



Hispanic Quality of Life Initiative
Opportunity for Prosperity
 Community Forum Findings & Recommendations
 August 27, 2009 FINAL REPORT



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Introduction



The City of Austin is committed to making Austin a place where its high quality of life is available and accessible to all of its citizens. Furthermore, Austin continues to be a city that prides itself in the diversity that makes up our community – and the Hispanic Quality of Life Initiative further demonstrates this point.

Since 2000, the Hispanic population has increased nearly 35 percent. There are currently more than 460,000 Hispanics living in the greater Austin area, representing the largest minority group. Today, the majority of children in Austin are now Hispanic. As pointed out by the City’s Demographer, Austin’s Hispanic community is not culturally monolithic but rather contains an amazing amount of internal diversity.

In 2005, the City of Austin launched a successful African American Quality of Life Initiative, identifying areas for improvement and resulting in a number of significant recommendations. For years there has been an interest expressed by the Hispanic and Latino community to initiate a similar process. In May 2008, the City Council adopted a resolution directing the City Manager to move forward with a Hispanic Quality of Life Initiative. (Appendix A).

The multi-phased Hispanic Quality of Life (HQL) Initiative and process seeks to examine the quality of life for Hispanics in Austin and includes demographic research, trend and data



analysis, and community engagement through a series of bilingual public forums and community input utilizing both print and online survey opportunities. The initiative seeks to address the following:

- Is the quality of life for Hispanics in Austin markedly different from the quality of life experienced by Hispanics in other cities?
- Is the quality of life experienced by Hispanics significantly different from the quality of life experienced by the rest of Austin and other demographic groups?
- Is the City of Austin providing program services, financial assistance and other opportunities to enhance the quality of life for Hispanics?

Throughout the months of February and ending in May 2009, the Hispanic Quality of Life Initiative received direct input through a series of forums and community surveys (Appendix B) from more than 1,600 residents on their views regarding city services, issues of concerns and recommendations of how to ameliorate issues they identified in each of the four areas and designated themes of Education, Economic Development, Cultural Arts/History/Enrichment, and Health.



City of Austin Hispanic Quality of Life Initiative – Overview of Community Forums



Education

The HQL initiative began with the first forum on the subject of Education on February 24th, at Austin High School. Attendees numbered nearly 200 and received a briefing on the City's demographic and census data, which cited a prevalent Hispanic demographic shift for the City of Austin and the economic and educational impact of this accelerated Hispanic population growth. A panel discussion with Dr. Steven Kinslow, President of the Austin Community College, Dr. Pat Forgione, Superintendent for the Austin Independent School District, and Dr. Victor Saenz, Assistant Professor for the University of Texas discussed prominent issues in public education. The panel presentation included increasing the need for post secondary education, the performance shift to the math and science curriculum and the widening education gap between Hispanics and the majority culture. The forum engaged participants in four small group discussions: Pre-K; High School Retention; Academic Excellence; and Bilingual Education. Overall, participants addressed issues by placing great responsibility on



the public school districts. There was common interest in seeking that AISD change policy and consider duplicating the best practices of other school districts that have been successful with minority-majority enrollments, especially those who have a majority of Spanish speaking parents. Moreover, it was decided that in order to provide more academic opportunities for Hispanics, the community should partake a greater role in the decision making process of public schools.

Economic Development

The second forum was on the topic of economic development, March 24th, at the Austin Community College, South Campus. The City's Budget Officer, Ed Van Eenoo presented a brief synopsis of Austin's economic indicators. Forum participants divided into four small groups to discuss specific topics related to: Affordable Housing; Resource Development for small minority-owned businesses; Building Wealth for families; and Workforce Development. Participants shared concern over the insufficient number of affordable homes in Austin. Additionally, it was noted that affordable housing provided by the City has a five year waiting list and these units are undersized for the larger Hispanic families and are not able to accommodate their needs even if they qualify for such housing. The pressing point coming from the break out session was that the City of Austin could do more to promote its business development services because many Hispanics in Austin are not aware of them. In addition, a strong emphasis on providing materials and classes in Spanish was accentuated during this session.

Cultural Arts/History/Enrichment

The third forum of the Hispanic Quality of Life Initiative was on the topic of Cultural Arts/History/Enrichment which took place on April 7th, at the Mexican American Cultural Center. The forum paid homage to the evolution of the Mexican American cultural arts with an artistic power-point presentation on establishing a world class Latino presence in Austin. At the core of the poetic power-point message was that of how Hispanic's expectations have



changed from wanting inalienable rights to wanting more resources to fund their projects and for these resources to be distributed amongst the community. Following the design approved by the City, the forum was separated into four small groups: Creating a Sustainable Future; Leadership Development and Advocacy; Cultural Arts Education; and History/Enrichment. The groups conversed about the policy issues affecting the City of Austin's establishment of a Latino cultural presence. One of their key issues was funding; the group proposed that the funding for Hispanic cultural arts should reflect the vast population of the Hispanic community. The groups identified an extreme necessity for the City of Austin to fund a department dedicated exclusively for assisting all forms of art non-profits to enable them to go into public schools to assist in Hispanic/Latino arts history and cultural enrichment activities. Moreover, the groups articulated that equal access to resources within the Hispanic community appears to be limited. There are not enough Hispanics in leadership positions, further citing the composition of the City Council. While acknowledging their responsibility, the groups agreed that the City of Austin should create leadership opportunities at all levels of city government. In addition, the group identified the importance of institutional and community based programs which expand the knowledge of Latino related history and heritage.

