

BEAVERTON, OR
Mayor Denny Doyle

Welcoming Beaverton Community Initiative

Welcoming Beaverton is a community initiative led by the City of Beaverton to recognize, welcome and support the successful integration of the local immigrant community and to promote cross-cultural relationships between newcomers and long-time residents. Beaverton is a member of the national Welcoming America Network, made up of 200-plus local government and nonprofit partners across the country working to create more welcoming, immigrant-friendly environments that maximize opportunities for economic growth and cultural vitality for all.

Beaverton became a Welcoming City in April 2015. In January 2017, Beaverton City Council also voted unanimously to declare Beaverton a sanctuary city, committing to provide a safe community for all individuals, regardless of race, ethnicity, place of origin, or immigration status by not using local resources to enforce federal immigration law. In doing so, the city emphasized the importance of ensuring that all community members feel safe in contacting law enforcement and in accessing critical city services without fear. Since these declarations, the city's welcoming work has evolved to include five areas:

Official Public Messaging on Welcoming and Inclusion

Since 2015, Mayor Denny Doyle and Beaverton City Council (as well as the city's Diversity Advisory Board and Human Rights Advisory Commission) have released multiple public statements and official resolutions under the umbrella of Welcoming Beaverton. These public messages have continued to promote and reaffirm Beaverton's identity as a welcoming and sanctuary city. At times the messaging has been released in response to local or national tragedies, such as the events in Charlottesville and on the Portland MAX train in 2017 following anti-immigrant/anti-refugee legislation at the federal level (e.g., Muslim ban, threats to shut down DACA, refugee resettlement restrictions). At other times it has served as a proactive affirmation of Beaverton's core values of welcoming and inclusion.

Convening a Local Celebration of National Welcoming Week

Each September, in coordination with national partners, the city convenes Beaverton Welcoming Week, a 10-day, community-wide celebration of what it means to be welcoming. The week includes an annual series of events that bring together immigrants and U.S.-born residents in a spirit of unity. The events raise awareness of the benefits of welcoming and engaging immigrant and non-immigrant community members in activities to strengthen relationships and cross-cultural understanding. Each year, Beaverton partners with approximately 20 community groups to offer events such as bilingual poetry workshops; cultural expositions of food, dance, music and storytelling; gatherings to promote small business and natural spaces; potlucks and craft classes; and more. All events are free and open to the public and are designed to promote the benefits of welcoming everyone. The public is encouraged to attend and participate in events that highlight a culture or tradition other than their own.

Grants for Community-Led Events and Projects to Support Welcoming

The city offers grants to support community-led projects that promote cross-cultural relationship building. Grant goals are to increase opportunities for cross-cultural exchange, support welcoming and connected neighborhoods, build relationships and understanding to unite residents, and foster pride in our diverse community. Over the past four years, we have funded approximately 25 projects led by community

organizations and grassroots groups across the Beaverton area; more than half of these are led by people of color or culturally-specific organizations. Grants are used to support the events that make up Beaverton Welcoming Week (described above) or as stand-alone projects throughout the year, including:

- A local resource guide for newcomers: Provided graphic design, printing and promotion of “Welcome to Beaverton: A guide for immigrants, refugees and other newcomers.”
- Mountainside High School Kenya Sister School Club’s “A Celebration of African Culture.” Acted as a sponsor for a student-led community event that included choir performances, exchange students and other guest speakers, drumming, and traditional African dance.
- We Are All America National Week of Action: Co-hosted a public event with local partners as part of the national week of action marking the anniversary of the first Muslim and refugee ban.

City officials believe the grants have been effective in building partnerships, identifying new opportunities for collaboration, and expanding ownership and reach for the Welcoming Beaverton initiative.

Convening a Partner Network

The city convenes a partner network of government and nonprofit entities and community leaders as part of the Welcoming initiative. Once each quarter, Welcoming Beaverton Partner Gatherings bring together a network of partners actively supporting immigrant welcoming and integration in the Beaverton area, hear feedback/concerns to direct the city’s work, and explore collective solutions across sectors. There are 14 official partners and dozens of others that participate regularly in this network that has given rise to many important collaborations.

Supporting Immigrant Integration Programming

With the goal of contributing to the civic, social and economic integration of newcomers to Beaverton, the city hosts, partners with, or sponsors the following programs:

- Culturally-specific programming for immigrants and refugees focused on leadership development, disaster preparedness, and early learning;
- Language access supports for navigating city programs and services;
- A “New Americans Corner” providing information and resources to support naturalization and immigration legal services;
- Special naturalization ceremonies;
- Citizenship classes; and
- Resource information on area English language classes.

More details on all of the initiatives are at www.BeavertonOregon.gov/WelcomingBeaverton.

Additional information is available from Alexis Ball, Equity & Inclusion Manager, at aball@BeavertonOregon.gov or 503-526-2503.