

COMMUNITY INVESTMENTS

This publication is produced by the Community Development Department of the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco. The magazine serves as a forum to discuss issues relevant to community development in the Federal Reserve's 12th District, and to highlight innovative programs and ideas that have the potential to improve the communities in which we work.

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CI Notebook

by Naomi Cytron

Editor

The immigration reform debate that has been swirling through Washington's political corridors is enormously complicated. At issue are concerns over national security and the effects of competition in U.S. labor markets, as well as the costs that immigrants may impose on government budgets.

While answers to these questions are ardently disputed by politicians and academics alike, there is no doubt that immigration has always been a significant driver of U.S. population growth and change. And over the past decade, the foreign-born population has not only grown but has dispersed from traditional "immigrant gateways" to cities, suburbs, and rural areas all across America.

The resultant increase in diversity has expanded the spectrum of foods found in local markets and ethnic celebrations seen in the streets, and has enriched the cultural landscape of our nation in many other ways. But this settlement pattern also raises new challenges for those of us working to revitalize low- and moderate-income areas. While many immigrants enter the U.S. with strong academic credentials and professional skills, many others find themselves in circumstances similar to native-born low-wage and low-skilled workers. Concerns that are common to all include housing affordability, accessibility of quality health care and education, availability of living-wage jobs, and neighborhood safety.

Increasing the accessibility of programs and services that help to address these concerns is paramount to stabilizing low-income households and communities of any demographic composition. In this issue of *Community Investments*, we aim to shed some light on the data and arguments that circulate on both sides of the immigration debate, and look at ways in which both financial institutions and community development organizations are working to respond to the needs of a diverse and growing immigrant population. We hope the articles in this issue help you think more broadly about the ways you can work to help meet the needs of all those who live and work in your communities.



Naomi Cytron

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