Health

The final forum was held on April 28th, at Conley-Guerrero Senior Activity Center and addressed all matters regarding health. Assistant Director of the Austin/Travis County Health and Human Services Department, Shannon Jones III provided a presentation on the general overview of the health status of citizens in Austin. Preceding Jones' presentation was another presentation by the Health Promotion Disease Prevention Unit Manager, Wilmia A. Perez who gave an overview of the services provided by the City of Austin including human services and medical director/health authority. Small break out groups discussed issues around the areas of Health Care Affordability; Public Health Service and Prevention; Clinical Services; and Understanding the Health Care System. The groups identified the need for transparency within the Austin/Travis County Healthcare District with respect to the decision-



making process. In general, there was a misunderstanding among forum participants about the roles and responsibilities of the City of Austin and Travis County regarding health and community care services. All four breakout sessions surmised that the city could benefit from a current assessment of the health care system. The break out groups discussed their desire for more Hispanic/Latinos to be part of health care boards. They strongly believe that if more Hispanic/Latinos were involved in making health care policies, it would be easier for them to obtain health care services.

Conclusion

Overall, nearly a 1,000 people attended the forums and almost 650 people completed the Hispanic Quality of Life Survey. After organizing all four forums, collecting the surveys, and input from citizens, Adelante Solutions, Inc. determined that it collected enough data from the Hispanic community to make recommendations on their behalf to the Austin City Council.

Please refer to Appendix C for the full summary reports of each HQL Community Forum.



Community Survey Results – Highlights

Nearly 650 citizens completed the Hispanic Quality of Life survey in English and Spanish. The survey results show that that 35% of respondents feel that the quality of life for Hispanic/Latinos in Austin is good or very good, 37% adequate, and 29% believe that the quality of life is poor or very poor. The following identifies the demographic profile of the survey participants:

- 55% of the respondents ranged in age from 30 to 49.
- Nearly 54% have a household income between \$35,000 to \$100,000.
- Approximately 33% of the respondents have lived in Austin for twenty-five years or more compared to 19% having lived in Austin for five years or less.
- Nearly 60% of the respondents had a Bachelor's or Graduate degree.
- Over 50% primarily speak English at home, while over 30% use both English and Spanish and nearly 17% of the respondents primarily speak Spanish.
- Survey participants represented more than 69 zip codes in the Austin area. The majority lived in central, east, south and southeast Austin.

In order to achieve the objective of understanding and gaining insight on what Hispanic/Latinos believe are the most significant issues to improve their quality of life, respondents identified Public Education 55.8%, Employment Opportunities 43.2%, and Accessible and Affordable Health Care 35.2% as the three most pressing issues.

When asked to identify the top three areas the City of Austin and the Austin Independent School District should focus on to support education and the growing Hispanic population in Austin, college preparation/opportunities for secondary education, improving computer and internet access and after school programs totaled more than 47% of the responses.



According to the survey results, the top three areas the City should focus on to support business and economic development opportunities include technical assistance, legal, technology and business development skills at 55.2%, financial assistance, bonding, securing capital at 52.4% and additional training on starting a business at 49.4%.

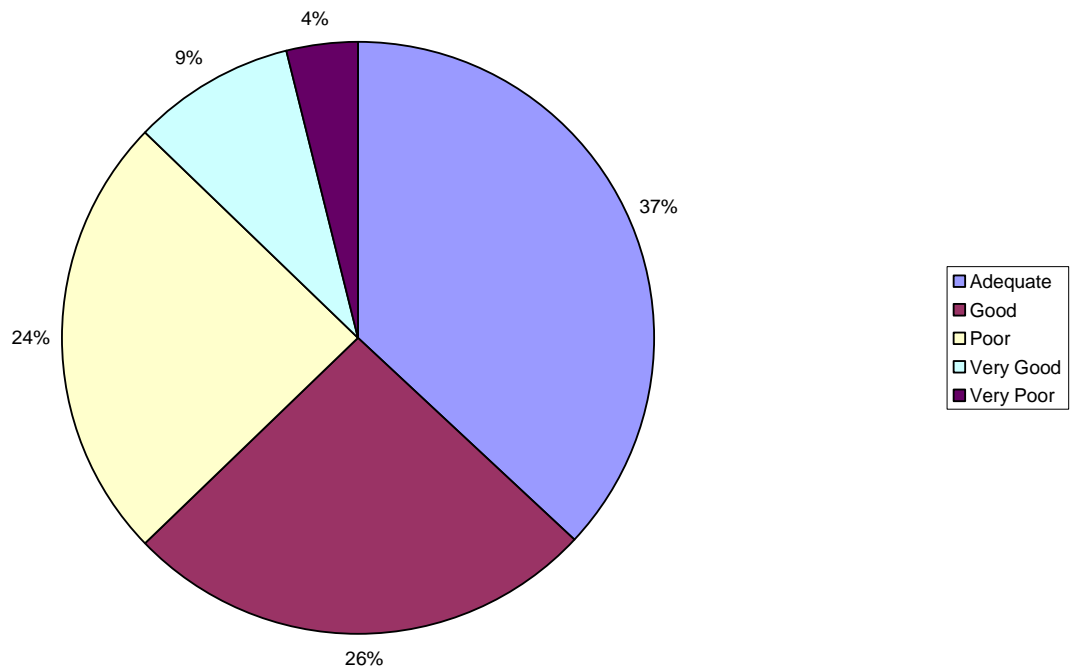
Respondents indicated that the top three areas the City of Austin and Travis County Healthcare District should focus on to support health care services for the growing Hispanic population were the Medical Assistance Program at 51.1%, child care services at 48.8%, and improved coordination on distributing information on public assistance programs at 43.5%.

