

Late Backup



Austin Raza Round Table
June 27, 2013

Mayor Leffingwell, Mayor Pro Tem Cole and
Members of the City Council
PO Box 1088

Austin, TX 78701

Dear Mayor Leffingwell and Members of the City Council:

The Raza Round Table, a community forum that advances open democratic discussions around Hispanic/Latino issues in Austin, applaud your commitment to improve the Hispanic/Latino quality of life and we commend the Oversight Team for inviting public input and preparing the report for presentation to the Austin City Council. We hosted three meetings in June, 2013 on the Hispanic/Latino Quality of Life (HLQL) Initiative that the Austin City Council launched on May 8, 2008. Approximately 75 persons, many of whom are professionals working in the community, participated in the meetings and agreed to attend the Austin City Council meeting on June 27, 2013 to express our support for the HLQL report and recommendations prepared by the HLQL Oversight Committee.

The morning briefing will initiate a critical opportunity for the Austin City Council to address the historic and continuing economic and socio-cultural marginalization of the Hispanic/Latino community. We now represent nearly 40% of the population of the city, and our children constitute over 60% of the students in the area schools. The exponential growth of the Hispanic/Latino community is a trend that can and should contribute to a vibrant diversity in our city. However -- without addressing the disparities in areas such as economic development, health, and education -- our population growth may instead result in growing ranks of poor and ill-served in Austin.

Furthermore, we will be exercising greater influence in local politics as our two-party system in national- and state-level politics and the city's new district representation system encourage us to translate our growing numbers into improved representation and advocacy in local politics. In sum, inattention to worsening conditions is no longer tenable—a fact that we trust you understood when you endorsed the HLQL Initiative. We consider City Council action to enact all the recommendations listed in the report absolutely critical. Our success means Austin succeeds.

Our overall recommendation is that you affirm your commitment to improve the Hispanic/Latino quality of life with the following:

1. Immediately accept the report and commit the city to implement its recommendations;

2. Immediately appoint a permanent HLQL Commission (hereafter The Commission) with members who have substantial experience working with the Hispanic/Latino community in at least one of the program areas addressed by the report;
3. Require the Commission to develop and present a 5-, 10-, and 15-year Hispanic/Latino Quality of Life plan, solicit public input, and advise the city on its implementation and regular evaluation based on measurable performance goals;
4. Appoint a person at the Assistant City Manager level to manage the staff support of the Commission and its initiatives;
5. Establish an inter-agency committee in city government to work with the HLQL Commission and the Austin Independent School District (AISD) in implementing the plan;
6. Identify existing city services that promote Quality of Life activities in the Hispanic/Latino community and incorporate them into the larger plan, including expansion when needed; and
7. Develop creative ways to fund the plan, including negotiated allotments from public/private initiatives such as the Formula 1 US Grand Prix, building projects in the Austin metropolitan area, and set asides by city agencies equivalent to the cost of their Quality of Life services.

Please see Appendix A for a non-exhaustive list of additional recommendations that came out of our meetings. Continued community input to the Commission will no doubt result in additional recommendations. The people listed below as signatories of this letter attended several of our meetings. They represent numerous community organizations and include a wide range of experience and expertise.

Susana Almanza
 Larry Amaro
 Dan Arellano
 Daniel Baladez
 Miguel Barrosa-Martinez
 Skylar T. Bonilla
 Ernesto Calderon
 Fred Cantu
 Diana Castaneda-Herrera
 Marylou Castillo
 Ricardo A. Chavira
 Leonard Davila
 Richard Franklin III
 Manuel Ray Garcia
 Alberto C. Gonzalez
 Monica Guzman
 Robyn Hembree
 Griselda Lopez
 Liz Lopez
 Dr. Patricia Lopez
 Anna Maciel
 Tim Mahoney
 Jayme Mathias
 Gloria Moreno
 Robert R. Ojeda

