the 1970s, National Cash Register moved its corporate headquarters to an Atlanta suburb, and outsourced manufacturing operations to foreign countries (Majka and Longazel 2015). Additionally, General Motors, another major employer of the Dayton metropolitan area closed its assembly plant in 2008 (Majka and Longazel 2015). As the manufacturing industry deteriorated, capital disinvestment plagued the city, manifested in terms of skyrocketing unemployment levels, dramatic population loss, and increased vacancy rates. Losing a shocking 46% of its population between 1960 and 2010, Dayton’s labor force dwindled, further stunting the local economy (Majka and Longazel 2015).
However, the population decline has since reversed, due in large part to the rapidly increasing foreign-born population. While the native-born population in Dayton decreased by 8.6 percent between 2009 and 2013, the foreign-born population increased by 58.8 percent (Partnership for a New American Economy 2015). Dayton has emerged as a growing immigrant gateway city, with the Catholic Social Services of the Miami Valley as the primary voluntary agency for refugee resettlement. Voluntary agencies, in accordance with the U.S. Department of State, provide services to individuals granted refugee status through the Bureau of Population Refugee and Migration, and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (Catholic Social Services of the Miami Valley 2016). Although refugee resettlement has greatly contributed to the growing foreign-born population of Dayton, secondary migration has been especially contributive to this trend. While immigrants in Dayton come from countless areas of the world, “the top five
countries of origin for new citizens in Dayton are: Russia, India, Turkey, Philippines, and Mexico,” (Welcome Dayton 2016).

**Background on Welcome Dayton**

Several community initiatives emerged in the late 1990s and early 2000s to integrate these immigrant groups into the Dayton community (Majka and Longazel 2015). During this time, Dayton’s welcoming initiatives stood out in stark contrast to the largely anti-immigrant political climate in the United States. As one of the more widely recognized pieces of anti-immigrant legislation, Arizona’s State Bill 1070 required all immigrants to register and carry documentation with them at all times. This bill provoked protests and widespread rejection of the policy as a discriminatory policing measure. While the Arizona Supreme Court overturned much of this bill in 2012, the remaining legislation allows police officers to ask for documentation in stops, detentions, and arrests if there is “reasonable suspicion that the person is in the country illegally,” (Harwood and Lee, 2015, 238). Anti-immigrant legislation such as this creates an unwelcoming environment for immigrants, causing many to move to other cities and states.

A similar anti-immigrant measure in Georgia drove immigrants to other places, resulting in “hundreds of millions in crop loss due to the shortage of vegetable harvesters,” (Harwood and Lee 2015, 238). Unintended consequences of anti-immigrant legislation have been known to hurt unwelcoming states’ economies. In a hostile political climate such as this, welcoming initiatives like Dayton’s arise as a bold counter-approach to immigrant relations and integration efforts. Welcoming initiatives can be regarded as part of a “private effort [that] partially fills a gap in U.S. immigration policy: the lack of federal attention to immigrant integration,” (McDaniel 2016). On a local level, cities like
Dayton can transcend attitudes toward immigration on state and national levels to either welcome or exclude immigrants and refugees to/from the community.

Figure 6 Immigrant community resources mentioned in interviews. Map by Erika Shepard, base map generated by ArcGIS Online, data compiled from the Welcome Dayton website

Early efforts to integrate newcomers into the Dayton community materialized through several distinct campaigns and organizations, including those formed by immigrants and refugees themselves. These efforts have been seen in organizations like Latino Connection, which acts as a networking organization, and Latino and Immigrant Rights Advocates, which focuses on legal status issues and advocacy. Additionally, the American Friends Service Committee has been instrumental in advocacy for African refugees and economic self-sufficiency, and the League of United Latin American Citizens, has led the charge in creating and maintaining educational opportunities for Latino students. More generally, East End Community Services has provided innumerable resources to immigrants and refugees, and the Ethnic and Cultural Diversity Caucus has initiated several anti-discrimination campaigns, and is responsible for the
City of Dayton’s acceptance of alternative forms of identification (Majka and Longazel 2015). Put succinctly,

From their inception, the overall focus of these grassroots efforts has been on facilitating the integration of immigrants and refugees into their local communities, particularly on institutional levels, by providing access to jobs, housing, health care, interpreter and translation services, and police services (Majka and Longazel 2015, 6).

While many of these initiatives had the same general mission—to promote immigrant integration—the actual programs and implementation strategies remained different. Many of the organizations engaged in immigrant integration initiatives collaborated and supported one another. It is important to bring these early efforts to light, as they provide the basis upon which the official Welcome Dayton plan was founded.

Amidst these grassroots integration efforts, the City of Dayton Human Relations Council, nicknamed the “conscience of the city” had been reaching out to the Hispanic community about discrimination issues (Wainwright 2016). After conducting more research, the Human Relations Council discovered that many immigrant communities’ needs were not being voiced or heard. In early 2011, in order to address the concerns of immigrant communities and streamline various preexisting pro-immigrant efforts, the Human Relations Council, held several community meetings to discuss the circumstances facing immigrants in Dayton. Welcome Dayton emerged out of these conversations to provide a framework for communication, implementation, and partnerships among the municipal government, local organizations, businesses, and community members. To organize goals and strategies, four sub-committees were formed: business and economic development, local government and justice system, social and health services, and community, culture, arts, and education (Human Relations Council 2011, Majka and Longazel 2015, Wainwright 2016). Each sub-committee produced a collectively written
report containing the goals and their implementation strategies. The sub-committees combined the reports into a Welcome Dayton plan, which was then unanimously approved by the Dayton City Commission (Majka and Longazel 2015). It has been emphasized by numerous groups, organizations, and individuals that the “early public support helped to create a safe political space for other city officials and city departments to speak about and implement actions on immigrant and refugee integration,” (McDaniel 2016).

The resulting Welcome Dayton plan has been implemented through a community-driven political framework. Firstly, the City Commission passed an ordinance, which nominated a Welcome Dayton Committee to guide Welcome Dayton initiatives. The Welcome Dayton committee meets on a semi-monthly basis, with the sub-committees meeting on the off months (Welcome Dayton 2016). Secondly, collaboration between Human Relations Council and the City Manager led to the establishment of an office to staff this Committee, and to “facilitate and coordinate the efforts of community organizations and businesses since most of the recommendations are not within the mission of the City itself,” (Human Relations Council 2011, 12). This is an important distinction, as it reveals the true grassroots nature of the framework, and its limited linkage to City mandates. Thirdly, the City Manager appointed a City worker to conduct the work that does fall within the City’s mission. Lastly, the City Commission has encouraged “immigrant groups, other government agencies, community institutions, and the business leadership to undertake their own initiatives, beyond this Plan” (Human Relations Council 2011, 12).
While these political implementation procedures have provided a critical governmental support structure for the plan in the form of resources and enforcement, Human Relations Council representatives have made it abundantly clear that it is the community that propels Welcome Dayton. Inherent in the plan’s implementation are small-scale community pushes. For example, upon receiving multiple calls from community members inquiring about how they can help, the Welcome Dayton coordinator responds with asking “what are you already doing, because a lot of times people are already doing things, and I say ‘hey look, you’re already involved. That is Welcome Dayton,” (Baccelli 2016).