Participants indicated that the top three areas the City of Austin should focus on to support cultural arts and history enrichment were additional collaboration and promotion of cultural events and activities at 53.9%, additional classes, workshops and services for children and adults at 48%, and infrastructure and program improvements at parks, museums, libraries, recreation and senior centers at 46.6%.

To see the entire Community Survey Results in graph form, please refer to Appendix E.



How would you rate Austin's quality of life for Hispanics?



1. In your opinion, how would you rate Austin's quality of life for Hispanics?

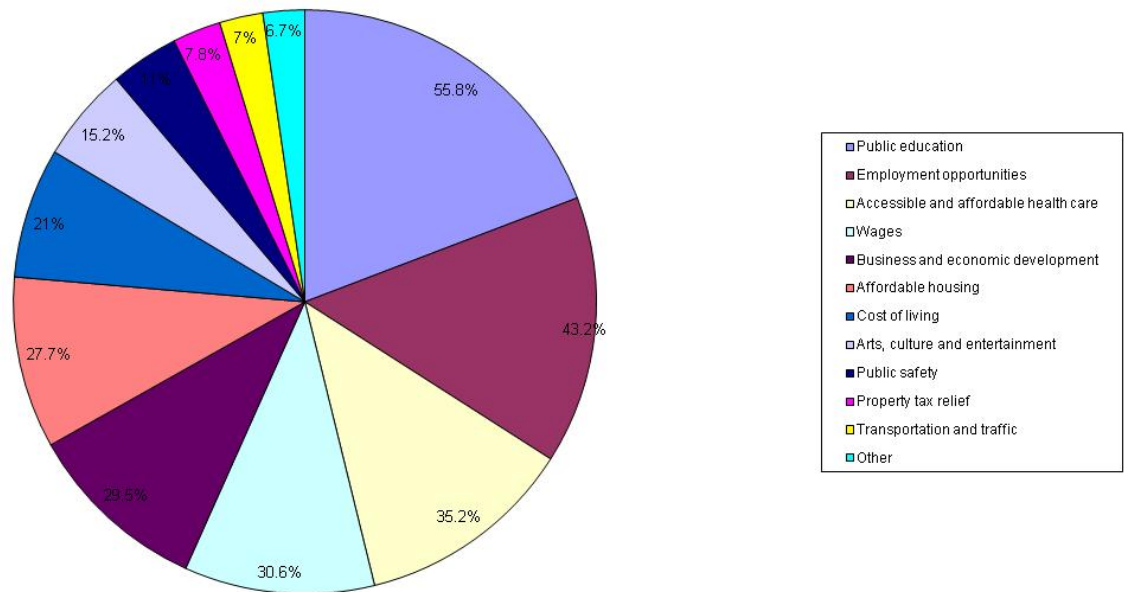
[Total: 625]

Adequate	231	37.00%
Good	162	25.90%
Poor	153	24.50%
Very Good	54	8.60%
Very Poor	25	4.00%

The HQL Survey results revealed that 35% of Hispanics feel that the quality of life in Austin is good or very good, 37% adequate, and 29% believe that their quality of life is poor or very poor.



What are the top three most pressing issues for improving the quality of life for Hispanics in Austin?



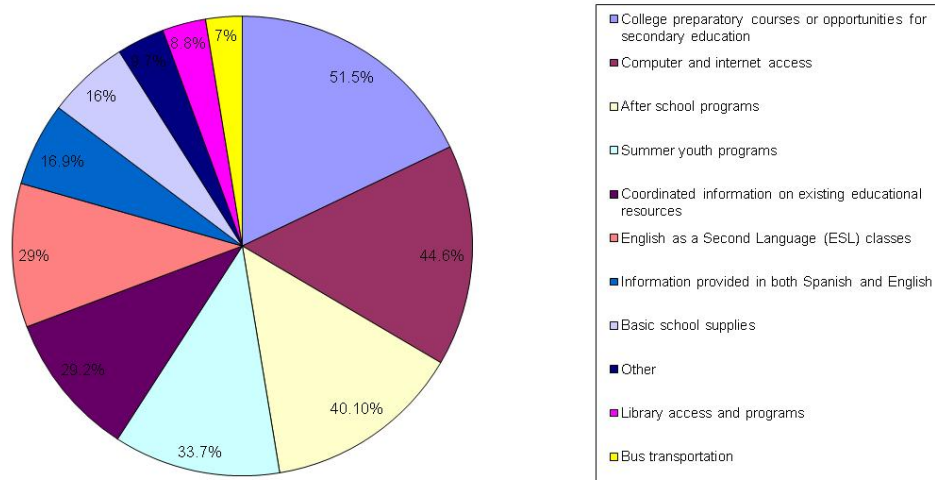
2. Based on your experience, what are the top three most pressing issues for improving the quality of life for Hispanics in Austin? [Total: 599]

