

# **ASSESSING CITY OF OXNARD IMMIGRATION-RELATED POLICY AND IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS**

## **OVERVIEW**

Since the November 2024 election, the policy objectives of the Trump Administration relative to immigration and enforcement of undocumented and documented non-citizens (including guest workers) has been well established. While municipalities have effectively no statutory recourse to stop federal policy in this space, cities and other public organizations at the local level have a healthy suite of options to mitigate fall out. This is an essential function of local government due to the widespread impacts of immigration enforcement on a region, including - but not limited to - issues relative to public trust, housing security, regional GDP, food security, and more.

The City of Oxnard, located in the Central Coastal region of Southern California, is home to an estimated 10,000+ non-citizens, and has been the target of multiple, recent immigration raids and escalations of ICE activity and tactics. While Oxnard residents remain divided on the issue of immigration overall, public sentiment denouncing the tactics used by border patrol agents against area residents has increased exponentially in recent months, with “anti-immigration enforcement” sentiment peaking immediately after the Glass House Farms raids that resulted in hundreds of detainments, numerous injuries, and one death.

While Oxnard has a larger burden of immigration activities due to the per capita volume of non-citizens residing both in the city limits, as well as just outside in unincorporated city regions (e.g. Nyland Acres, El Rio, etc.), the City has fallen behind other cities within the Ventura County region in applying remedies and enabling preventions relative to the issue. Whereas cities such as Moorpark and Santa Paula have hosted or planned “Know Your Rights” trainings for residents, and cities such as San Buenaventura and Ojai have approved protective policies that establish committees to ensure State Sanctuary laws are being abided, Oxnard has completed just one (1) of thirteen (13) tasks requested by Council (“Know Your Rights” information published to the City website). This opens a broader issue about City Management adherence to policies and procedures relative to agendaing Council requests, as well as transparency issues within the City structure.

## KEY REQUESTS

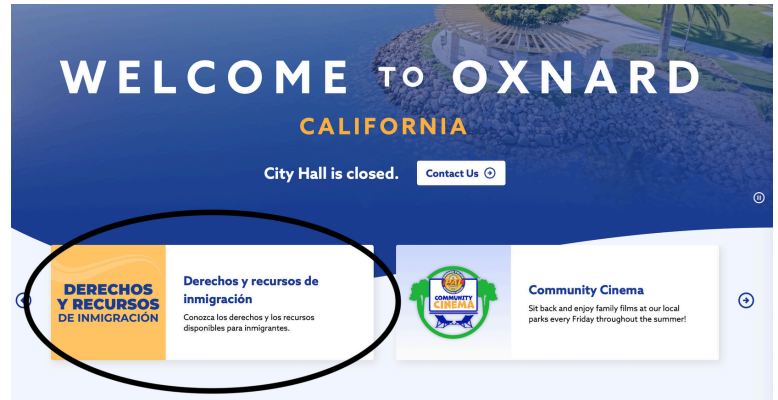
At 8 meetings since the November 2024 election, former and current council members made both generalized comments regarding immigration enforcement, as well as thirteen (13) specific requests of staff and/or for items to be added to the agenda relative to the issue.\* The specific requests were:

1. On 2/4/2025, Councilmember Michaela Perez requested that staff create a “Know Your Rights” information section on the City’s website, and
2. to share that “Know Your Rights” information to City social media and Weekly Packets emails.
3. She also, at this same time, requested staff develop a grant to offer to non profits for immigration related education purposes. Councilmembers Gabe Teran and Gabby Basua reiterated these requests.
4. On 2/4/2025, Mayor Luis McArthur requested staff bring forward a “deep dive” for the public to understand what a Sanctuary City actually means.
5. On 5/20/2025, Councilmembers Michaela Perez and Gabe Teran requested staff come forward at a later date with transparency on what is delaying the many requests on immigration assistance and education, and to improve transparency regarding delays, funding issues, etc.
6. On 6/17/2025, Councilmember Gabe Teran requested an update on a future agenda regarding the City’s capacity to support organizations relating to “Know Your Rights” trainings, legal aid, etc.
7. On 6/17/2025, Mayor Luis McArthur directed staff to research and bring forward at a future date information on the City partnering with schools and the county to provide mental health services for people impacted by the immigration raids.
8. On 7/1/2025, Councilmember Gabe Teran requested/reminded staff bring back to council the possibility to organize with Supervisor Vianey Lopez the development of a legal defense fund.
9. On 7/15/2025, Councilmember Michaela Perez requested the city bring in an expert to present “Know Your Rights” training at a future meeting or special City Hall event,
10. and to return with a developed plan for legal resources for immigrant families,
11. and requested the City join Los Angeles in the lawsuit against the Department of Homeland Security. Councilmember Gabe Teran agreed with these requests.
12. On 7/15/2025, Councilmember Aaron Starr requested staff return at a later date with the capacity for, and/or a proposed, amicus brief for the City to file relative to ongoing lawsuits regarding immigration activities.
13. On 7/15/2025, Councilmember Gabriella Rodriguez requested staff look into and report back on a later date on the capacity for the city to form a committee to develop ways to support immigrant families.