Another vital form of implementation is the partnerships with other local organizations. The Welcome Dayton coordinator has stressed the importance of relationships among all of the actors involved in Welcome Dayton: “You have to have that trust, you have to have opportunities to get messages out and all of that. If you don’t have relationships, it’s just not going to happen. We do a lot of collaboration,” (Baccelli 2016). Relationships such as these can range from public establishments such as Dayton Public Schools to religious institutions like Hispanic Catholic Ministries, to non-profit organizations like East End Community Services to immigrant community associations such as the American Ahiska Turkish Society. The actual functionality of these partnerships generally exists in the form of programs or specific services targeted toward the Dayton immigrant community. One of the first things that Welcome Dayton did upon passing the plan was to assess the ESL offerings in Dayton in conjunction with available childcare and transportation services (Machak 2016). Partnerships proved to be essential to this assessment, and continue to serve the plan’s range of capabilities today.
II. Dayton Interview Data

As mentioned in the Data and Methodology section, I conducted a total of seven interviews in Dayton, Ohio to further explore the grounded reality of immigrant-friendly initiatives in a typical Rust Belt city context. In order to preserve the confidentiality of the interview participants, I will only identify individuals by their organization and a pseudonym. A summary of the interview participants’ organizations can be found in Table 1. This representation of organizations provides a sampling of the various community resources available in Dayton, and the diverse network of individuals they serve.

Table 2 Interview Participants and Organization Descriptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Organization Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Todd Wainwright</td>
<td><em>Human Relations Council: City of Dayton agency that “enforces civil rights; provides business and technical assistance to minority-owned, woman-owned and small disadvantaged businesses; and administers community relations initiatives that promote and maintain peace, goodwill and harmony; assists in reducing inter-group tensions, and ensures equality of treatment and opportunity to all who live, work, play, and gather in the City of Dayton” (Human Relations Council 2016)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mikayla Baccelli</td>
<td><em>Welcome Dayton: Program run through the Human Relations Council that coordinates immigrant-friendly initiatives and works to foster a more inclusive Dayton community</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harold Mbanefo and Karen Martinez</td>
<td><em>Dayton Public Schools: Public school district serving about 14,000 students in the Dayton area, including about 800 English language learners (Dayton Public Schools 2016).</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelly Morton and Carla Bronson</td>
<td><em>Kettering ABLE: Adult literacy program based out of Kettering, a suburb of Dayton. The program’s main areas of instruction are GED classes and English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes (Kettering ABLE 2016).</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judy Leotta</td>
<td><em>East End Community Services: Nonprofit organization that serves the greater Dayton community: “Through our housing development, community building, afterschool and summer programming, educational initiatives, teen services, and services for parents, single adults and seniors, East End reaches more than 3,000 persons a year, more than 4,000 counting all the children from the families that we serve” (East End Community Services 2016).</em></td>
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A. Political and civic rights concerns of Welcome Dayton

Welcome Dayton is regularly termed a “community initiative” which is officially housed within the City of Dayton Human Relations Council. While it has become clear that Welcome Dayton exists outside of the governmental structure, some of the implications and achievements of the initiative have political ties. Welcome Dayton relies partially on public funding, and partially on a grant through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development given to Fair Housing Assistance Program (FHAP) agencies that actively engage in “looking at inclusive communities and taking down barriers to fair housing,” (Baccelli 2016). By working with other government agencies, Welcome Dayton has attempted to make it easier for immigrants and refugees to “navigate the system” through initiatives such as the language access policy, which was passed in 2015. The Human Relations Council received funding to provide all City departments with access to language services.

Another major shift in policy was a project of the Ethnic and Cultural Diversity Caucus. Garnering the support of a coalition of government agencies and community organizations, the Caucus successfully lobbied the City of Dayton to “accept the Matricula Consular and Guatemalan Consulate Identification Cards as valid forms of
identification for Mexican and Guatemalan nationals who had dealings with and sought services from city agencies, including the police,” (Majka and Longazel 2015, 8).

Following continual occurrences of discriminatory policing and racial profiling, the fact that this resolution had passed meant that many Hispanic residents did not have to fear deportation for failing to possess “sufficient” means of identification (Machak, Sister Shannon 2016). Essential to this resolution’s success was the Hispanic Catholic Ministry.

While attempting to gain support for the measure, one of the Sisters along with a Methodist minister divided up the City Commissioners with whom to discuss the measure’s implications. One of the Sisters explains her experience:

I took with me [the US-born son of a Mexican immigrant, who was 14 years old at the time], and he could explain how his father got picked up. That really helped to acquaint the Commissioners, County and City, with what was going on. It could be made personal with a personal story or with an actual witness. These kids, their parents are going to be deported, so they figure well I guess we’ll go to Mexico, they don’t even speak Spanish. He’s 14, he’s been here his whole life, and one of the County Commissioners said to him ‘where are your parents from in Mexico?’ and he didn’t even know, and he was going to be going there (Sister Shannon 2016).

The importance of a multi-actor grassroots campaign can be seen in this example.

Multiple segments of the community, from religious organizations to government agencies can generate political change with far-reaching effects on the community.

**B. Economic vs. social and human rights goals**

In the context of a post-industrial Rust Belt economy Dayton’s welcoming initiatives have emphasized the economic benefits stemming from integrating immigrants and refugees into the community. Some regard this perspective as necessary, as the Welcome Dayton plan may not have received nearly as much attention without the perceived economic benefits. Indeed, Harwood and Lee (2015, 253) contend,
Although comprehensive, [the Welcome Dayton plan emphasizes] economic development, being driven politically by the economic imperative to stimulate growth that would improve [the city’s] competitiveness. The efforts in Dayton...focus on immigrants as economic actors. This is not surprising given the recent economic downturn that left cities under tremendous pressure to create jobs. Strategies with such a focus are notably the most challenging, yet they are also the keys to success for these plans.

Therefore, the necessity to demonstrate the economic benefits of the plan, although only a piece of the overall initiative, proves to be an instrumental point of concern, so as to act in the interests of the city. In Dayton, immigrant and refugee communities have had a valuable economic impact on the city. The Welcome Dayton coordinator summarizes the beneficial economic impacts of immigrants in contrast to the social dynamics of immigrants’ experiences by stating,

When you have a very small immigrant population, as this city does, an uptick can have a significant contribution, so we saw people buying homes, and starting businesses. And the community began to thrive, but that’s a real juxtaposition where you know that people are being socially isolated and being discriminated against and that you also have an increase in your population, an increase in your tax base, an increase in your property values (Baccelli 2016).