Public education	334	55.80%
Employment opportunities	259	43.20%
Accessible and affordable health care	211	35.20%
Wages	183	30.60%
Business and economic development	177	29.50%
Affordable housing	166	27.70%
Cost of living	126	21.00%
Arts, culture and entertainment	91	15.20%
Public safety	66	11.00%
Property tax relief	47	7.80%
Transportation and traffic	42	7.00%
Other	40	6.70%

Additionally, respondents identified the three main issues that Hispanics want addressed to improve their lifestyle; 55.8% indicated public education, 43.2% choose employment opportunities, while 35.2% opted for accessible and affordable health care.



What are the top three areas the City of Austin and Independent School Districts could focus on to support education with the growing Hispanic population in Austin?



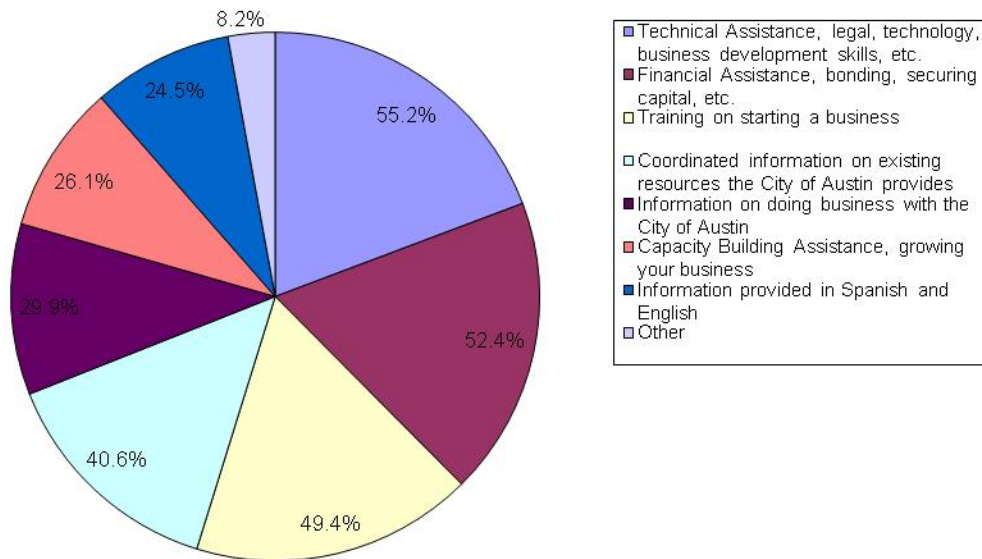
3. In your opinion, what are the top three areas the City of Austin and the Austin Independent School District could focus on to support education with the growing Hispanic population in Austin? [Total: 569]

College preparatory courses or opportunities for secondary education	293	51.50%
Computer and internet access	254	44.60%
After school programs	228	40.10%
Summer youth programs	192	33.70%
Coordinated information on existing educational resources	166	29.20%
English as a Second Language (ESL) classes	165	29.00%
Information provided in both Spanish and English	96	16.90%
Basic school supplies	94	16.50%
Other	55	9.70%
Library access and programs	50	8.80%
Bus transportation	42	7.40%

Moreover, the results demonstrated the top three issues Hispanics want addressed in the area of education: 51.5% of respondents want college preparatory courses or opportunities for secondary education, 44.6% want computer & internet access, and 40.1% want after school programs.



What are the top three areas the City of Austin could focus on to support business and economic development with the growing Hispanic population in Austin?



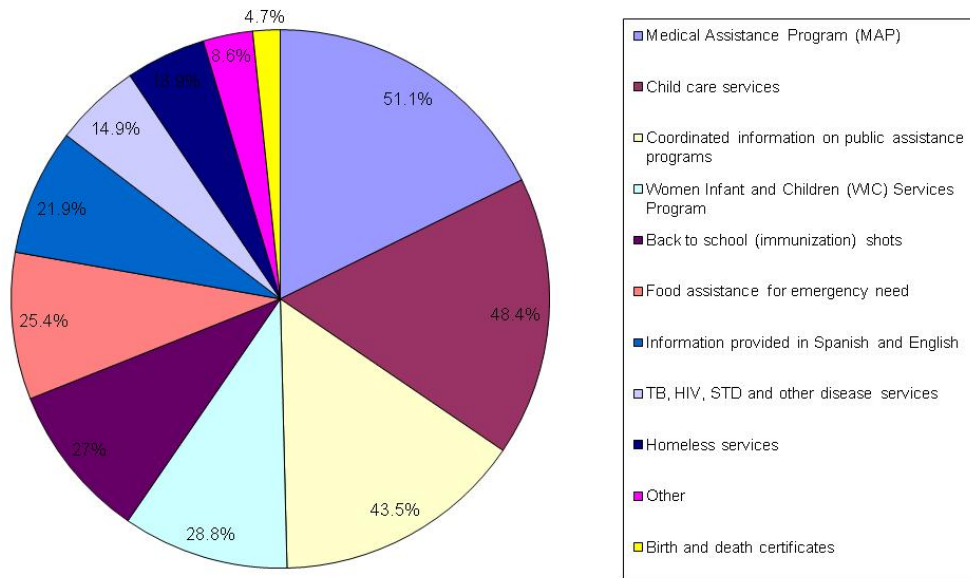
4. In your opinion, what are the top three areas the City of Austin could focus on to support business and economic development with the growing Hispanic population in Austin? [Total: 571]

