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New Data Shows Cedar Rapids' Immigrants Accounted for Nearly Half of the County's Total Population Growth

Immigrants in Cedar Rapids held more than \$225 million in spending power in 2017 and represented over 15 percent of STEM workers, despite being just 4.4 percent of the county's population

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Cedar Rapids, IA -- Immigrants accounted for 47.1 percent of total population growth in Cedar Rapids between 2012 and 2017, according to new research from [New American Economy](#) (NAE).

The [report](#), which was published in partnership with the City of Cedar Rapids and the Cedar Rapids Metro Economic Alliance, highlights the impact that immigrants in Cedar Rapids have on their community, such as contributing \$53.9 million to federal taxes and \$26.1 million to state and local taxes. Immigrants also supported critical social programs, including paying \$34.5 million into Social Security and \$9.2 million to Medicare. Immigrants held \$225.6 million in spending power, providing an economic boost to Cedar Rapids as consumers.

The [report](#) also highlights how immigrants fill crucial workforce gaps in industries vital to the economic stability of Cedar Rapids. While just 4.4 percent of the total population, immigrants made up triple that share of workers in science, technology, and math (STEM), and represented an outsize share of workers in industries such as manufacturing (8.7 percent) and hospitality (8.2 percent). Immigrants were 7.1 percent of business owners in Cedar Rapids, thus serving as an important economic catalyst for the region as job creators.

The [new report](#) will be discussed at the Greater Cedar Rapids Community Foundation's Community Learning Series on October 30th at the National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library. The Community Learning Series is an effort by the Community Foundation to elevate awareness, generate conversation and encourage action around issues of broad community importance.

The [report](#), which uses data from the 2017 American Community Survey and covers Linn County, was released as the City of Cedar Rapids and the Cedar Rapids Metro Economic Alliance bring together leaders across sectors to develop a strategic plan to ensure that Cedar Rapids welcomes and harnesses the potential of all residents. To support this work, Cedar Rapids was one of 14 communities selected nationally for the 2019 [Gateways for Growth](#) award to receive research from NAE and technical assistance from NAE and Welcoming America.

“Cedar Rapids was built on a tradition of immigrant workers who created unique cultures and neighborhoods that remain today,” said **Cedar Rapids Mayor Brad Hart**. “We are eager to use this data to develop programs and initiatives to continue our city’s tradition of welcoming diversity, building on our strong and productive workforce, and enhancing our economy.”

“A shortage of qualified workers consistently ranks as one of the top economic growth challenges facing the Midwest,” said **David Connolly, City of Cedar Rapids Economic Development Specialist**. “Participation in the Gateways for Growth Challenge is part of a long-term solution intended to help ensure companies in Cedar Rapids, Iowa will continue to have access to an exceptionally productive labor force, enhancing our City’s competitiveness as a location for business growth.”

“This report quantifies what many people in Cedar Rapids already know -- immigrants play a key role in driving economic growth,” said **Kate Brick, Director of State and Local Initiatives at New American Economy**. “We’re excited to see how the Cedar Rapids community uses this data to support its ongoing work to ensure that all residents are welcome and have pathways to success.”

Read the full research brief [here](#).

About Cedar Rapids Economic Development

The City of Cedar Rapids offers unique attractions, exciting events, specialty shopping, a dynamic arts scene, and a large variety of restaurant and nightlife options. The Cedar Rapids economy is thriving, thanks in part to our 10,000+ business – including over 300 manufacturing plants and two dozen Fortune 500 companies. As the second-largest city in the state, Cedar Rapids is the largest corn-processing city in the world, one of the leading manufacturing regions in the US, and one of the leading bio-processing and food ingredient centers in North America. Cedar Rapids has a longstanding reputation as a strong, supportive business environment, with community leaders whose flexible and supportive attitudes have helped local companies succeed.

About the Cedar Rapids Metro Economic Alliance

The Cedar Rapids Metro Economic Alliance serves as the catalyst for economic diversity, growth and prosperity for our region through core functions of economic development, community development, public policy and business support. More information about the Economic Alliance can be found at www.cedarrapids.org.

About New American Economy:

New American Economy (NAE) is a bipartisan research and advocacy organization founded to educate, empower and support policymakers, influencers, and citizens across the country that see the economic and social benefits of a smart approach to immigration reform. NAE has created a coalition of civic, business, and cultural leaders who span the political spectrum and represent all 50 states. NAE makes the case for smart immigration reform in four ways: 1) we use [powerful research](#) to demonstrate how immigration impacts our economy, 2) we [organize champions](#) at the grassroots and influencer levels to build support for immigration, 3) we [partner with state and local leaders](#) to advocate for policies that recognize the value immigrants add locally, and 4) we show [immigrant contributions to American culture](#) through film, food, art, sports, comedy, and more.