Juan Oyervides
 Alicia Perez-Hodge
 Teresa Perez-Wisely
 Anita Quintanilla
 Jill Ramirez
 Charles Rand
 Rene Renteria
 Isabel Rios
 Gilbert Rivera
 Dr. Jane Rivera
 Anita Rodriguez
 Santo J. (Buddy) Ruiz
 Celeste Ruiz
 Karlo Sales
 Dionisio Salazar
 Eli Santiago
 Alfredo Santos
 Teofilo Tijerina
 Jose Uriegas
 Cynthia Valadez-Mata Jr.
 Dr. Angela Valenzuela
 Juan Vasquez
 Peggy Vasquez
 Alicia E. Villareal
 Roberto M. Villareal

Carl Webb
 Manuel Zamarripa
 Jessica Zamarripa
 Dr. Emilio Zamora

Appendix A:

Raza Round Table Recommendations

Health

The HLQL report was initiated prior to the time that the Affordable Care Act (ACA) took effect. This means that some of the recommendations must be amended with ACA in mind. For instance, ACA acknowledges that the current U.S. health care delivery system is fragmented and intends to change it with greater attention on prevention. In anticipation of ACA initiatives, the City must:

1. Integrate the Austin area health care delivery system to match the new law;
2. Develop the appropriate infrastructure to support the new law, including youth care;
3. Insure that the new University of Texas Medical School provides for community economic development and educational services; and
4. The City of Austin health care system must continue to serve Hispanic/Latino patients.

Education

1. Expand successful education programs that are serving the Hispanic/Latino community youth;
2. Work with AISD and community organizations to decrease the Hispanic/Latino dropout rates by 50% over the next four (4) years;
3. Support existing and new culturally specific youth programs in concert with Austin area school districts and community organizations;
4. Allow AISD parents to decide if they wish to opt in their children when military recruiters visit their schools (in other words, parents should explicitly call for the military to engage their children. Otherwise, they are to be left alone). The City should encourage military recruiters to visit all the Austin schools, not just to the predominantly Latino ones;
5. Collaborate with Austin area public school districts to support new and existing culturally relevant early childhood interventions and early childhood education initiatives; and
6. Create apprenticeship programs to train and place at-risk Latino youth in the work force with city departments such as Austin Energy, Libraries, Public Works, etc. Each agency should offer apprenticeships to a group of eight (8) to twelve (12) Latino youth every year starting in 2014. Program success will be measured by the number of placements following completion of the program.

Housing

1. Incentivize the creation of affordable housing of all types, i.e. not just apartments but also town homes and single family homes adequate not only for single people, but large enough to accommodate families;
2. The City of Austin must discourage further destruction of affordable housing units in the city and encourage the construction of affordable housing units throughout the city;
3. Housing affordability means that new reasonably priced housing units must have access to public transportation, health care, schools, and grocery stores, etc., throughout the city;
4. The City of Austin must provide emergency displacement funds for tenants forced to relocate due to forces outside their control and the City must increase the amount of funds to repair affordable homes; and
5. The City of Austin must provide incentives for businesses that deliver services in the areas of health care, food, education, and other areas of need to locate or relocate in economically distressed areas.

Economic Development

1. The City must reach out to ALL Hispanic businesses, regardless of where they are located, so that they can participate in the ACL, F1 races, SXSW and other large-scale City-wide events;
2. Promote an economic tie-in/benefit for Hispanic businesses from these events, which bring in revenue from local, out-of-state and international visitors;
3. Establish a community oversight body to review and approve projects designed by the City Economic Growth and Redevelopment Services Office (ERGSO) to ensure transparency in City-initiated and sponsored economic development projects;
4. The City must fund non-profit community economic development corporations to assist with economic development activities in the Hispanic/Latino community; and
5. Amend the Waller Creek Project Plan to share TIF resources with the ESB MACC and other cultural projects on the project's route.

Cultural Arts

1. The City must complete the second and third stages of the Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center (ESB MACC), including a major parking structure that is now necessary given the redevelopment of the Rainey area;
2. The city must not sell 64 Rainey property and assign it to the ESBMACC;

3. Recognize that the Hispanic Latino community really consists of various communities, including but not limited to the Mexican American, Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Colombian communities;
4. Establish an office of cultural affairs to include but not be limited to community cultural art centers like the ESB MACC;
5. The ESB MACC must not charge building use fees for community groups that share the mission of the ESB MACC; and
6. Place a moratorium on further development around the ESB MACC.