Technical Assistance, legal, technology, business development skills, etc.	315	55.20%
Financial Assistance, bonding, securing capital, etc.	299	52.40%
Training on starting a business	282	49.40%
Coordinated information on existing resources the City of Austin provides	232	40.60%
Information on doing business with the City of Austin	171	29.90%
Capacity Building Assistance, growing your business	149	26.10%
Information provided in Spanish and English	140	24.50%
Other	47	8.20%

According to the survey results, the top three areas the City of Austin should focus on to support business and economic development are technical assistance, legal, technology, business development skills, etc. (55.2%), financial assistance, bonding, securing capital, etc. (52.4%), training on starting a business (49.4%).



What are the top three areas the City of Austin could focus on to support health care services with the growing Hispanic population in Austin?



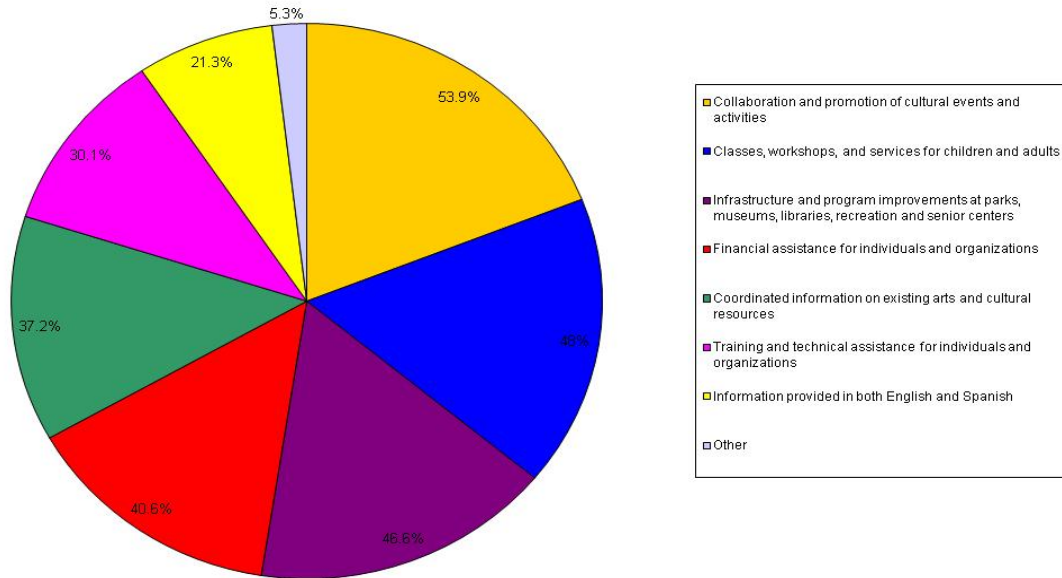
5. In your opinion, what are the top three areas the City of Austin could focus on to support health care services with the growing Hispanic population in Austin? [Total: 570]

Medical Assistance Program (MAP)	291	51.10%
Child care services	276	48.40%
Coordinated information on public assistance programs	248	43.50%
Women Infant and Children (WIC) Services Program	164	28.80%
Back to school (immunization) shots	154	27.00%
Food assistance for emergency need	145	25.40%
Information provided in Spanish and English	125	21.90%
TB, HIV, STD and other disease services	85	14.90%
Homeless services	79	13.90%
Other	49	8.60%
Birth and death certificates	27	4.70%

According to Hispanics, the top three areas the City of Austin should focus on to support health care services include: Medical Assistance Program with an overwhelming response of 51.1%, in second place is child care services with a close vote of 48.4%, and thirdly the coordinated information on public assistance programs with a vote 43.5%.



What are the top three areas the City of Austin could focus on to support cultural arts/history/enrichment with the growing Hispanic population in Austin?



6. In your opinion, what are the top three areas the City of Austin could focus on to support cultural arts/history/enrichment with the growing Hispanic population in Austin? [Total: 581]

Collaboration and promotion of cultural events and activities	313	53.90%
Classes, workshops, and services for children and adults	279	48.00%
Infrastructure and program improvements at parks, museums, libraries, recreation and senior centers	271	46.60%
Financial assistance for individuals and organizations	236	40.60%
Coordinated information on existing arts and cultural resources	216	37.20%
Training and technical assistance for individuals and organizations	175	30.10%
Information provided in both English and Spanish	124	21.30%
Other	31	5.30%

The top three areas Hispanics want the City of Austin to focus on in order to support cultural arts/history/enrichment are comprised of the Collaboration and promotion of cultural events and activities (53.9%), Classes, workshops, and services for children and adults (48.0%), and Infrastructure and program improvements at parks, museums, libraries, recreation and senior centers (46.6%).



Consultant Recommendations



Adelante Solutions, Inc. collected both qualitative and quantitative data from a diverse representation of the Hispanic and Latino community residing in Austin.

