



Immigrant Affairs Committees & Councils

A City Practice Brief

Spring 2009

The national dialogue on immigration and immigrant integration has increased in volume and intensity over the last decade in direct relation with the changing makeup of America's cities and towns. As the issue takes a place at the forefront of public policy debates around the country, mayors and local officials are increasingly seeking new ways of addressing the issue for the betterment of their communities.

Many cities and towns do not have the resources available to create an office dedicated to immigrant issues. Creating a committee, commission, or council focused on immigration and immigrant integration issues is a way for these municipalities to face the growing concerns of their immigrant communities. Filling each of these bodies with volunteers will create opportunities for local community leaders to take a direct role in local government and many will be eager to take part. Establishing a committee, commission, or council is one of the most direct and effective methods for mayors and local officials to work with their communities and promote a spirit of collaboration and understanding with their immigrant populations.

For more examples, visit the City Practice database, online at www.nlc.org→ABOUT CITIES→CITY PRACTICE RESOURCES.

Austin Commission on Immigrant Affairs

City: **Austin, Texas**

Population: 656,562

For more information, contact: Ramey Ko, Chair
(512)571-5729
<http://www.austinimmigrantaffairs.org/>

The Austin Commission of Immigrant Affairs was established in the 1990s. The objectives and functions of the commission include advising the city council on issues of common concern to immigrants, particularly in the areas of health and human services, education, and the demographic make-up of the Austin immigrant community. The commission monitors requirements of federal, state, and local immigration, welfare and other laws that affect immigrants. It also promotes recognition of the contributions of the foreign-born to the economic and cultural vitality of Austin and promotes the availability of and accessibility to local municipal educational, legal, and social resources for immigrants. The commission meets the second Wednesday of every month.

Commission on Hispanic and Latino Affairs

City: **Bloomington, Indiana**

Population: 72,254

For more information, contact: Melissa Britton
Latino Outreach Coordinator
(812) 349-3860
http://bloomington.in.gov/sections/viewSection.php?section_id=374

In 2007, during the tenure of Mayor Mark Kruzan, the Bloomington City Council passed an ordinance that established the Commission on Hispanic and Latino Affairs. The Commission works to alleviate problems Hispanics and Latinos experience in education, health, employment and public safety. It recognizes that opportunities exist to improve social, cultural and economic challenges faced by Hispanic/Latino Communities. Local commissions are instrumental in encouraging the development of programs at the local level that focus on long-range solutions to issues facing Hispanic/Latino residents and bridging cultural gaps. The City of Bloomington is known for its atmosphere of diversity and it is fitting to establish such a commission for the community. All Commission meetings are open to the public.

Commission on African and Immigrant Affairs

City: **Philadelphia, Pennsylvania**

Population: 1,517,550

For more information, contact: Stanley L. Straughter, Chairman
(215) 686-7895
<http://www.africancaribbeanaffairs.org/>

The commission was created in 2005 under the direction of mayor John F. Street. Its main function is to encourage the development and implementation of policies and practices intended to improve conditions affecting the cultural, social, economic, political, educational, health and general well-being of the African and Caribbean immigrants, refugees, and asylees residing in Philadelphia.

Immigrant Rights Commission

City: **San Francisco, California**

Population: 776,733

For more information, contact: Adrienne Pon, Executive Director
(415) 554-7028
http://www.sfgov.org/site/immigrant_index.asp

The mission of the Immigrant Rights Commission is to improve, enhance and preserve the quality of life and civic participation of all immigrants in the City and County of San Francisco. The Commission consists of 15 voting members. Eleven members are appointed by the Board of Supervisors and the Mayor appoints four members. At least eight members should be immigrants to the United States. The term of each member of the commission is two years.

Latino Affairs Commission

City: **South Lake Tahoe, California**

Population: 34,000

For more information, contact: Susan Alessi, City Clerk
(530) 542-6004

The Latino Affairs Commission advises the City Council on any significant problems currently encountered by Latino residents. It works to review the needs of Latino citizens in the South Lake Tahoe Basin and recommends comprehensive goals and objectives for effectively meeting those needs. It also monitors the various services made available to Latino citizens by public

and private agencies and make recommendations to the City Council on how City Government can help ensure effective and efficient delivery of those services. The commission advises the City Council how best to cooperate with local, state, federal and private agencies serving Latino citizens, and assist in the preparation, implementation and review of any regional plan or program designed to serve Latino citizens. It meets every third Monday.

Greater Tulsa Area Hispanic Affairs Commission

City: **Tulsa, Oklahoma**

Population: 393,049

For more information, contact: Joseph Flores, Chair
(918) 607-4924

The Greater Tulsa Area Hispanic Affairs Commission was established in 1979 under Mayor Jim Inhofe and consists of fifteen members of Hispanic extraction, nine of whom are appointed by the Mayor, subject to the confirmation of the Council. Six of the members are appointed by the Board of Tulsa county Commissioners. The Commission acts in an advisory and advocacy capacity to the greater Tulsa area to encourage and promote unity, purpose and understanding among the Hispanic people of the greater Tulsa area. The commission seeks to encourage and promote cooperation between the Hispanic people of the greater Tulsa area and the local, state and federal governments for the general benefit and welfare of the Hispanic people of the greater Tulsa area and assists in making it possible for the Hispanic people of the greater Tulsa area to develop their talents and abilities without limitations; to make recommendations of Hispanic persons for appointment to boards, councils and commissions of the local, state and federal governments; to aid in permitting the Hispanic community to benefit from the fullest realization of its human resources; to encourage a better understanding of the Hispanic people and the Hispanic community; to aid in the preservation of the cultures of the Hispanic people; to assist in the enhancement and promotion of education and opportunity among the Hispanic people; and, otherwise, to promote the general welfare of the Hispanic people of the greater Tulsa area.

Latino Advisory Council

City: **Indianapolis, Indiana**

Population: 791,926

For more information, contact: Carolin Requiz
Director of International and Cultural Affairs
(317) 327-7955

The first Mayor's Commission on Latino Affairs in city's history was established by former Mayor Bart Peterson in February 2000. The new Indianapolis Latino Advisory Council was established by Mayor Greg Ballard in June 2008. The new purpose of this committee is to provide advice and support to the Mayor's Director of international and Cultural Affairs regarding specific issues in the Hispanic community. The Latino Advisory Council was created to focus on three areas: public safety, education, and business. The council consists of ten members, the Director of International and Cultural Affairs also serve as the chairperson of the Latino Advisory Council.

Commission on Latino Community Development

City: **Washington, D.C.**

Population: 572,059

For more information, contact: Ana Elsa Aviles, Chair
(202) 671-2825
<http://ola.dc.gov>

The District of Columbia's Commission on Latino Community Development was created by former Mayor Marion Barry to serve as an advisory board to the Mayor and advocate for the

interests of the Latino communities. The Commission consists of at least 15 members appointed by the Mayor, all of whom are residents of the District of Columbia. The members reflect the demographic, geographic, and ethnic diversity of the different Latino communities within the District. The commission advises on government policies and programs affecting the Latino communities in the District and serves as an advocate for the communities' their needs. It also promotes public awareness of government programs and advises the Mayor and the directors of government departments and agencies on public concerns relating to those programs.

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City Practice Briefs contain examples from NLC's City Practice database, available at www.nlc.org. Series editors: Bruce Calvin and Larry Foxman. For more information contact the NLC Municipal Reference Service at (202) 626-3130 or email mrs@nlc.org.



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