



## **Annual Internal Review**

**This report covers the time period of 7/1/2015 to 6/30/2016**

(This report is covering the transition date to 10-1 and in accordance with Ordinance No. 20141211-204. This report is due July 31, 2016. Please note that this is to be completed by the Chair of the board or commission. While a board action is not required to complete this form, I highly recommend this be a collaborative effort of the board.)

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### **African American Resource Advisory Commission**

**(Official Name of Board or Commission)**

**The Board/Commission mission statement (per the City Code) is:**

*to advise the City Council on issues related to the Quality of Life (QOL) for the City's African American community and recommend programs designed to alleviate any inequities that may confront African Americans in social, economic and vocational pursuits, including: health care; housing, including affordable housing, home ownership and homelessness; entertainment opportunities for professionals and students; employment; and cultural venues, including museums, theaters, art galleries and music venues. The Commission also advises the Council on matters related to the African American Cultural and Heritage Facility and the George Washington Carver Museum and Cultural Center.*

- 1. Describe the board's actions supporting their mission during the previous calendar year. Address all elements of the board's mission statement as provided in the relevant sections of the City Code.**

In support of our mission, during the 2015-16 year the AARAC expanded its membership from seven to fifteen members with added Commissioners representing the Austin Revitalization Authority, the Greater Austin Black Chamber of Commerce, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the Austin Area Urban League. In an effort to ensure the AARAC would effectively serve the African American community and the Council, briefings and extended training sessions were incorporated for

Commissioners into meeting agendas during each meeting held July 2015 – January 2016. Training, the acclamation of new members, ordinance and by-laws discussions along with the selection of officers were completed in 2015 also.

During this year the AARAC submitted to City Council a recommendation in support of the African American Heritage Network and its request for the City Manager and Council to address issues of disparity and inequality which affect African American employees of the City of Austin (20160504-001). The AARAC believes this recommendation and requested action relate directly to the Commission's mission to alleviate inequities that confront African Americans in areas of vocational pursuits and equitability.

The AARAC worked diligently during the year through community input, special called meetings and a designated working group to provide meaningful input to the Council concerning budget requirements for FY2017 that will favorably impact the QOL of African Americans in the City of Austin. The Commission received valuable updates from City Staff, Council Member Houston's office and the community concerning FY16 requests and needs that still require attention in FY2017.

The AARAC supported non-profits and community organizations through briefings and meeting participation in 2016 as these groups collaborated to positively impact the QOL of formerly incarcerated individuals as they confront the many challenges of reentry.

The AARAC engaged the community in briefings and transformational dialogue concerning the historical preservation of East Austin and crucial discussions concerning Rosewood Courts and the needs of its residents.

The AARAC in 2016 recommended and appointed Commission members to represent the AARAC on the Joint Inclusion and Joint Culture Commissions.

The AARAC participated in briefings and community forums regarding the creation of the City of Austin Equity Office and the pending selection and hiring of the Chief Equity Officer. Commissioners continue to be involved in the process concerning this Office.

The AARAC hosted briefings with the Chief Acevedo, the Austin Police Department and the Police Monitor regarding current excessive force policies and officer involved shootings in the City of Austin.

The AARAC continued to receive briefings from the City Demographer concerning the QOL of African Americans in the City of Austin along with population, income and housing trends and concerns.

The AARAC in 2016 received briefings from the African American Cultural Heritage District and the Greater Austin Black Chamber, each of which continued to solidify the collaborative work between the Commission and these entities in order to better serve the African American community.

**2. Determine if the board's actions throughout the year comply with the mission statement.**

*During the 2015-16 calendar year the AARAC's action were compliant with the Commission's Mission Statement. There were months in 2015, July, August and November, when the Commission was unable to meet due to the inability to acquire a quorum. This challenge was directly related to new membership requirements placed on the Commission by the City through amendments made to City Ordinance 20141211-204. There were delays in Commission members being selected and approved, along with the time required to complete initial training.*

**3. List the board's goals and objectives for the new calendar year.**

The goals and objectives of the AARAC for the new calendar year will be focused around three primary areas of concern in the African American community, listed in order of priority. The AARAC will focus its efforts on Health, Education and Criminal Justice issues. Each of these issues is a priority as they correspond with the six pillars upon which the AARAC was founded in 2005; Arts, Culture & Entertainment, Business and Economic Development, Employment & Education, Health, Neighborhood Sustainability and Police & Safety.

Health is the Commission's leading priority because the African American community in the Austin/Travis County area historically has a higher mortality rate in at least four of the seven leading causes of death. African American health disparities indicate that African Americans also have a higher prevalence of cardiovascular disease, are more likely to contract HIV/AIDS and are disproportionately affected by the Sickle Cell disease. The AARAC believes it is a priority in the African American community to address these issues and increase preventive practices in order to save lives.

Education is a priority because it directly affects health disparities, employment and economic opportunities as well as the overall QOL for African Americans. Although education is not a cure for all the inequities in the African American community, it has been proven that education is an essential element in transforming lives and equipping persons to achieve a better standard of living.

Criminal Justice is a priority because the African American community, in Austin/Travis County and around our nation, is disproportionately represented in the criminal justice system. The AARAC believes it is imperative the Commission is involved in reducing the number of African American youth who enter the criminal justice system and helping the formerly incarcerated as they reenter our communities with limited resources and support.

The AARAC's goal is to increase education in the African American community concerning these issues, collaborate with agencies, the City of Austin, the faith community and other resources to increase the number of preventive measures and opportunities available, and to advise the City Council on ways the City of Austin can support and lead in these efforts.