Hispanics will continue to play a significant role in shaping the city's economic landscape and the social issues that will define and prepare Austin for the future. Although decision makers have acknowledged the Hispanic community as stakeholders in the decision making process, Hispanics ultimately must assume a leadership role and seek out opportunities to provide input in the development of sound public policies and strategies geared towards improving the quality of life in Austin.

The Hispanic community along with our elected officials should acknowledge and reflect upon our city's history good or bad; and remember that future decisions and policies will need to reflect upon our lives as they are actually lived.



The recommendations that follow are part of an analysis of the issues and challenges identified by the community, documenting themes and priorities to make specific recommendations regarding these challenges and opportunities.

The following are the recommendations to the City of Austin for review:

Education

Issue: Uniquely the survey and breakout sessions revealed the lack of opportunity for Hispanic/Latino students to transition from high school to a college preparatory curriculum and secondary education.

Recommendation:

1. The City can work to support AISD by helping develop long term cooperative partnerships with colleges, non-profits agencies and businesses for developing strategies to bridge the gap from high school to secondary education for Hispanic/Latino students.

Issue: The breakout session participants indicated that there is a deficiency on how information is transmitted and received in English and Spanish from the City and AISD.

Recommendation:

2. AISD and the City should regularly assess the consolidation of resources to engender a sustainable course of bilingual communication. This will ensure that staff from both entities can share best practices and work in conjunction with community and neighborhood groups to fill gaps in disseminating information with an emphasis on grassroots communication strategies.

Issue: In the Bilingual breakout session, the issue was raised on the importance of being able to communicate effectively in English and Spanish both at school and at work. There are a lack of



programs to help first generation immigrants and second and third generation Austinites bridge the language barrier.

Recommendation:

3. The City and AISD should consider policies that promote and encourage a dual language work place. A coordinated effort to provide appropriate programs that service both educational and work force development needs is recommended.

Issue: Throughout the breakout sessions, participants indicated that there is a lack of coordination in disseminating information on after school, summer youth, and educational programs in Spanish; and in maintaining a centralized and managed data base for these programs.

Recommendation:

4. The City should support AISD in bringing government, neighborhood and community organizations together to create a centralized and managed data base of educational associated programs.

Issue: In the Academic Excellence breakout session, the need for accessibility to technology was seen as a major obstacle to ensuring a student's academic success under the current environment.

Recommendation:

5. The City should consider potential partnerships with businesses to find additional resources and means to augment "computer labs" and Wi-Fi hub connections at existing city facilities and those located in close proximity to neighborhoods.

Issue: Participants cited the lack of joint regional planning and incongruent policies by AISD and the City for new development and the placement of new schools. The City's current desired development zone policies have had a negative impact on the growing number of underutilized and low capacity schools located east of Interstate 35. Compounding the impact is the school



district's current transfer policy which allows affluent families relocating to the desired development zone to send their children outside the designated neighborhood schools.

Recommendation:

6. The City is encouraged to work with AISD to maximize underutilized campuses and the impacts on neighborhoods. This ongoing issue should be addressed regularly at the standing Joint Subcommittee of the City and AISD.

Economic Development

Issue: In general, forum participants did not feel informed about the City's programs and services offered in each of the four break-out sessions: workforce development, affordable housing, building wealth for families, and resource development for businesses.

Recommendation:

1. We applaud the City of Austin for the multitude of departments addressing the needs of the business community. To maximize the services offered by these departments, constant and a regular communication is needed. We recommend that the City schedule a summit perhaps through an annual event to address needs from the perspective of its clients. Major areas for further discussion and training are:
 - Business development, technical and legal
 - Securing financial resources for capital and bonding
 - Business incubation and training on how to build, maintain, and grow a business
 - Coordination of City services.

The City has a great team of community outreach coordinators that brings the message of each of its representative departments.

Recommendation:



2. Continue to work at reaching the community through all of the available communication streams, encourage participation of departments and employees associated with specific programs in the various business network groups and solicit opportunities to present program information at business meetings, committees, and program luncheons.

Issue: There is insufficient stock available of affordable housing, a quality of life issue the City has attempted to satisfactorily address with various policies and State legislation. Yet the economic conditions and a rising cost of living in Austin have not allowed these policies to make an impact on the supply of workforce housing.

Recommendation:

3. Continue to work on policies to encourage and incentivize developers to apportion a percentage of housing to the city's workforce. Increase information strategies that consistently get information to the public on available programs and their requirements to support affordable housing opportunities for Hispanic/Latino residents. In addition, the traditionally constructed multi-family units needs to evolve to meets the needs of a culture that embraces having more than one generation living at a single residence.

Issue: Despite the fact that Latino communities have become the sparkplug of America's economic engine--- we have not yet learned to take full advantage of the country's mainstream financial mechanisms. Learning to link assets, income, and education will help Hispanic/Latino families and entrepreneurs to tap those mechanisms and use them to create even greater opportunities for the achievement of economic progress.

Recommendation:

4. A properly coordinated campaign between the public, private, business organizations and non-profit sectors; spearheaded by the City would set a benchmark within the Hispanic



community on the significance of transference of wealth to future generations and how that transfer communicates to a empowerment and success.

