



# Building Integrated Communities in Chapel Hill, NC

## Community Perspectives and Recommendations for Local Government

A report for Chapel Hill Building Integrated Communities (BIC)

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Authors:

Hannah Gill, [hgill@email.unc.edu](mailto:hgill@email.unc.edu)

Isaura Godinez, [isaurag@live.unc.edu](mailto:isaurag@live.unc.edu)

Jorge Gutiérrez, [jgutierrez@unc.edu](mailto:jgutierrez@unc.edu)

Jessica White

The Latino Migration Project  
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

<http://migration.unc.edu>



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at CHAPEL HILL



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# Chapel Hill Building Integrated Communities

## Executive Summary

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### Overview

In 2017, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC) selected the Town of Chapel Hill to participate in the Building Integrated Communities (BIC) initiative. BIC is a collaborative initiative of the Town of Chapel Hill, community residents and organization leaders, and UNC that aims to understand the experiences of immigrant and refugee residents [1] and develop recommendations for the Town Council to consider that support the integration, wellbeing, and leadership development of immigrant and refugee community members. This executive summary offers an overview of the findings and recommendations from the community assessment phase of the BIC initiative. To read the Executive Summary in Burmese, Karen, Mandarin and Spanish, or to read the full report in English and Spanish, please visit: [www.townofchapelhill.org/BIC](http://www.townofchapelhill.org/BIC).

### Methods

The community assessment phase of the BIC used a variety of methods to gather information for this report, including:

- Community meetings with 160 immigrant and refugee residents.
- Secondary data compiled from the U.S. Census and other sources.
- Data visualization and comparison through Geographic Information Systems (GIS).
- Analysis of 25+ oral histories from the New Roots/Nuevas Raíces Latino Oral History Initiative, The Carrboro Oral History Project, and the Arab Refugee Oral History Project at Duke University.
- 13 interviews with organizations and businesses that work with immigrant and refugee residents.
- Surveys of 74 refugees by Transplanting Traditions Community Farm and the Refugee Support Center.
- Analysis of reports, service offerings, and other information from organizations that provide services to immigrant and refugees.

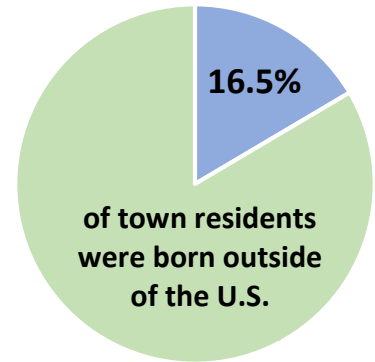


*Residents at community meetings in January 2018*

## Immigrant and Refugee Demographic Profile



**Population:** From 2011-2016, the total population of the Town of Chapel Hill was about 59,005 people. About 9,691 of those residents, or 16.5% of town residents, were born outside of the U.S.[2]



**Country of Origin:** Chapel Hill’s foreign-born residents come from several different countries of origin. The top ten countries of origin are listed in Table 1 below [3]. Undocumented residents are predominately of Latin American origin and speak Spanish, with a much smaller minority who speak indigenous languages. Since 2005, 1,121 refugees have arrived in Orange County; most come primarily from Burma/Myanmar, Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of Congo, El Salvador, Haiti, Iran, Iraq, Laos, Russia, and Syria [4].

**TABLE 1:** Top 10 countries of origin for Chapel Hill residents born outside the U.S.

Country	Population Estimate	Percentage
China	2330	24.0%
India	854	8.8%
Korea	805	8.3%
Mexico	490	5.1%
U.K.	432	4.5%
Canada	295	3.0%
Germany	291	3.0%
Russia	263	2.7%
Japan	234	2.4%
Argentina	230	2.4%

Source: ACS 2016 (5 Year Estimates), Table B05006



**Income:** Residents born outside of the U.S. *without* U.S. citizenship have substantially lower household incomes than residents *with* U.S. citizenship (Table 2) [5]. Furthermore, Chapel Hill residents not born in the U.S or who are naturalized citizens have a higher median household income than residents born in the U.S. This difference may be influenced by the high number of graduate or professional degree holding foreign-born residents in high paying professions who relocate to Chapel Hill. Of Chapel Hill residents working in professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services, 12.60% were born abroad [6].

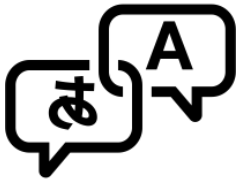
**TABLE 2:** Household incomes by citizenship status in Chapel Hill

Characteristic	Born in the U.S.	Not Born in the U.S.	Not Born in the U.S., Naturalized Citizens	Not Born in the U.S., Non-citizens
Median Household Income	\$65, 026	\$71, 198	\$106, 250	\$46, 045

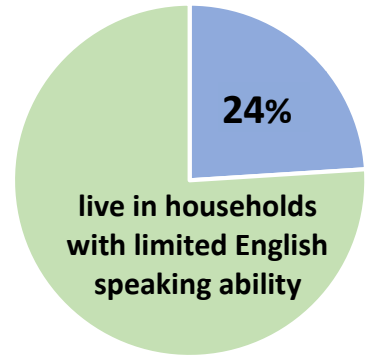
Source: ACS 2016 (5 Year Estimates). Table S0501



**Education:** Chapel Hill has a higher percentage overall (44%) of residents with a graduate or professional degree than the North Carolina average (10.2%) [6]. In fact, more foreign-born Chapel Hill residents have a graduate or professional degree than residents born in the U.S., reflecting the global recruiting practices of institutions of higher education and companies in the Triangle area [6]. However, foreign-born populations have lower general educational attainment than native-born populations. In particular, high school graduation rates for immigrants and refugees are comparatively low.



