

# PRESSRELEASE



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**DENVER REGIONAL COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS HONORS AURORA WELCOME CENTER AND AURORA OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL AND IMMIGRANT AFFAIRS**

**DENVER** – The Aurora Welcome Center and Aurora Office of International and Immigrant Affairs received a 2017 Metro Vision Award from the Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG). The award recognizes the city’s Natural Helpers Program and was presented at DRCOG’s annual awards celebration on April 26 at the Sheraton Downtown Denver.

Aurora celebrates its diverse and growing immigrant population, and as the demand for immigrant services grows, the city’s Natural Helpers Program fills a critical role in accessing those services. Working in tandem with the Aurora Welcome Center, the Natural Helpers Program mobilizes a group of volunteers who are immigrants themselves to help other immigrants and refugees navigate life in a new country.

“Aurora is the only city in the state of Colorado and one of the few in the country with a comprehensive citywide strategy to address the issue of immigrant integration,” said Ricardo Gambetta, Manager of the Office of International and Immigrant Affairs. “This collaborative project between the city and the Aurora Welcome Center play’s a key role in integrating newcomers and empowering members of the local immigrant and refugee communities.”

Through the program, immigrants gain access to resources such as social services, information on community organizations and networking for better job opportunities. The Natural Helpers Program is one of the innovative projects listed in the City of Aurora’s Immigrant Integration Plan.

DRCOG’s Metro Vision Award program recognizes exemplary projects, plans and initiatives that significantly improve the quality of life in the Denver region and its communities. The regional council has been honoring outstanding achievements for more than 30 years.

***The Denver Regional Council of Governments is a planning organization where local governments collaborate to establish guidelines, set policy and allocation funding in the areas of transportation and personal mobility, growth and development and aging and disability resources.***

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**(Insert group photo)**