Cultural Arts/History Enrichment

Issue: One of the key issues facing Hispanic/Latino cultural arts organizations is the threat of displacement. The Latino arts community continues to face the burden of finding affordable and permanent space to conduct artistic visions. If affordable space could be made available the cultural arts community would develop into assiduous organizations with ongoing opportunities for patronage, staffing, and sustainable development. Over the years, the City has acknowledged this ongoing challenge and has offered city-owned space lease agreements for various arts organizations including Ballet Austin, Austin Film Society and Zachary Scott, to name a few. However, there is a perception that when Hispanic/Latino arts organizations have requested similar arrangements no progress has been made.

Recommendation:

1. The City should consider developing an inventory of potential and available City-owned spaces that can be used by Hispanic/Latino cultural arts organizations, as interim and long term solutions. Furthermore, a program could be developed to match groups with certain spaces with reasonable leasing prices creating opportunities for both Hispanic/Latino artists and generating additional income for the City.

Issue: Another required component of viability and sustainability for Latino artists and organizations is the level of investment they receive from the Latino community. To increase patronage by the Latino community, artists need to showcase their work. The quintessential showplace for Latino art is the Mexican American Cultural Center (MACC). With only one phase of the MACC yet to be completed, Latino performance artists are essentially locked out of the facility. Efforts, so far, to show theatrical or dance performances at the MACC



have produced sub-par events that do not present the work by these groups in the most positive light, thereby discouraging rather than encouraging patronage.

Recommendation:

2. To resolve this issue, we propose that the City should address the feasibility of efforts to fund completion of the additional phases of the MACC. The additional phases would include 300- and 800-seat theaters, with the objective of building theater and practice space to accommodate Latino performing artists.

Issue: Another prevalent issue facing the cultural arts community is funding. While the hotel occupancy or bed tax provides steady revenue of funding, the actual allocation process remains contentious. Over the years, the City has revamped the cultural arts funding process with good intentions of a fair and equitable distribution; however, local Hispanic/Latino artists stated that access to equitable funding for Hispanic/Latino artists and art organizations remains a challenge.

Recommendation:

3. Adelante recommends a review of the City's current cultural funding process. This review at minimum should include regular reporting and audits to evaluate the level of funding allocated to local Hispanic/Latino artists and organizations. The funding allocation process at minimum should take into consideration the growing Hispanic community and Latino arts organizations. Furthermore, we recommend the current MBE/WBE program as a potential model for the equitable distribution of cultural arts funding. The MBE/WBE program conducts regular disparity and availability studies on the growing number of minority and women-owned businesses and sets goals for minority and women-owned contracting and funding opportunities with the City. The cultural arts community continues to serve as an economic development opportunity for Austin and we must ensure that the needs of our diverse local artists and arts organizations are met.



Health

Issue: There is a lack of knowledge and understanding from the public on the role the City has in the delivery of health and healthcare services to the indigent and underserved in Austin. In addition, with the recent monumental change in the separation of the City's clinics that occurred in March 2009, it remains unclear for many residents that the Travis County Healthcare District (TCHCD) and the CommUnity Care, are the primary care service providers over the clinic system. This is confirmed in the survey results given that the top health care services focus area as expressed by citizens referenced the Medical Assistance Program, which is now a TCHCD responsibility. Respondents also emphasized the need to improve coordinated efforts to disseminate information on City public assistance programs.

Recommendations:

1. We recommend that the City consider a memorandum of understanding with TCHCD and the CommUnity Care to clarify and communicate the role each of these entities has in the provision of the delivery of healthcare services to the community in general and with specific regard to the diverse Hispanic community. It is imperative that a comprehensive and well thought out bilingual public education and communication strategy be implemented. At minimum, these grassroots efforts should include the communications of the various programs and services offered by each entity. These efforts should be implemented by the Austin City Council's Public Health and Human Services Subcommittee in cooperation with the TCHCD Board of Directors and the Federally Qualified Health Care Board of Directors.
2. The City should communicate and include information regarding the transition of the city clinics to the TCHCD on the Health and Human Services Department's website. Furthermore, helpful links to both the Healthcare District and the CommUnity Care websites should be readily available.



3. The City should ensure that the 211 and 311 city operators have up to date information about the transition in city clinics and health programs that have been transferred over to the TCHCD and CommUnity Care clinic systems.

Issue: Need far outweighs the capacity of the local CommUnity Care clinics. There is a perception that finite number of dollars are available which in turn affects the number of providers hired, the clinic hours, number of sites, type of services (including mental health), and a limit on services provided, thus compromising the delivery of timely services.

Recommendation:

4. We recommend that the City assist the TCHCD and the CommUnity Care in addressing the financial needs and collaborate with them in finding federal and state resources to realize greater medical capacity in the primary care area. This issue should be communicated through the Council's Health and Human Services Council Subcommittee.

Issue: Cultural diversity and language challenges persist as noted by forum participants. This perception contributes to the communication issues addressed above. The need for Spanish language communication, especially in writing and in Spanish media is not keeping pace with the rapid growth of the Spanish speaking community in Austin.

Recommendation:

5. It is recommended that emphasis in the communication strategy of the various healthcare programs and services include a partnership with the City's public information department and TCHCD to maximize on the resources and proven strategies implemented by the City in its outreach and public engagement of the Hispanic community. Lastly, we



recommend improving collaborative efforts with networks of Healthcare advocates (including Community Action Network) to help communicate the City, TCHCD and CommUnity Care programs and services.