\*Meeting dates: 11/19/2024, 12/3/2024, 2/4/2025, 5/6/2025, 5/20/2025, 6/17/2025, 7/1/2025, 7/15/2025

## DISCUSSION

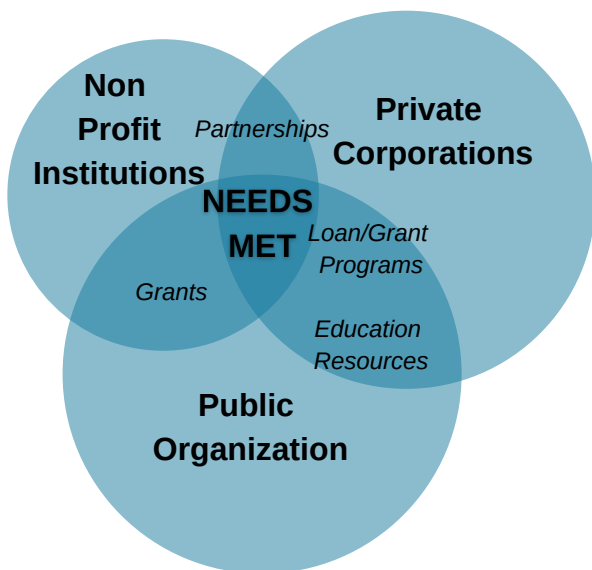
Upon review of the 5 Year Priorities of the Oxnard City Council, these requests by the mayor and council would either directly or indirectly fall under the pervue of those priorities. While development of localized immigration policy is neither a traditional city function, nor outlined in the 5 Year Priorities, the consequences of doing nothing on this issue - such as negative outcomes in the areas of public trust, housing security, regional GDP, food security, and more - do have both direct and indirect impacts on those stated council priorities. It is therefore prudent for city management and staff to at the very least respond to council requests in a timely manner.



Source: Oxnard.gov

To date, only one (1) of the thirteen (13) requests have been fulfilled, insofar as that information is made public. The City of Oxnard has successfully added to its City website homepage a clickable button (pictured above) for residents and businesses to access “Know Your Rights” information. Additional responses publicly made to council requests were done in the form of comments by the City Manager, Alexander Nguyen:

- On 2/4/2025, City Manager Alexander Nguyen stated that staff is working on all of the council's requests and that “they will eventually trickle back.”
- On 2/18/2025, City Manager Alexander Nguyen stated that if the City becomes a Sanctuary City that “everything” would be defunded by the federal government. It is unclear if this was the intended “deep dive” Mayor McArthur had requested, though it is reasonable to assume it was not given it did not explain to the public what a Sanctuary City even is or means (as was explicitly outlined in the request).
- On 6/17/2025, City Manager Alexander Nguyen stated that all of California is a Sanctuary State, and that police in Oxnard do not collaborate with ICE.
- On 7/15/2025, City Manager Alexander Nguyen stated that farmers ultimately need to be the ones protecting their workers.



Upon analysis, three (3) of four (4) comments made on behalf of staff were not relevant to council's requests. No target date for any of the requests, status updates, or specific agendized reports or actions have been made available to the public. Efforts and collaborations made outside of council meetings within the public-private-non profit partnership (e.g. the ongoing relationship and collaborations between the public organization and other community organizations and companies to fill in gaps the City is unable to meet) have only been requested or theorized, though no public acknowledgment or reporting of such activities, especially funding, has been developed as well.

## **POLICY OPTIONS**

While the federal government holds authority over States, Counties, and Cities on immigration policy, municipalities are not helpless in policy options to mitigate the impacts of border patrol enforcement activities within the region.

**“Know Your Rights” trainings, social media presentations, business trainings**

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**Legal aid resources or diversion of City Attorney staff for free legal resources**

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**Grant programs for private and non profit organizations to fill gaps (education, food and housing assistance, etc.)**

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**Committee or task force to identify community-specific needs and make recommendations**

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**Limited eviction moratorium for individuals impacted financially by immigration activities**

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**Mental health resources for victims of immigration activities and family separation**

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**Loan programs to aid local farms in fencing and increased security of properties**

## **ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS**

Given the urgency of the issue at hand, as well as the seriousness and extent of the delays to the Council's requests thus far, the following recommendations should be considered given the potential for further negative (potentially legal) impacts, as well as the long-term, deleterious effects on overall public trust:

- The Mayor should call at least one (1) Special Meeting during the August recess to address these issues relative to immigration, in particular to receive the requested report from City staff as to the capacity and potential timelines for the City to engage in any/all of the requested items.
- Whereas councilmembers have already discussed the delays with staff during previous meetings, additional performance evaluations and reviews should be considered for relevant staff given the pattern of these and other requests experiencing serious delays or dismissal. This should further be reported to the public in a transparent manner, in particular for the public to understand full reasoning for delays and timelines for items requested to be moved into committees or agendized.
- The City Attorney's Office should engage in re-training and review of appropriate council procedures and protocols for requesting items to be sent to committee or added to the agenda, both for council and relevant staff. Additional language or guidance regarding time limits, best practices, reporting requirements, and more may be considered.