The economic contributions of immigrants, therefore, are easily seen in economically depressed contexts. Immigrants are often discursively projected as economic assets before they are acknowledged as community members in need of social inclusion and support networks. This general perception can be summarized in Harwood and Lee’s words: “Cities hope that immigrant entrepreneurs can jump-start economic development in neglected neighborhoods, connect to globalizing markets in already thriving neighborhoods, and create more opportunities in general for both the city and its residents through population growth” (2015, 241-242). Immigrant integration initiatives are largely recognized on a national scale through an economic lens, perpetuated by media sources and capital-focused pro-immigrant arguments.
However, as the Welcome Dayton coordinator points out, “It’s important to recognize that you can’t really have business and economic development if you have people that don’t have access to services or don’t know how to navigate the system,” (Baccelli 2016). Welcome Dayton affiliates have emphasized the importance of balancing economically driven initiatives with those that prioritize social services and human rights-oriented goals. In his explanation of the weight that should be given to the often overlooked social contributions and humanistic value of immigrants and refugees, the former director of the Human Relations Council referenced Tony Judt’s description of the society’s priorities and metrics:

We are skeptical, if not actively suspicious, of all-embracing political goals: The grand narratives of Nation and History and Progress that characterized the political families of the twentieth century seem discredited beyond recall. And so we describe our collective purposes in exclusively economic terms – prosperity, growth, GDP, efficiency, output, interest rates, and stock market performances – as though these were not just means to some collectively sought social or political ends but were necessary and sufficient ends in themselves (Judt 2008, 11).

In order to acknowledge the coarse standards by which our nation measures progress and success, it becomes necessary to reassess society’s values and goals. The former director of the Human Relations Council has contextualized these statements by suggesting that “economic development, absent fundamental change, is destroying humanity’s welcome on earth, viewing people as just money multipliers is denying their capacity to connect and care for each other,” (Wainwright 2016). This viewpoint seems to reject the social conditions brought about by neoliberal doctrine, aligning well with Harvey’s point about human activity’s subordination to capital. Evidence of these sentiments is deeply engrained in both the goals of the Human Rights Council, as well as the development of Welcome Dayton. Perhaps one of the most influential aspects of Welcome Dayton’s
origins was the former Human Relations Council director’s background in transformative mediation. This approach to mediating discussions of conflict calls on civic engagement and community discussion rather than relying on more inflammatory forms of intervention like policing or judicial procedures. Transformative mediation does not close down conflict; on the contrary, it opens conflict up to discussion. This method of engagement certainly influenced the evolution of Welcome Dayton by prioritizing above all the participation and suggestions of community members of all backgrounds (Wainwright 2016). While extensive participation played a dominant role in addressing the challenges facing immigrants and refugees, part of the success was simply the recognition of community members and coming together to discuss meaningful issues.

Instead of dividing welcoming initiatives into categories of economically based goals and socially based goals, there seems to be a mutual dependence on one another. As the Welcome Dayton coordinator puts it,

If people are not welcomed, and are not being included, and are not being integrated, that [economic] benefit is not going to last. I don’t think it’s this either/or; I don’t think you can only do one or the other, but it’s really about how those two complement each other, (Baccelli 2016).

Because welcoming initiatives’ economic goals and social goals are not mutually exclusive, it becomes difficult to speculate what one would look like without the other. University of Dayton professor and chair of the Ethnic and Cultural Diversity Caucus discusses this relationship by stating,

It is hard to actually say. What if Dayton still had a good economic base, what if we didn’t have a population loss, what if we were thriving, what if our housing stock was well occupied, and we had this influx of immigrants, would we do this? I don’t know. On the other hand, the people I know that figure into this, yes they can talk about it’s in our own interest to do that, but it’s not the main motive. Their main motive is ethical and moral, this is the right thing to do. Compassion is humanistic. So, social justice issues are concerned with human rights issues. Now
the fact that it is in the interest of the larger community is a real plus. If we didn’t have that “homes need to be occupied issue” would all these people who we really wanted to assist, would it have come about? I really don’t know. Realistically I would like to think it would, but it may not have because, it may have not gotten to the level of a city initiative. It’s not that the city commission people or the city commissioner were like “okay lets see how can they help us.” I don’t think they were oriented that way, but still that has to be one of the...it’s the larger context, a context within [which] it occurs (Machak 2016).

While many media sources and governmental agencies tend to “spin” welcoming initiatives in the Rust Belt as economic development schemes, in Dayton, the early community initiatives that preceded the Welcome Dayton plan are a testament to the socially conscious values inherent in the Dayton community. This distinction reveals the unique context of Dayton as a welcoming city.

C. Community perceptions

Nearly everyone I interviewed emphasized the importance of the community in developing a welcoming environment for immigrants and refugees. With many early pro-immigrant initiatives already in place, Dayton had the grassroots support to pursue its designation as an immigrant friendly city. It should be reiterated that Welcome Dayton itself is specified as a “community initiative.” Many proponents of Welcome Dayton cite its unanimous City Council passage as an indication of the community’s positive perceptions of immigrants and refugees. Indeed, the only dissident of the plan who came to the public hearing was from out of town. The chair of the Ethnic and Cultural Diversity Caucus explains the positive and negative community perceptions of Welcome Dayton in further detail:

When it came up for in the city commission meetings, there were two times it was introduced and people could comment on it, that is, ordinary citizens could comment on it. There were maybe a couple dozen people who said yes let’s do it, positive things. The only one that spoke against it wasn’t from Dayton. It was a representative from some anti-immigrant organization. It’s either in Michigan or in Cleveland. They were so overwhelmed by the positive support that that guy had
a very muted response, “oh you should think carefully about this!” He didn’t rant about how immigrants are taking our jobs and stealing our women…So two things on that: one is that the reason why many of these cities can do this is because the natural opponent, the people that are skeptical of the changes new immigrants might bring, tend not to live in cities anymore. That’s more of the affluent whites moving out so you have the conservatives moving out so they’re not living in Dayton, they’re living in the suburbs. This is a City of Dayton initiative; it’s not a Montgomery County initiative. That base of opposition no longer lives here (Machak 2016).

This statement raises several points about the community’s perception of expanding efforts to welcome immigrants and refugees. The multi-scalar debate theme arises yet again, in the broader discussion of immigration. Because Welcome Dayton is a City of Dayton initiative, the question of its implications on larger scales emerges. The dissident who attended the public hearing is affiliated with the Cleveland-based Ohio Jobs and Justice PAC, and rejects pro-immigrant attraction strategies, because he sees it as a way for immigrants to take jobs from native-born citizens, and that it could lead to Dayton becoming a sanctuary city (Kelley 2011). This argument takes a stance on the scale of welcoming initiatives, despite the continual emphasis on community throughout the Welcome Dayton plan.

