

MEMORANDUM



TO: VICTOR CARDENAS, CITY MANAGER
FROM: SHERYL WALSH-MOLLOY, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS
SUBJECT: MAYOR'S YOUTH FORUM – DIVERSITY & CULTURAL PROGRAMS
DATE: AUGUST 17, 2026

The Mayor's Youth Forum recently focused on **Diversity and Cultural Programs**, with students discussing what makes them feel welcome in Novi, how cultural diversity has shaped their experiences, and opportunities for the City to expand its programming and outreach.

Key Takeaways

- **Novi's diversity is viewed as a strength and a defining characteristic of the community.** Students consistently described Novi as welcoming and diverse, noting that growing up around people from different cultures has made cultural differences feel natural rather than unfamiliar.
- **Youth value both cultural connection and cross-cultural interaction.** Students appreciated opportunities to connect with people who share their cultural backgrounds but emphasized that the ability to form friendships and learn from people with very different experiences is one of Novi's greatest strengths.
- **Students see schools as a major driver of inclusion.** Teachers, student clubs and school activities were cited as important in creating an environment where students feel welcome and encouraging curiosity about other cultures. There was interest in stronger partnerships between the City and Novi Community School District on cultural programming.
- **There is interest in more opportunities for adults and families to experience cultures together.** Students suggested expanding beyond individual cultural events toward programs that intentionally bring multiple cultures together. Ideas included multicultural festivals, programming tied to cultural heritage months, and events where participants can experience several cultures at once.
- **The City could explore opportunities to promote culturally diverse businesses.** Students identified restaurants, grocery stores and specialty retailers as natural ways people experience other cultures. Suggestions included greater promotion

of culturally diverse businesses and consideration of how economic development efforts could help attract a broader range of culturally oriented businesses and retail.

- **Some cultural representations may be less visible.** Students specifically raised interest in greater awareness of smaller cultural and religious communities in Novi and opportunities to learn about cultures that may not have established school clubs or City events.
- **Recruitment and representation within City government was an important discussion.** Students were asked how Novi could attract more diversity to careers in police, fire and other City positions, as well as boards and commissions. Their suggestions centered on early exposure, visibility and relationship-building, including career presentations, internships, job shadowing, ride-alongs and introducing students to public safety and other municipal career paths while they are still in high school.
- **Keeping young people connected to Novi emerged as a broader issue.** Students noted that many leave Novi after high school for college and careers. The discussion touched on the need to consider what Novi can offer young adults in their 20s, including housing options, career opportunities and reasons to return to or remain in the community.

Overall Impression

The conversation reinforced that Novi's young residents see diversity not simply as a City initiative, but as part of the community's identity. One student offered the idea of viewing Novi as a "tapestry" rather than a "melting pot," reflecting the belief that Novi is strongest when different cultures and experiences retain their individuality while contributing to the larger community.

The next Mayor's Youth Forum is scheduled for **October 29th**.