General Recommendations

Issue: From the onset of this initiative, the City Demographer posed the question of whether the quality of life experienced by Austin Hispanics/Latinos is significantly different from the quality of life experienced by other demographic groups within the city. The HQL Survey results revealed that 35% of Hispanics feel that the quality of life in Austin is good or very good, 37% adequate, and 29% believe that their quality of life is poor or very poor. There are a number of potential reasons why this perception may exist including the top three pressing issues identified in the survey as impacting the quality of life for Hispanics which include public education gaps and attainment, employment opportunities and access to affordable healthcare.

Issue: As also pointed out, Austin's Hispanic community is not culturally monolithic containing an amazing amount of internal diversity and subcultures. There is a growing sentiment within the Hispanic community, particularly within the third and fourth generation Mexican Americans and other Latinos such as Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Central and South Americans that those outside the ethnicity have a tendency to categorize all Hispanics as the same. This stereo-typical assessment is often offensive creating an immediate reaction by some Hispanics/Latinos to quantify and differentiate themselves from other Hispanic subcultures.

Issue: As also pointed out by the City Demographer, there is a potential emergence of two communities: one that is fully integrated and engaged, and the other isolated, existing within a cultural bubble, and disadvantaged. Over a 25 year period, the Austin, Travis County region



has documented over 126,000 foreign-born living within the community. Over 58% are immigrants from Mexico and Central America.

Issue: Due to the tremendous growth of the Hispanic community, a common theme expressed throughout the series of discussions was a need for additional Hispanic/Latino representation on the Austin City Council. There is a perception that as critical issues arise in the Hispanic community, the unspoken expectation by the Council is that the single Hispanic Council Member is expected to lead, address, and resolve these community challenges. And while the Hispanic community acknowledges that single-member districts has been presented to the Austin voters at least six times and has failed, single-member districts and/or an alternative method of electing our Council representatives should be revisited. It is also important to acknowledge that there was equal concern about the lack of geographic representation, citing perceived and ongoing disparities between communities in East and West Austin.

Recommendations:

1. As the HQL initiative moves forward, the City should ensure that the HQL community oversight committee has inclusive representation from the various subcultures that make-up our diverse Hispanic/Latino community.
2. In 1998, the Austin City Council created a Commission on Immigrant Affairs to address ongoing immigrant issues and challenges. While some of these issues continue to exist, Adelante Solutions recommends a re-evaluation of the charge and the name of this commission. This should include a potential expansion and/or revamping to create a Hispanic/Latino Affairs Commission bringing citizens from the various subcultures of the Hispanic community together to address ongoing challenges and opportunities that impact the overall of quality of life experiences for Austin Hispanic/Latinos.



3. Adelante Solutions recommends that the issue of an alternative means of electing our Council representatives be revisited. While we too acknowledge the previous failed ballot attempts, Adelante recommends reconvening a citizen's committee to reassess this important issue. This group should be charged with developing a plan of action and recommending whether or not a potential charter amendment ballot item should be held within the next two charter election opportunities. Should the City Council remain silent on this issue, the Austin community will be faced with ongoing threats of potential legislative action by the Texas Legislature and/or citizens may be compelled to initiate a resolution that fits the Austin community.
4. The City should also look at working with the Hispanic community to ensure there is diversity and representation on all of the City's boards and commissions. This will also assist the growing Hispanic community with leadership development and community engagement opportunities on important quality of life issues for the city. The City should seek partnership opportunities with various Hispanic business, civic and community organizations to identify potential participation and leadership development opportunities.
5. Throughout the series of community discussions, another priority and theme that permeated was the need for the City to improve its overall outreach and communications with the diverse Hispanic/Latino community. The City must implement an efficient and well thought out strategy to provide a bilingual communications and grassroots outreach plan regarding the various programs and services offered by the City. In addition, the City must do a better job to ensure that the City's workforce acknowledges the culture and value systems of the growing Hispanic/Latino community.



6. In October 2005, the Joint Subcommittee of the Austin City Council and AISD Board of Trustees created the Task Force on Education and the Quality of Life in Austin for Hispanic Students. The task force was charged with considering current data research on best practices, and community perspectives in developing findings and recommendations on the quality of education for Hispanic students in AISD. In responding to its charge, the task force held several community meetings and sighted major findings and recommendations. Adelante Solutions would like to point out, that three years later, we documented many of the same issues, concerns and themes as previously outlined in the Hispanic Quality of Life and Education Task Force report during the recent HQL education forum and community survey. Therefore, we strongly recommend that the Joint Subcommittee of the City and AISD provide an update to the community on the status of the implementation of recommendations made by the previous task force and the impacts to date on current policies. Adelante further recommends that the City and AISD consider reconvening the original task force to assess the impact to date of their findings and to review the HQL education themes, priorities and recommendations.



Appendix

Appendix A - Austin City Council Resolution

Appendix B - Survey

- English/Spanish Survey
- General Comments to Survey

Appendix C - Forum Reports

- Education
- Economic Development
- Cultural Arts/History Enrichment
- Health

Appendix D - HQL Collateral and Marketing Materials

Appendix E - HQL Community Survey Results

