

## Project Summary

Like many other cities, New Haven, Connecticut has recently experienced a rapid growth of its Latino immigrant population. New Haven now has the third largest Latino population in Connecticut. An estimated 10,000-15,000 of New Haven's immigrant population is undocumented.

As the nation waits for Congress and the president to enact immigration reform, New Haven, like other states and localities, has been obliged to respond to the needs of the city's new and rapidly growing immigrant population. It has done so by creating the *Elm City Immigration Project*, a collaboration between the city, faith-based organizations, financial and educational institutions and community members. Through this project, the city has implemented a series of innovative, comprehensive and far-reaching policies and initiatives aimed at strengthening the relationship between the city and its immigrant community while improving public safety. The success of this project has generated national attention, with New Haven being recognized as a model for its welcoming approach to immigrants. Among the initiatives that the city has adopted are the following: 1) Creation of a multi-purpose municipal identification card for all city residents; 2) establishment of an *Office of New Residents* to provide assistance to all new city residents in order to facilitate their integration into the community; 3) implementation of General Order 06-02 by the New Haven Police Department prohibiting law enforcement officers from inquiring about a person's immigration status; (4) increased collaborations to improve immigrant crime reporting and relations with law enforcement; 5) facilitating immigrant access to financial institutions and financial literacy services; and 6) translation of city documents to Spanish.

As a result of this project, new coalitions have been built, public safety has improved; and there has been an increase in communication and participation between immigrant residents, the community and the city. Collaborating partners include the City of New Haven, New Haven Police Department, JUNTA for Progressive Action ("JUNTA"), Unidad Latina en Acción ("ULA"), St. Rose Church, Sovereign Bank, First City Bank and Yale Law School. We believe New Haven's approach has made for a stronger, safer, more harmonious and vibrant city.



## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

*The people have been arriving here for years from Mexico, Guatemala, Jamaica and Ecuador, some staying just a few months, but more settling in for years. The way Mayor DeStefano saw it, there were basically two choices: City officials could look the other way, as if the change were not happening, or they could embrace the transformation, doing whatever was possible to welcome the newcomers. For now, this city is marching toward becoming a safe haven for immigrants – whether they are in the country legally or not....*

The New York Times, “New Haven Welcomes a Booming Population of Immigrants, Legal or Not”, March 5, 2007.

### Background

New Haven is the second largest city in the state of Connecticut, with a population of approximately 124,791.<sup>1</sup> Latinos comprise the fastest growing immigrant population in New Haven and Connecticut, and constitute approximately 24.11% of the population.<sup>2</sup> New Haven now has the third largest Latino population in Connecticut and the seventh largest in the New England states. Between April 2000 and July 2002 alone, there was a 9.8% growth in the Latino population nationwide and a 54% growth in New Haven.<sup>3</sup> This statistic does not account for the dramatic number of undocumented immigrants who have moved into the city over the last few years; estimates place the number of undocumented immigrants at around 10,000-15,000.

Many of the newly arrived residents have settled in Fair Haven, New Haven’s historic port of entry for new immigrants and where Latinos today account for 50.3% of all residents, approximately 3,000-5,000 of whom are undocumented. The immigrant population is disproportionately affected by language and cultural barriers, exploitation and discrimination. Undocumented immigrants in particular are easy victims of scams, workplace abuse and harassment.

While New Haven’s rapid increase in its immigrant population has presented challenges, it has also created opportunities for new types of city-community-institutional relationships. In an effort to adequately respond to the needs of this population, address public safety concerns, encourage community cohesion and strengthen the relationship between the city and the community, the city of New Haven created the *Elm City Immigration Project*, an initiative that was launched in the Spring of 2005. Partners in this initiative have included the City of New Haven, the New Haven Police Department; community based organizations (JUNTA for Progressive Action (“JUNTA”) and Unidad Latina en Acción (“ULA”); financial institutions (Sovereign Bank and First City Bank); faith-based organizations (St. Rose de Lima Church and the Catholic Diocese) and Yale Law School.