As mentioned in the regional section, some African American residents of Dayton have expressed frustrations with the welcoming initiative, stating that they feel that the same “welcome mat hasn’t been extended to them,” (Kelley 2011). It should be noted that “questions about equity and justice for African Americans in cities has been one of planning’s greatest challenges,” (Harwood and Lee 2015, 256) and matters of equity should not be taken lightly. However, some argue that Welcome Dayton is not giving any more resources to immigrants and refugees than those already accessible through the government for native-born residents (Machak 2016). Additionally, other white working class Dayton residents may feel resentment toward immigrants. The chair of the Ethnic
and Cultural Diversity Caucus describes this sentiment through his canvassing experience:

When we went to campaign in favor of the Matricular, when we went to certain groups in East Dayton, which is heavily white—at that time more so than today—although it’s still mostly white, working class...a lot of hostility to it, because they didn’t like these people, because they were Mexican or they were undocumented or something like that. They have not formed, as far as I know, any kind of organized, at least no public opposition to it, because what are you going to say? “Okay so you don’t like these immigrants here, so you want these houses to be vacant and not occupied? How about that business that’s owned by an immigrant? Do you want that to be a vacant building again?” This is the use of “it’s in our economic advantage collectively” – it kind of takes the brunt out of that anti-immigrant argument (Machak 2016).

While many of the government agencies and community organizations present the Dayton community as unified in support of becoming an immigrant friendly city, this may not be the case. However, because Welcome Dayton is a community initiative that grew out of pre-existing grassroots welcoming initiatives and organizations, it follows that the Dayton community largely supports the notion of welcoming immigrants and refugees. Again, resourcefulness comes into play here, as Dayton’s intentional recognition of the interests of all community members stands in opposition to the discriminatory, power-laden status quo. Furthermore, the fact that the municipal government has prominently supported Welcome Dayton in the face of the multi-scalar debate on immigration, acts as a testament to the city’s commitment to creating a welcoming environment for newcomers.

D. Critique: Welcome Dayton as an “empty slogan”

Throughout the interviews I conducted, participants expressed a generally positive view of Welcome Dayton, and listed all of its successes and beneficial impacts on the community. A few of the participants, however, indicated that the initiative has amounted to be more of a public relations campaign that is missing the logistical backing to make it
a working success. In other words, Welcome Dayton needs more robust social and financial infrastructure to not only find greater success in immigrant integration, but to follow through on its promises of being a welcoming and inclusive environment. The director of East End Community Services explained the essence of this shortcoming with a story of an immigrant family coming to Dayton as secondary migrants:

A couple years ago, we had a family: a mom, a dad, and a two year old. They had flown to New York, went through the Internet and discovered that Dayton is a welcoming city. They spent the rest of their money on a bus ticket from New York to Dayton. They showed up in City Hall with their bags and said basically “we’re here!” No kidding, this really happened. They had no money, City Hall had no idea what to do with them, so they called us. You’ve got to understand in Dayton there are only a handful of community-based centers like us that are willing to do whatever it takes. I mean, they’ve just all collapsed. So one of our people went down there and she spoke Spanish quite fluently...she figured out Moroccan. Anyway, she ended up taking the family home with her. I mean we wouldn’t have encouraged that, but she just did what she needed to do.

That is a very real example...we all started thinking that if that’s the best we’re doing for folks, then we’ve got a problem here. So that’s when we started thinking more about, you know if you had an address to go to and there would be somebody there to help you figure out temporary housing and employment. Because it’s not just people coming in as refugees through Catholic Social Services, it’s people who get a plane ticket and unfortunately in this case...and I don’t even know what happened to this fellow, but he was on a student visa that was about to expire, and he didn’t have any money for school, and so he probably went underground with his family, because he couldn’t work. In that case there was nothing anybody could do, but a lot of people tried really hard to figure it out, and like I said, I don’t know what happened to him. He’s probably working at a Moroccan restaurant...The bigger notion is that the quicker we can get these folks up on their feet and contributing to the economy, the better off everybody’s going to be (Leotta 2016).

This story conveys both the successes and deficiencies of Welcome Dayton. While it is clear that the city has effectively portrayed itself as an immigrant friendly city, to the extent that families will move to Dayton from wherever they previously lived, it also becomes gravely evident that Dayton lacks adequate social and economic infrastructure to deal with the immigrants it attracts. The coordinator of the Kettering ABLE program
seems to agree with this critique of Welcome Dayton, as she explains through another
story how the initiative has fallen short:

When WD initiated...so I’m going to give you the other side of this coin, because
as a server in the community that was not part of the initial WD, (I serve on the
commission now), providing a resource to the immigrants, which is part of that
framework that you’re seeing. Initially, we (the city of Dayton) were out there,
talking about our initiative to be immigrant friendly.

I had several families (refugees) show up in my classroom who had moved
themselves across this country, which is pretty big for them when they come from
countries that are as big as one of our states. But they were refugees, and when a
refugee comes in through a resettlement agency, they are tied to that resettlement
agency. Even if it’s Catholic Services in Louisiana, which is an example I can
give you, I had a family from Iraq that was settled in Louisiana, and they saw the
Welcome Dayton initiative being talked about on CNN by Todd Wainwright, the
Director of Human Relations for the City of Dayton then. I don’t want to put it
down, but we had no resources for people to come here with nothing and move
themselves. Because when they moved themselves from Louisiana, they lost their
resettlement support.

You cannot move into a new resettlement agency’s area because they have not
been given the support for that family, and they had nothing to give them. So that
meant they lost their three years of cash assistance, they lost their caseworker who
was tying them into resources, they lost their housing. Because when they come
into this country, they get some of these services for a period of time with no
payback to help them get established. So they show up at my door for English
classes, and wanted to know where were they supposed to live, what were they
supposed to do for cash. We had nothing; we had nothing to support other than
good will. That’s when I started getting involved with WD and said oh my gosh,
you cannot open our doors for people who have nothing, because refugees have
been through so much. That was so traumatic to them, and to that family (Morton
and Bronson 2016).

Again, this story describes the unintended consequences of enacting a massive campaign
to project a city as welcoming to immigrants and refugees. While Dayton does have more
immigrant-related resources and supports than the average post-industrial city, they have
not been strong enough to support unexpected incoming immigrants and refugees moving
from elsewhere in the United States.

A critique of this critique is that the more symbolic side of Welcome Dayton is
equally as important as the logistical backing. Perhaps the rationale involves the argument that logistical social and economic infrastructure will come with time, but the ability to convey a welcoming message to immigrants and refugees is a necessary first step. The chair of the Ethnic and Cultural Diversity Caucus has expressed this view by saying:

As far as specifics of WD, we do some things that are probably more symbolic than real and tangible. A number of cities do this, we now have a World Refugee Day celebration, and this June will be the fourth one. Then we have the Dayton World Soccer games. Those are really nice, they’re tangible events, but it really doesn’t improve anybody’s prospects. But, it’s kind of symbolic [to] recognize, welcome that kind of thing. Hopefully it makes those immigrant populations feel like “yes I do belong here, this is my home” (Machak 2016).

The value of symbolic gestures accompanies this argument, suggesting that the inclusive expressions or events are critical to the cultivation of a sense of place for immigrants and refugees. One of the greatest conclusions to be made from this argument is that symbolic gestures are necessary to support Welcome Dayton’s prospects, but that they cannot work by themselves in creating a welcoming place. Perhaps part of this strategy is to shift perceptions among native-born residents to create a more supportive and positive environment for Dayton’s existing immigrant and refugee populations, rather than necessarily attracting more immigrants and refugees living elsewhere to come to Dayton. A combination of sorts seems to be the best approach to maintaining a successful welcoming initiative.

III. Successes and challenges

Like any community development initiative, Dayton’s immigrant friendly initiatives, including Welcome Dayton, have faced many challenges in addition to their successes. It seems as though Dayton has found the most success in the educational infrastructure
available to arriving immigrants and refugees. Through the public school district, nonprofit organizations, and religiously affiliated institutions, there exist numerous programs and educational resources for incoming residents. These offerings go beyond typical educational programs in various ways that will be expanded upon in the next sections.

The challenges facing Dayton’s immigrant-friendly initiatives stem from the various critiques outlined in the previous section. The general challenges surround the inability for some immigrants and refugees to successfully integrate into the Dayton community. While there are many reasons for which this occurs, the insufficient services available to new immigrants and refugees have emerged as a dominant theme, and will be further explored in the following sections.

A. Successes: Diversified educational infrastructure

*Dayton Public Schools*

Dayton Public Schools has been instrumental in developing an immigrant friendly educational infrastructure for incoming immigrant and refugee families. With the massive influx of English Language Learner (ELL) students, the district has adjusted its academic programs to accommodate a shift in needs and concerns among Dayton residents. One of the Dayton Public Schools representatives describes the continual inflow of ELL students in the following statement:

> We had 873 that are tagged, but 69, well, we’ve had, this is from last week. But each month, we’ve had between 20 and 25 ESL students specifically new refugees or ESL students. Yesterday I placed three...The day before that, there was two more. It’s weekly, you know. Every month we’re getting at least 20 extra kids. When I went through and looked at the number of kids we got from August through December was 192 extra students we got since the end of last year. Last year we had 850 by the end of the year, but we had kids that graduated, kids that exited ESL because they didn’t need the support anymore, or students that have
moved. So some of those numbers went down, but we got another 200, and it’s just continued. It’s going to continue to the end of the year. So we have numbers of how many kids we have. I have numbers of what the population in our department has looked like since, I don’t know if it’s ’98 or 2003 to show the growth of numbers. This is how we determine who, how they come in through the student enrollment center. First we have to look at the papers, obviously the refugees that we talked about, we know that they’re coming. But when there’s kids that are coming that are not being resettled, they’re coming on their own, you know it can be any day of the week (Mbanefo and Martinez 2016).

As a way to manage the seemingly constant arrival of immigrant and refugee students, Dayton Public Schools established a Welcome Center, through which refugees can find personalized mentoring and tutoring services. Refugee families are asked to sign a contract that commits them to complete the mentoring program. Mentors are volunteers who are asked to participate in a “Refugee 101” class offered through Catholic Social Services, as well as ESL training through the district’s relationship with Project READ (Matumaini 2016). One of the Dayton Public Schools representatives explains how the Welcome Center fits into the general process of accepting and registering new immigrant and refugee students:

The Welcome Center, the idea of what they’re doing for the refugees that are coming, it’s not something that is so much separate. We have a lot of students that are coming in from other areas of our country and other countries that are coming as immigrants but not refugees. There are things that kind of melt together, it’s not something that is “it’s this way or this way,” things kind of cross over and back and forth.

When they come, and we have families that are in refugee status, we get contacted by Catholic Social Services because they are the people that resettle in this area, and we get a heads up; “We’re going to be coming to enroll students. It’s a family that has this many children, they speak this language, this is where they’re coming from,” so we have an idea before they get here that they’re coming. We have certain days of the week that one of us or both of us, somebody will be here to serve them, to help them get through the registration process.

And then, like you said, depending on what grade they’re in, I mean if it’s kindergarten through eighth grade we try to place them in...we have five ESL sites that are kindergarten through five. We have two high schools that have ESL in them as well. One is a typical high school and the other one is solely for the 16
year olds and up. Each of our preschool through sixth or eighth grade, depending on which school you have, has a regular ESL program. We have one school that has a dual immersion program for Spanish speakers, so our kids that are coming in as refugees from El Salvador, from Honduras, from Central American countries, Colombia, Ecuador. We’ve had people coming in for the last three or four years (Mbanefo and Martinez 2016).

In addition to the ESL programs, and targeted placement sites, Dayton Public Schools has a Parent University program affiliated with the Welcome Center, which meets monthly. Parent University acts as a venue through which the district can engage with parents of students to provide clarification on how the American school system operates, as well as to discuss a topic of the month, ranging from financial literacy to citizenship (Mbanefo and Martinez 2016).

During the interview with the Dayton Public Schools representatives, it became clear that schools represent much more than merely an academic center for young students. In fact, specific school locations seem to influence immigrant and refugee settlement patterns. Schools have become increasingly perceived as community resources for all members of immigrant and refugee families. One of the Dayton Public Schools representatives explains this phenomenon by stating:

I think that in the Mexican community that we have living around Ruskin, knowing that there’s somebody at the school that can help them...“we want to live in this neighborhood because I want to send my children to school here, and there’s someone there that I know can help them” and so just the idea of there’s someone that I can count on that’s going to be able to help me, that’s going to reach out, I think has drawn those people to those centers...The majority of our kids that speak the dialects from Africa that the teacher at Fairview speaks, the majority of the kids live in that neighborhood—the same as the Turkish families that live around Kaiser, and the Spanish speaking families around Ruskin. It’s like which came first, the chicken or the egg. I think that there was an element maybe there of a teacher working in that environment, and like “okay well this is working” and then word spreads...Remember that we work together in coordination with Catholic Social Services, because they’re the service that houses, you know. So we try to work with them, so to get the houses. Yes there’s the population that accept the calls that say, “hey come” because they like to live
in a community. “Here we have the school we have the teachers, we have the people who listen to us,” and so they invite them (Mbanefo and Martinez 2016).

The combination of neighborhood-specific programming, and the accessibility of teachers, instructors, and ESL paraprofessionals who speak the same language of neighborhood residents seem to drive this residential pattern. This combination produces spatial clustering of certain immigrant groups, following an ethnic enclave pattern. However, as suggested, it is unclear whether the immigrants came first, and the ethnically matched services followed, or the other way around. Regardless, the existing ethnic enclave pattern has compounded as immigrants seeking existing communities continue to reside alongside other immigrants of similar cultural backgrounds. Again, in the case of refugees, this is often a calculated measure, as Catholic Social Services knowingly place refugees in areas that are predominantly immigrants and refugees of the same cultural background.