**English Language Ability:** About 24% of foreign-born residents live in households with limited English speaking ability [3]. Of those with limited English-speaking ability, as shown in Table 3, residents who speak Asian and Pacific Island languages (such as Chinese, Vietnamese, Hmong, Urdu, Bengali, Korean, Iloko, Nepali, Burmese, and Chuukese), are the largest number (705 residents).



**TABLE 3:** Self-rated English-speaking ability among the residents of that were born outside the U.S. and speak a non-English language at home.



Residents who speak...	Number who speak English "Not well" or "Not at all"	Total surveyed
Spanish	537 (43%)	1,248
Indo-European languages	115 (5%)	2,188
Asian and Pacific Island languages	705 (19%)	3,728




Source: ACS 2016 (5 Year Estimates)

## Key Findings and Resident Recommendations

Table 4 below provides an overview of key findings and recommendations that emerged from the extensive community meetings, interviews, and surveys of immigrant and refugees in Chapel Hill through the Community Assessment phase of the BIC.

**TABLE 4:** Key findings and recommendations from immigrant and refugee residents

Issue	Findings	Recommendations
 <p><b>Public Transportation</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Chapel Hill Transit (CHT) is the only form of transportation to which many have access.</li> <li>▪ Reasons for limited personal transportation include: undocumented residents cannot obtain a license, unfamiliarity with driving in the U.S. and/or the DMV, low income, etc.</li> <li>▪ Current CHT routes do not offer late night routes to many locations where immigrant and refugees live.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increase access to public transit through:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ More bus stops near neighborhoods, especially public housing as well as naturally occurring affordable housing.</li> <li>○ Expand CHT routes.</li> <li>○ Improve weekend and late-night services to areas where residents live.</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Improve language access, and enhance outreach with foreign-born residents.</li> <li>▪ Engage Chapel Hill employers in improving direct work access for low-income and night-shift employees.</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Housing</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Many immigrants and refugee residents face challenges in affording housing in Chapel Hill.</li> <li>▪ Public housing challenges:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ There is not enough public housing.</li> <li>○ Undocumented residents do not qualify.</li> <li>○ Limited understanding of public housing policies and practices.</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ 35% of households in public housing have family members who were born abroad.</li> <li>▪ The cost of housing in Chapel Hill impacts where immigrant and refugee residents live. Some live outside of town limits in locations with limited access to public transit.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Continue to explore affordable housing strategies, particularly those that are accessible to immigrant and refugees.</li> <li>▪ Improve conditions of existing rental housing.</li> <li>▪ Provide bilingual legal resources about fair and affordable housing, as well as other materials including public housing application requirements, etc.</li> <li>▪ Engage residents in mobile home communities in Town planning processes.</li> </ul>

 <p><b>Public Safety and Law Enforcement</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Some participants were enthusiastic about local law enforcement efforts to develop identification documents for use by immigrant community members.</li> <li>▪ Some residents believe Immigration and Customs Enforcement raids and police checkpoints have a negative impact on trust with local law enforcement.</li> <li>▪ Some reported that they have fears of gun violence (in schools and elsewhere) as well as youth drug abuse.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Expand community-police relationships.</li> <li>▪ Provide more legal resources about ICE raids and civil rights.</li> <li>▪ Expand bilingual education related to gun violence prevention and youth drug abuse.</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Leadership</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Strong interest in civic engagement and leadership opportunities.</li> <li>▪ Participants shared positive reactions to the Town’s past efforts to eliminate language barriers by providing interpretation and translation services at local government and other community meetings.</li> <li>▪ Many foreign-born community members perceive an anti-immigrant climate that has been exacerbated in recent years by national and state leaders, and highly value local leaders’ efforts to engage their perspectives and recommendations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increase the accessibility of elected, appointed, and Town positions to residents with knowledge of foreign languages.</li> <li>▪ Provide interpretation at public meetings.</li> <li>▪ Publicize events with welcoming language.</li> <li>▪ Create bilingual hiring policies.</li> <li>▪ Provide youth with more opportunities to connect with local government elected officials during public meetings.</li> <li>▪ Organize multilingual “Peoples Academy” and other opportunities for civic education.</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Government Communication</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Key languages critical for communication: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Spanish, Chinese, Karen, and Burmese.</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ The Town and other key community institutions do not offer adequate language access. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Most communications and services are English-only.</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Services are not standardized across Town departments.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Make communications language accessible, particularly Town and County regulations, general civic information, local resources, and leadership opportunities.</li> <li>▪ Local government should hire more bilingual staff in local government.</li> <li>▪ Enhance publicity of special events, disaster response, and other local information.</li> </ul>

Information from this assessment will guide the collaborative creation and implementation of a town-wide action plan for immigrant integration in 2018 and 2019. Residents who are interested in participating in the project and creating action plans are encouraged to contact Latino Migration Project staff by phone at 919-966-1484 or by email at [hgill@email.unc.edu](mailto:hgill@email.unc.edu), [isaurag@live.unc.edu](mailto:isaurag@live.unc.edu), and [jgutierrez@unc.edu](mailto:jgutierrez@unc.edu) (*Hablamos español.*)

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6. 2016 American Community Survey (5 Year Estimates: 2012-2016). *Table S1501: EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT*; Generated by Isaura Godinez using American Fact Finder; U.S. Census Bureau. [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov).