



Sanctuary One Year In: A Culver City Report Card

Culver City Action Network (CCAN)

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([aquí en español](#))



One year ago, the Culver City Council declared us a “Sanctuary City.” That declaration was an important symbolic statement of principle. The [resolution](#) also made a detailed policy commitment: the City would protect immigrants in our community and would avoid assisting the Trump Administration in its draconian deportation campaigns.

How well has Culver City lived up to its commitment? The City has rightly celebrated its sanctuary status and thus far has avoided immediately harmful actions, but it also has repeatedly **missed opportunities to fully and meaningfully implement** sanctuary and to treat immigrant protection as a priority. In contrast, the Culver City School District (run by the School Board, not the Council) has taken many tangible steps to make sanctuary real.

Based on the past year, **we assign the following grades** to Culver City government for sanctuary implementation and immigrant protection. Further details and background are below.

- The City’s Public Statements of Support **Grade: A**
- Immigration-based Police Questioning or Arrests **Grade: B**
- Police Department Information Sharing with ICE **Grade: C**
- Internal Policy & Training: Police Department **Grade: D**
- Internal Policy & Training: Other Departments **Grade: C**
- City Council Oversight **Grade: C**
- Police ID Policy To Minimize Unnecessary Detentions **Grade: C**
- School District Support & Protection for Immigrant Families **Grade: A**

There is more work to do. Here is our vision for Sanctuary 2.0, to fully implement existing policy and take addition steps based on what we have learned this year:

- Designate a Sanctuary City Ombudsperson within City government
- Implement policies and training for CCPD and all City government departments
- Ban City contracts with vendors who endanger immigrants
- Publicize and support immigrant-protective information and resources
- Create an official, ongoing forum for community participation in immigrant inclusion

Background on Culver City Sanctuary

The [sanctuary movement](#) seeks to **protect immigrants from federal mass deportation efforts**. Those efforts have dramatically escalated under the Trump Administration. U.S. Immigration & Customs Enforcement (ICE) aggressively detains and deports both [legal](#) and [undocumented](#) immigrants at every opportunity. It has [rejected previous policies](#) that focused on people who pose some danger to the community, though the Administration still takes every opportunity to cast all immigrants as criminals. It also has begun to strip protected status from --and potentially begin deporting-- 700,000 “Dreamers” under the [DACA program](#) and [hundreds of thousands of people](#) with “TPS” status from El Salvador, Haiti, Nicaragua, and Sudan.

This is a real issue right here. The last year has seen ICE implement [retaliatory crackdowns](#) throughout California, [visit 7-11 stores](#) in Culver City, detain an immigrant father dropping of his children [at school](#) in LA, and attempt to obtain student records from the Norwalk-La Mirada school district in order to locate and detain the pupil’s parent. In that last case, a well-trained and prepared staff refused to assist ICE and helped keep the family safe. ICE continues to try to leverage local law enforcement into a deportation tool by [accessing private databases](#) with which [local agencies shares data](#), a system the CCPD recently proposed to join.

Sanctuary works by local governments **refusing to use our power and resources to assist federal crackdowns**. Local governments generally are not legally required to provide such assistance, so the question is whether to embrace or refuse complicity with the Trump Administration’s anti-immigrant campaign. More details are in our [Sanctuary FAQ](#) and [overview](#).

On [March 27, 2017](#), the Culver City Council [voted 3-1](#) to declare us a “Sanctuary City” and [adopt a policy](#) implementing that idea. Earlier, in November 2016, the Culver City School Board had voted unanimously to adopt a [“Safe Zones” resolution](#) to have the School District implement sanctuary principles. The Council also had [voted 3-2](#) to [support the California “Sanctuary State” bill SB54](#). SB54 later [passed and became law](#), but the City policy remains important because it is broader and stronger in several ways. More details about the sanctuary campaign are [here](#).

Key components of Culver City’s sanctuary resolution are

- **No sharing personal information** (such as address, current location, etc.) with ICE for enforcement purposes (without a warrant, etc.)
- **No access to City property** for ICE for enforcement purposes (without a warrant, etc.)
- **No other assistance to ICE** such as coordinated patrols, logistical support, etc.
- **No inquiries into immigration status** by police or other City officials
- **No police stops or detentions based on immigration status**
- **No unnecessary or unnecessarily long police detentions** that make people vulnerable to ICE while in local custody, especially the County jail where ICE is active

So What Happened Next?: Culver City Sanctuary in Practice

The City's Public Statements of Support

Grade: A

The City has publicly celebrated its sanctuary status. Mayor Cooper made an excellent [public statement supporting Dreamers](#) after Trump announced that he would end the DACA program. The Mayor also has made a point of including sanctuary in the idea of Culver City as a "[City of Kindness.](#)" These public shows of solidarity are important and appreciated.

Immigration-based Police Questioning or Arrests

Grade: B

Thankfully, we are not aware of any sanctuary violations that have led to CCPD improperly questioning or arresting anyone, nor to any ICE detentions or deportations in Culver City. There have been some anecdotal reports where it is hard to confirm whether the incident occurred in Culver City or just nearby, or whether questioning crossed the line, for instance when police ask someone where they were born but not specifically if they are a US citizen. Even so, this points to the need for clear, enforced policies that can reassure the public.

Police Department Information Sharing with ICE

Grade: C

CCPD actively sought Council approval of an automated license-plate reader system tracking car movements throughout the city. This effort continued despite [revelations](#) that the [vendor \(Vigilant Solutions\) shares data with ICE](#) to assist deportations. CCPD failed to incorporate into its [proposed policy](#) any protections against such data sharing and falsely assured the public that state law already prohibited data-sharing by Vigilant. This [letter from the ACLU](#) explains the proposal's [dangers](#). Fortunately, the no-bid contract [failed](#) to receive the super-majority necessary for approval after CCAN helped mobilize opposition.

Internal Policy & Training: Police Department

Grade: D

Shortly after sanctuary passed, the [LA Times revealed](#) that the official CCPD Policy Manual directly contradicted sanctuary and CCPD's representations about its policies. The CCPD appropriately and swiftly [deleted](#) those policies, but, despite [repeated calls](#), it **still has not issued a new policy** detailing police officers' sanctuary obligations. The need is clear given that one current CCPD officer has [publicly](#) (and [falsely](#)) called the sanctuary law illegal. In contrast, CCPD has [hundreds of pages of policies](#), procedures, and training requirements on other topics, and CCPD touted the importance of such policies when persuading the Council to approve a drone purchase; for months, its proposed [drone policy](#) omitted immigration status from its anti-bias provisions until a last minute change to ease passage.

Internal Policy & Training: Other Departments

Grade: C

For months after sanctuary passed, City agencies provided zero guidance or training to staff, such as which situations implicate sanctuary or when ICE is entitled to demand cooperation. After CCAN repeatedly raised the issue with City Council, the City Manager issued a [perfunctory notice](#) primarily attaching the resolution text without explanation.

City Council Oversight

Grade: C

When CCAN raised concerns that six months had passed without any apparent sanctuary implementation, the City Council declined to create a forum for information and dialogue. It simply invited Chief Bixby to make a presentation that [sidestepped the main issues](#) raised while mischaracterizing efforts at community engagement. Further protests did elicit the perfunctory notice mentioned above. On a positive note, the Council did defer CCPD's license-reader request until it could review a draft policy, and it later [denied](#) the request.

Police ID Policy To Minimize Unnecessary Detentions

Grade: C

Providing appropriate identification is one basis for release from police detention with a ticket to appear at a later court date. Accepting a range of IDs avoids extending detentions.

Unfortunately, CCPD has [refused to adopt](#) a policy generally accepting (though it may do so *ad hoc*) foreign consular IDs such as [Mexico's *matricula consular*](#), although [LAPD does so](#) and the [State of California accepts them](#) as sufficient ID to issue a driver's license.

School District Support & Protection for Immigrant Families

Grade: A

The schools have coupled reassuring words with tangible deeds. CCUSD formed a "Family Alliance" with CCAN and the Fineshriber Family Foundation. It shares information and provides supportive services to students and families on immigration-related issues. CCUSD also created an Inclusion, Respect, and Diversity Task Force with community participation. Finally, CCUSD is implementing internal staff training so that school employees will know what to do if ICE comes to a school or a student's family member gets detained.

Where Do We Go From Here?: Sanctuary 2.0

Designate a Sanctuary City Ombudsperson within City government.

The City needs to make immigrant protection part of its day-to-day mission, not just something it does when there is public pressure. A specific City official should be responsible and accountable for sanctuary implementation. Duties would include ensuring that new and old practices do not violate sanctuary policy, identifying potential City initiatives to support immigrants, and coordinating among City departments, CCUSD, and the public.

Implement policies and training for CCPD and all City government departments.

A Council resolution alone neither explains to City employees how to [put it into practice](#) nor makes it clear that their supervisors expect them to follow it. The City should adopt and implement detailed sanctuary procedures and training, as it does elsewhere such as with [anti-bias policy](#). Pasadena has a [thorough entry in its police manual](#) explaining and applying its sanctuary policy, though that resolution is somewhat narrower than Culver City's.

Ban City contracts with vendors who endanger immigrants by cooperating with ICE.

ICE tries to get voluntary assistance from [private companies](#), not just local governments. The City should avoid contracting with vendors who voluntarily give ICE access, information, or other help, and it should include in City contracts terms that bar such voluntary assistance. City money should support vendors who protect immigrants, not endanger them. This principle was put into practice by rejecting CCPD's license-plate reader proposal.

Publicize and support immigrant-protective information and resources.

The City actively publicizes and supports many things happening in our community. It could do the same on immigration issues, such as informing businesses ([like this](#)) how they can protect immigrant workers and follow the new state [Immigrant Worker Protection Act](#). Philadelphia, for instance, has extensive [online resources](#) explaining sanctuary status, current immigration issues, and local resources.

Create an official, ongoing forum for community participation in immigrant support and protection, as well as related diversity and inclusion issues.

The City has [many commissions](#), committees, task forces, and so on, and sanctuary deserves similar attention. Community input and oversight is especially important because the City so far has not demonstrated that it prioritizes and acts on these issues. The designated Sanctuary City Ombudsperson should staff this new forum.