**Adult literacy programs that serve a range of immigrants**

The Kettering ABLE Program, based in one of Dayton’s suburbs, serves adults wishing to learn English or to attain a GED. While many native-born residents take these classes, foreign-born residents have come to comprise 50 to 70 percent of overall ABLE Program participants. As the program’s coordinator explains, the “average ESL class of 25-30 students has 19 countries represented and 12 languages,” (Morton and Bronson 2016). ESL class instructors do not teach using translation, but instead teach through immersion, citing that immersion allows for faster acquisition. In addition, the program offers one-on-one tutoring and “speaking labs” that center on a participant’s topic of choice. Regarding immigrant and refugee related services; the program coordinator summarizes the program’s offerings:
We do have leveled classes. We teach six levels of English, dictated by normed standards and benchmarks. The program goal is postsecondary or living wage employment. That’s not always possible. We do serve undocumented as well as documented immigrants. We serve the immigrants on visitation visas. The only immigrant we do not serve is an F1 visa, which is international student, because their visa states that they will pay for educational services, and they can’t access free government funded services (Morton and Bronson 2016).

A key takeaway here is that Kettering ABLE serves not only refugees and documented immigrants, but also undocumented immigrants who otherwise have very limited access to social and educational resources. Again, the program coordinator explains the rationale for the program’s inclusivity with a strong statement about the reciprocal relationship among immigrants and their new community:

The bottom line is that language provides them access to a life here, and until they can actually be at a certain language level, they really have trouble reaching their maximum potential, plugging into the community, their children’s school, and/or sustainable employment (Morton and Bronson 2016).

The fact that there are classes and educational resources available for all adults promotes the very ideals that make the Dayton area a welcoming place.

**Hispanic Catholic Ministry**

Another key educational resource in the Dayton community can be found in St. Mary Catholic Church’s Hispanic Catholic Ministry. As previously mentioned. Hispanic Catholic Ministry helps Hispanics, as well as those who practice the Catholic Faith with legal services, taxes, and English classes beyond the prayer groups and religious services. In one of the Sisters’ words:

When I was hired, the emphasis was really on social concerns; of course sacramental preparation, and offering, and service, you know that’s my main thing to offer service in Spanish, but just to be able to meet the needs of people. During the week, I might have a Bible Study, but I also have English classes. I have people who want to come and discuss maybe a personal problem, or something about how the court system might work, or anything. But it might be as mundane as do I know where the Spanish hairdresser is (Sister Shannon 2016).
Because many Hispanics are affiliated with the Catholic Church, it can serve as a comfortable and reliable venue for resources that extend beyond traditional religious services. Again, Hispanic Catholic Ministry acts as a refuge for undocumented immigrants, which adds to the welcoming nature of the Dayton community.

B. Challenges: Some immigrants and refugees not finding success

**Ethnic community – government relationships**

One of the most significant challenges mentioned by the Welcome Dayton Coordinator was “navigating ethnic community relationships as an outside agency,” (Baccelli 2016). The Human Relations Council exists in part for this purpose. As a government agency that advocates for minority groups, the Human Relations Council has already broached the issue of building trust with historically underserved communities. However, another side of the issue is that “there’s a lot of tension and conflict within the ethnic communities, and a lot of competition…being an outside agency that tries to remain neutral and tries to remain objective, it’s really challenging,” (Baccelli 2016). There does not seem to be much media coverage on the topic of inter-ethnic competition and conflict in the Dayton area, but the fact that it exists demonstrates that there is certainly a gap in the data for micro-scale issues such as this. The government’s role in this issue remains difficult, as there is likely a sense of culturally specific knowledge and sensitivity involved that an outside agency may not be able to ascertain.

**Matching services to Dayton’s “welcoming” objective**

As previously discussed, some residents argue that Welcome Dayton acts as an “empty slogan,” which lacks the proper services to back up its immigrant-friendly reputation. One of the city’s greatest challenges, therefore, is to identify gaps in the services
available to incoming immigrants and refugees, and target these areas for improvement.

A significant service that has been identified as lacking for immigrants and refugees is mental health support. The Kettering ABLE coordinator summarizes this service gap well through her experience with Iraqi and Sudanese refugees:

You know a lot of the Iraqis and the refugees that come here—not just Iraqis but I’ve seen it mostly in Iraqis—they come here with post-traumatic stress syndrome so it’s another major hurdle for them in plugging in, being able to keep a job, being able to learn a language. Some of them never learn the language because they are stuck. That’s another resource that we did not have in place because the expert we had at the VA center had just been moved to DC with the influx of Iraqis as well as the Americans returning from that war. The Iraqis were the ones who were showing the PTSD at its worst...the worst I’ve seen it. They were far worse in showing it than the Africans who had come from the Sudanese war. I spent three months trying to find someone to treat one of the newly arrived students here. He’s never learned the language. If you know anything about PTSD—I’ve learned a lot—it doesn’t get better; you hope that you can maintain it with medications. But that’s something that comes with the refugees, because they’ve been through things that you and I can’t even imagine (Morton and Bronson 2016).

Looking beyond the comparison of mental health struggles among refugees, the stressful transition to a new city or country alone may prove significant enough for immigrants and refugees to maintain a healthy state of mind. Regardless of situation, there seems to be a distinct shortcoming in terms of the mental health services that are accessible to immigrants and refugees. There is likely a major financial barrier in addition to the language barrier that may limit the existing mental health services in Dayton.

Another factor that may play into immigrant and refugees’ mental health is the transfer of credentials. The director of East End Community Services has dealt with this issue on a regular basis, and describes the complications and stresses of this process by stating:

So they’re expected to get over the culture shock, deal with any traumas that they’ve brought with them, and there are many, learn English, and go get a job that allows them to be self-supporting, basically in three, maybe six months. I
don’t know the rules specifically. So imagine being a parent with four kids and grandma in tow, and you get stuck in the middle of East Dayton in a place that is roach infested because that’s all you could afford, because the housing allowance isn’t very big from the State department. You’re having—I have seen this with my own eyes—having to keep your food wrapped up in plastic bags. And you’re an Iraqi and you helped the US Air Force over there, and you think “I can go get a job over at Wright- Patterson Air Force Base here” and they say “oh no, you don’t qualify to work here.” It’s okay to work in Iraq, but you can’t work here. None of his skills transfer, his credentials transfer—you know there’s that whole problem. This poor man with all these kids living in a roach infested apartment after he was a translator or I think he was a mechanic, worked on the airplanes over there, lived a middle class life, and then they show up here…and grandma is weeping. She’s completely depressed, and she’s begging to go back. She would rather die over there than live here (Leotta 2016).

There is obviously overlap between the failure of credentials to transfer, and immigrant and refugees’ mental health. This convoluted credential transfer process faces immigrants and refugees across the country, and has been lacking for a long time. The Kettering ABLE coordinator has described that there is a bit of progress being made in this realm on the state level:

Ohio is doing a great job because they have rewritten a lot of licensures, exams at the state level to make it more immigrant-friendly for immigrants that already have professional degrees. That’s mostly in the healthcare field right now, but they’re looking at expanding that to other fields. That’s a resource that needed building, and they’re continuing to build. I guess we kind of put the cart before the horse (it’s sort of the way it looks), but I think the country has always been doing that (Morton and Bronson 2016).

It becomes clear here that Dayton has a long way to go before the city can “catch up” with its welcoming reputation by providing these services. The unsurprising challenge here is the limited funding allotted to services like these. Several of the interview participants have expressed their hopes for a Welcome Center that would hold all of the immigrant and refugee services and resources in one physical location. The Welcome Dayton Committee has a sub-committee that is working on this idea. The director of Hispanic Catholic Ministry describes the idea:
The One Stop Center, the idea was, we would have one place where immigrants would come when they come to the city, and they could get paperwork there. You know one of the main questions is how do I find a school for my kid? So things like that. Immigrants would go to this One Stop Center and be helped, and probably there would be different languages spoken there. Well because it would be very hard to finance that, even to buy a building, no less getting personnel, we felt that we weren’t ready for that.

Then we looked at a model from I think Indiana somewhere, Indianapolis maybe, where they had Natural Helpers. I’m on that committee because that would be wonderful for what we’re doing. We already know why people come here. What we were thinking is instead of having a One Stop Center, one place where everybody would come, we would have...I don’t know if it was Indiana, I think it might’ve been...where they would have one stop for Hispanic, one stop for Iraqi, one stop for African. We thought we sort of had that here already, so we thought okay well we can maybe manage that because we have a building, and Hispanics know they should come here (Sister Shannon 2016).

The Natural Helpers idea has already begun to take shape, as the Welcome Center sub-committee has already identified community members that already play this supportive role in the Dayton community. The idea would be to train community members on specific topics, like how the legal system works for example, and then encourage these community members to voluntarily assist newcomers when needed (Leotta 2016).

Ultimately, the Welcome Dayton Committee is well aware of many existing challenges that face immigrants and refugees, and has taken action to plan an approach to address these issues through a lens of resourcefulness, with the community-supported organizational structure that already has roots in the existing resources and locations in Dayton today.

C. “An immigrant-friendly city is...”

To conclude all of the interviews, I asked the participant to define an immigrant-friendly city. Apparently, the national umbrella organization for welcoming initiatives, Welcoming America, is currently in the process of developing a comprehensive definition in order to certify cities as “welcoming.” At the last Welcoming America
conference, attendants were asked to list the three main characteristics of an immigrant-friendly city (Baccelli 2016). My informal poll did not have any numeric components, but several traits and themes stood out.

Perhaps the strongest thread that ran through participants’ definitions was the role of the city in providing services to its residents. One of the Dayton Public Schools representatives stated: “it’s a city that accommodates you, it’s a city that welcomes you. An immigrant-friendly city takes care of every person, individual…We have to make sure that we answer the questions they have and the aspirations, ambitions,” (Mbanefo and Martinez 2016). The East End Community Services director stated that an immigrant friendly city is:

One that has a real honest infrastructure that can provide the kind of empowering services that people need. Not one that calls itself a welcoming city and doesn’t have, or chooses not to put resources behind the initiative. Again, in our case it’s nobody’s fault, but to promote yourself, and not have anything behind it is an empty slogan (Leotta 2016).

Along a similar line of thinking, the Kettering ABLE coordinator admitted that “the one piece that I struggle with the most right now is to make sure that economically, we’re not just dependent on what they’re going to do for us, but that we already have the economic resources to support what they can do for themselves,” (Morton and Bronson 2016).

Another definition goes beyond the provision of city services, stating that:

An immigrant friendly community is one that values the immigrant population that saves a space at the decision making table for that population; that is aware of the immigrants there and the desire for immigrants to continue to come and to leave and to influence their community. I think that it’s a community that has resources, but works to continue those resources, and has a continual conversation among the whole community to build a network of diversity; a city, a community, an area that reflects the talents and the backgrounds of those that live there (Morton and Bronson 2016).
A separate major theme was the multi-actor component of forming a welcoming initiative. In the words of the Welcome Dayton coordinator, “I think for a city to be truly immigrant-friendly, I think you have to have the leadership on board, the mayor, the City Commission or Council, and to have that type of leadership driving it. Without their support, we wouldn’t have been able to do as much,” (Baccelli 2016).

Another major theme was the role of the community and grassroots support. Again, in the words of the Welcome Dayton coordinator, “The flipside…is that you have to have the grassroots community support and involvement as well. Because you can’t just have the policies…you have to have the community involved and want it as well,” (Baccelli 2016). The former director of the Human Relations Council builds on that definition by including the importance of awareness and recognition of community members and issues. He states that openness and agency are key to this aim.

Finally, a common pattern in participants’ definitions was the value of diversity. One of the Dayton Public Schools representatives aptly described its significance, “I think an immigrant friendly city is a city that celebrates the diversity of their citizens. Helping them find commonalities, and not expecting everybody to assimilate to one certain way of living,” (Mbeneo and Martinez 2016). Similarly, the director of Hispanic Catholic Ministry expressed the importance of diversity in her definition: “I would say an immigrant-friendly city would be one in which we enjoy meeting residents, appreciate the race, beliefs, and religion of people who are different from us,” (Sister Shannon 2016).
IV. Welcome Dayton summary

This case study has been able to answer many of the questions involved in this project. In terms of Dayton’s immigrant-friendly characteristics, it is clear that the city has several community-based organizations that range from advocacy groups to culturally specific associations that provide resources and services to various immigrant and refugee groups in the Dayton community. Furthermore, the municipal government has developed immigrant-friendly infrastructure from the tangible—acceptance of alternative forms of identification for immigrants and the language access policy—to the intangible—Welcome Dayton ambassador program and citywide cultural celebrations like World Refugee Day.

In terms of the basis upon which Dayton seeks the immigrant-friend designation, it is abundantly clear that the city cites human rights as the foundation for Welcome Dayton. There seems to be a general emphasis on the argument that “it was the right thing to do” despite the obvious economic benefits that immigrants and refugees would bring to the ailing city. However, it is also clear that the economic benefits of welcoming these groups played a significant role in the welcoming framework’s publicity, and acceptance across the Dayton community. While there are obvious shortcomings in the Welcome Dayton plan, its success seems to stem from the joint engagement of the municipal government and grassroots community support. Ultimately, if other cities in the same economic and demographic circumstances as Dayton seek the immigrant-friendly designation, Welcome Dayton stands out as a largely successful model.
Chapter 7 - Analysis and Conclusion

On a national, regional, and local scale, immigrant-friendly initiatives have gained recognition in the domain of urban regeneration. The national scale tends to view welcoming initiatives as a way to advance political imperatives. Because much of immigration policy exists through the federal government, it makes sense that national organizations and entities like the White House Task Force on New Americans focus on policy-based regeneration.

On a regional basis, market-led urban regeneration tends to dominate immigrant-friendly development initiatives. In regions like the Rust Belt, there may exist partnerships like Welcoming Economies Global Network to provide a support network for former industrial cities, but the underlying sense of competition among Rust Belt cities prevails in the struggle to attract new residents. A neoliberal framework shapes the development of any type of urban regeneration strategy, but regionally, the prominence of the market and the quest for capital reinvestment tend to dominate urban policies.

On a local scale, the neoliberal ideas inherent in immigrant-related development initiatives becomes both reinforced and challenged. While reflecting upon MacKinnon and Derickson’s ideas of resilience versus resourcefulness, it becomes clear that many urban regeneration strategies are founded on the basis of resilience as a product of neoliberal ideals to preserve the previously existing conditions, using policies that remain flexible to the market’s volatility. In the context of this project, resilience seems to underscore nearly all immigrant-related development:

When considering the present roles and future well-being of immigrants settling in the United States, the idea of resilience reinforces current policy and expectations in that the primary goal has been rapid adaptation and integration
into the existing social, economic, and political systems, as distinct from resourcefulness, which seeks to ‘meaningfully challenge existing power relations,’ (Housel et al. 2014, 5).

Indeed, the significant challenges that immigrants and refugees must face upon arrival in the United States are largely minimized by the current social and political structures that shape immigration policy and discourses. Furthermore, the commonly held perception of immigrants as economic assets, before the acknowledgement of the social and cultural traits that each immigrant holds, only further supports the notion that immigrants’ role is to revitalize economies and engage in entrepreneurial activities. This perception places a significant economic burden on immigrants to not only become self-sufficient themselves, but to reverse years of economic decline in post-industrial cities amidst culturally and socially challenging circumstances. Yet, in the context of a neoliberal society, cities must remain competitive to survive, which drives the idea of immigrants as the key to successful economic revitalization and market-driven urban regeneration. In this regard, much of the volunteer, non-profit, and publicly funded labor and support that goes into immigrant integration can be considered a way to “prep” the city for capital reinvestment. Judging by the cycles of capital and historical urban processes, although Dayton’s ‘ethnic’ appeal will continue to draw reinvestment to an economically depressed city, it may in fact lead to gentrification and displacement in the future.

Resourcefulness as an alternative to resilience also comes into play in this project. In order to challenge the structural inequalities inherent in the capitalist system, community members can identify barriers, needs, and concerns within the confines of existing social, economic, and political institutions to be addressed. From there, community members can launch a targeted grassroots campaign to equitably modify the
distribution of resources, technical knowledge, indigenous knowledge, and cultural recognition (McKinnon and Derickson 2012). Put simply, “while resilience directs attention on what the current resource distribution is, resourcefulness opens possibilities of changing the status quo with the skills and tools to address issues of unequal power gradients (Housel et al. 2014, 6). Thus, resourcefulness is less concerned with capital and profit, and more concerned with mutual recognition, and giving agency to the whole community.

Housel et al. argue that MacKinnon and Derickson’s notion of intentional mutual recognition lies at the heart of resourcefulness-based immigrant-friendly initiatives like Welcome Dayton. Intentional recognition, a term coined by those behind Welcome Dayton, involves three core concepts: firstly, “that each individual has value and is connected through a shared humanity,” secondly that “each individual has autonomous agency,” and thirdly, that “each member of the community (and the community itself) has latent possibility” (Housel et al. 2014, 11). Through intentional recognition, diverse skills and talents can be realized, representative participation can be achieved, and disagreements can be communicated and addressed. Welcome Dayton stands as a testament to the success of grassroots, community focused immigrant integration efforts. Because Welcome Dayton built on the preexisting politics of resourcefulness, the human-rights basis upon which the community and government sought to include and integrate immigrants and refugees could be preserved.

Despite its success as a community-driven welcoming initiative, Welcome Dayton still operates in an urban sphere dominated by multi-scalar neoliberal influences. Many would argue that the immigrant-friendly framework found much of its success through
the fact that immigrants would also serve as an economic advantage to the city. Perhaps
the fact that Dayton lies within the Rust Belt contributes to this mindset, as the city seeks
urban regeneration regardless of how this is achieved.

Ultimately, this project has demonstrated the importance of context in the
discourse, strategy, and goals of immigrant-friendly initiatives. As evidenced by the
various definitions of the “immigrant-friendly city” designation, different cities hold
different histories, demographic make-ups, and economies that shape the ways in which
welcoming frameworks can be implemented. As the movement of cities taking up
welcoming reputations evolves and expands, so will the understandings and meanings of
the designations themselves.
References:


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**Interviews**


Appendix – A1: Comprehensive list of immigrant-friendly cities and counties

- Akron, Ohio
- Allegheny County, Pennsylvania
- Anchorage, Alaska
- Atlanta, Georgia
- Austin, Texas
- Baltimore, Maryland
- Beaverton, Oregon
- Boise, Idaho %
- Boston, Massachusetts
- Boulder, Colorado #
- Buffalo, New York
- Burlington, Vermont %
- Central Falls, Rhode Island
- Charlotte, North Carolina
- Chattanooga, Tennessee
- Chicago, Illinois*
- Cincinnati, Ohio
- Clarkston, Georgia
- Clinton Township, Michigan
- Columbus, Ohio
- Crete, Nebraska
- Dalton, Georgia %
- Dayton, Ohio ^
- Decatur, Georgia
- Denver, Colorado
- Detroit, Michigan
- Dodge City, Kansas
- Durham, North Carolina #
- East Lansing, Michigan
- El Paso, Texas
- Fort Wayne, Indiana
- Grand Forks, North Dakota
- Greensboro, North Carolina
- Hamtramck, Michigan
- Hartford, Connecticut
- High Point, North Carolina
- Hillsborough County, Florida
- Houston, Texas
- Indianapolis, Indiana ^
- Iowa City, Iowa #
- Jersey City, New Jersey
- Kalamazoo County, Michigan
- King County, Washington
- Lewiston, Maine
- Lincoln, Nebraska
- Littleton, Colorado
- Los Angeles, California*
- Louisville, Kentucky
- Macomb County, Michigan
- Memphis, Tennessee
- Meridian, Michigan
- Montgomery County, Maryland
- Nashville, Tennessee
- New Orleans, Louisiana
- New York, New York*
- Norcross, Georgia
- Oakley, California
- Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
- Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
- Princeton, New Jersey
- Raleigh, North Carolina
- Richmond, Virginia
- Roanoke, Virginia
- Salt Lake City, Utah
- Salt Lake County, Utah
- San Francisco, California*
- San Francisco County, California
- San Jose, California
- Santa Clara County, California
- Santa Fe, New Mexico
- Seattle, Washington
- Skokie, Illinois
- St. Louis County, Missouri
- St. Louis, Missouri
- Sterling Heights, Michigan
- Summit County, Ohio
- Tacoma, Washington
- Toledo-Lucas County, Ohio
- Tucson, Arizona
- Utica, New York ^
- Washington DC
- West Bloomfield, Michigan
- York, Pennsylvania

Examples of cities in designated groups
Key:
* : Traditional immigrant gateways
# : College towns
% : Non-traditional immigrant gateways
^ : Post-industrial cities