



OFFICE OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

MAYOR: Lauren McLean | DIRECTOR: Maria Weeg

Welcoming America's "Welcoming Week" Feature

September 2020

What makes Boise welcoming and inclusive for all?

The City of Boise has a long tradition of welcoming new Americans. We have formally recognized Boise as a home to refugees since the 1970s. In the 1990s, our city became (and is still today) one of the few places in the world that has the full Universal Declaration of Human Rights on public display, which reinforces everyone's right to seek protection from persecution.

In 2017, the City of Boise passed a resolution, in solidarity with our refugee community, declaring that foreign-born Boise residents are a vital part of our community. The city and the Idaho Office for Refugees were also instrumental in the creation of Neighbors United, a nationally recognized, community led effort that partners with our neighbors who arrived as refugees, connecting us the Boise Community and our New Refugee Neighbors and giving our new neighbors a solid foundation to contribute to a stronger Idaho.

We recognize that the refugees we are fortunate enough to have within our borders benefit the economic, cultural, social, and spiritual life of our community. We know that today's refugees and immigrants are tomorrow's leaders, innovators, and trailblazers.

Are there any future projects, programs, or vision for continuing to make Boise inclusive?

We are committed to, and actively working on, creating a City for Everyone. This means that all residents from all diverse backgrounds, cultures, and neighborhoods have equitable access to public safety, housing, transportation, clean air, and clean water, parks and open spaces, and economic opportunities that lift up our residents.

We also believe that the work for an inclusive community must start from the inside, which is why we are working with a consulting agency that is a national leader in leadership development in diversity, equity and inclusion to help us implement practices, policies and procedures that support a truly equitable and inclusive organization.

As we develop programs and initiatives around the future of our city it is imperative to have diverse voices at the table, from the beginning. We will do our part in fiercely

seeking opportunities for collaboration by meeting all residents from across our community where they are, in a way that is most comfortable for all.

What ways have you helped ease the burden caused by COVID-19 for immigrants, refugees and long-time residents in particular?

The health and safety of all Boiseans has been my top priority, especially when presented with the COVID-19 outbreak in our community. We have been working closely with medical professionals, elected officials and community partners on doing all we could to slow the spread of the virus and protect our residents.

When the virus made its way to Boise, we quickly formed a Coronavirus Task Force, focused on coordinating and planning how we manage outbreaks. A subset of the Task Force worked specifically with our refugee resettlement agencies, the school districts, as well as immigrant and refugee community members to share the latest updates, resources and information in a way that considered language access and cultural awareness. Resources were translated into the top languages spoken in Boise, shared on various channels, including WhatsApp, a channel frequently used by our friends in the refugee community. We also co-hosted several virtual informational sessions in partnership with medical providers who also serve as trusted leaders in their respective communities to provide health and safety updates to individuals and we delivered masks to places of worship.