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, 2005 available at [http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/ACSSAFFacts?\\_event=ChangeGeoContext&geo\\_id=16000US0952000&\\_geoContext=&\\_street=&\\_county=new+haven&\\_cityTown=new+haven&\\_state=04000US09&\\_zip=&\\_lang=en&\\_sse=on&ActiveGeoDiv=&\\_useEV=&pctxt=fph&pgsl=010&\\_submenuId=factsheet\\_1](http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/ACSSAFFacts?_event=ChangeGeoContext&geo_id=16000US0952000&_geoContext=&_street=&_county=new+haven&_cityTown=new+haven&_state=04000US09&_zip=&_lang=en&_sse=on&ActiveGeoDiv=&_useEV=&pctxt=fph&pgsl=010&_submenuId=factsheet_1)

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

<sup>3</sup> The New York Times, “Hispanic Population is Rising Swiftly, Census Bureau Says”, June 19, 2003.

The genesis of the *Elm City Immigration Project* took place in the Spring of 2005, when a meeting was held among Immigration advocates, faith-based organizations, city officials and immigrant residents of the city to discuss issues facing the immigrant community, including the following:

- **Marginalization.** Immigrants at the meeting discussed a sense of marginalization and disorientation among some of its population based on issues including language and cultural barriers, immigration status, lack of familiarity with the city and its neighborhoods and a lack of knowledge about individual rights and civil liberties. Some of the attendees at the meeting confirmed that they and their peers rarely ventured beyond the Fair Haven neighborhood and most did not know whether or not laws protecting city residents applied to them or what rights if any applied to them.
- **Lack of Access to Services** - Service providers, faith-based organizations and immigrants alike talked about a general lack of understanding by the new immigrants about accessing basic governmental services and information about issues pertaining to civic engagement and government. Providers in particular stressed the inability of community-based organizations to handle the increasing needs of the immigrant community and indicated a need for greater communication with the city.
- **Public Safety Concerns** - Testimonies were shared by immigrants about the types of public safety issues they encountered. Some talked about the rampant problem of underpayment or complete non-payment of wages as well as unsafe work conditions. Many lacked proper identification to enable them to open bank accounts; and because they work primarily in a cash economy, they were frequent targets of crimes (namely robbery and burglaries). Lack of identification and their undocumented status also made them reluctant to report crimes or serve as witnesses. Finally, there was a general reluctance about contacting the police in any situation for fear of deportation and a general distrust of law enforcement.

Faced with these issues, meeting attendees agreed that a plan of action needed to be developed, including policy initiatives for the city to consider implementing. JUNTA and Unidad Latina en Acción worked to develop these initiatives, and solicited the assistance of Yale Law School in order to gauge the legality of the measures that were being considered. A report called “A City to Model” was drafted, and a meeting with the Mayor and city officials was organized. Attendees included representatives from JUNTA, ULA, Yale Law School, St. Rosa de Lima Church and grassroots immigrant leaders as well as Fair Haven community members.

The City of New Haven was presented with the following seven policy initiatives:

- 1) Translation of public information documents into Spanish;
- 2) Developing a New Haven Police Department policy of non-enforcement of federal immigration laws;
- 3) Strengthening the relationship between the police and the immigrant community;
- 4) Enforcing criminal wages through the New Haven Police Department;
- 5) Creating a municipal identification card for residents of the City of New Haven;
- 6) Working with financial institutions to allow customers to open bank accounts without Social Security numbers; and
- 7) Creating an Office of Immigrant Affairs.

At the meeting the Mayor expressed support for the immigrant community in general; made specific inquiries about the policy initiatives presented, and agreed to review the report and consider the initiatives presented. At the mayor's urging, the city began to explore the initiatives in detail and determine their feasibility. By early summer, the city began to lay out the core components of the *Elm City Immigration Project*. The Project was officially launched in the fall of 2005.

### **Project Objectives**

The objectives of the *Elm City Immigration Project* are to protect public safety; improve the relationship between the city of New Haven and the new immigrant community; encourage community cohesion; strengthen relations between the city, the community and its institutions; and ensure that all of the city's residents have easy access to government services and are given every opportunity to lead positive and productive lives. Since the fall of 2005, the city has worked in partnership with community residents, non-profit community-based organizations, financial institutions, and faith-based organizations, the New Haven Police Department and Yale Law School to implement all aspects of this project. Every policy proposal that was presented to the city has been implemented, or is in the process of being implemented. The following is a synopsis of the substance and development of the initiatives since they were presented to the city in 2005:

**Translation of public information documents into Spanish.** Over the course of the summer 2005, the city worked to 1) identify bilingual staff that provide direct services and interact directly with the public (Main Receptionist, Public Advocate, Livable City Initiative Neighborhood Specialists, Chief of Police), and 2) create a list of the types of documents most commonly requested by city residents, subsequently hiring a translator to assist with the translation of these documents into Spanish. Extensive outreach efforts then took place to inform Latino-based and Latino-serving organizations of these efforts. In October, the city held a press conference to announce the launching of the "Hablamos Español" Initiative, aimed at making City Hall more accessible to Spanish speakers. In addition to identifying bilingual (Spanish-English) staff, the Mayor also announced the list of documents available in Spanish, including applications for handicapped-accessible parking, marriage certificates and parking ticket appeals and the posting on its website of all bilingual staff, their language of fluency and the department in which they work.

**Results Measurements** include the implementation of a culturally competent initiative within the city to better serve city residents; an increase in the processing of applications in Spanish; the identification of readily availability bilingual staff to provide direct assistance to Spanish speaking and an increase in the number of immigrants at city hall.

**Strengthening the relationship between the police and the immigrant community.** New Haven has a long and distinguished history in the area of community policing. Because of this, the charge to improve relations between the police and the immigrant community was substantially facilitated. The challenge for the city and its police force then, lay in effectively communicating the city's approach to policing and explaining to the immigrant community the city's then unwritten policy of non-enforcement of immigration laws.

Beginning in the winter of 2005, the City of New Haven, in partnership with JUNTA, ULA, St. Rose de Lima Church and the NHPD, organized a series of dialogues between the immigrant community and the police. Two dialogues were held (both at the St. Rose de Lima Church); both were attended by approximately 300-400 immigrant residents. There was active participation from members of the immigrant community, leading to rich and substantive interactions between the community and the police. As a result of these dialogues, a number of police-community initiatives were created, including the development of measures to encourage crime reporting by immigrant victims, the establishment of mechanisms to increase communications between the police and the immigrant community and the development of bilingual materials about rights education and law enforcement procedures.<sup>4</sup>

**Results Measurements** include an astonishing **18% overall reduction in major crimes in Fair Haven in 2006** (from 2005) AND a concomitant increase in the reporting of crimes by immigrant victims;<sup>5</sup> successful efforts to ensure effective community policing efforts in Fair Haven; successful collaboration between community-based organizations, the NHPD and the immigrant community; the production and wide dissemination of rights education material to community residents.

**Development of a New Haven Police Department Policy of Non-enforcement of Federal Immigration Laws** - The Chief of Police (Francisco Ortiz) and the Sergeant of the Fair Haven substation (Lou Casanova) worked to examine the concept of a general order, engaged in discussions with law enforcement officials around the country and reviewed general orders, ordinances and statutes from other jurisdictions. In partnership with Corporation Counsel, Yale Law School and JUNTA, a draft of a New Haven specific general order was created. In December of 2006, the NHPD officially issued Police General Order 06-02, prohibiting police officers from engaging in immigration enforcement outside of the context of a criminal investigation. The order also called for training and education of law enforcement officers to ensure their knowledgeable of all provisions contained in the order.

Subsequent to the announcement of the order, the City of New Haven, the NHPD, JUNTA and ULA worked to implement a community outreach and education strategy, organizing a series of community dialogues between the Chief of Police, the Mayor, and community residents to discuss the general order. Public education materials were widely distributed and forums explaining the order were also held.

When asked about the effects of the order and targeted community policing efforts in the immigrant community, Sergeant Lou Casanova stated that the impact has been “huge” Immigrants now come to the substation all the time. There is more interaction., more reporting and more enforcement. The reduction in crime in Fair Haven is nothing short of astounding.”

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<sup>4</sup> JUNTA agreed to serve as a site for crime reporting by the immigrant community, and a number of volunteers agreed to assist the police by serving as interpreters and volunteering to assist the immigrant community at the police substation in Fair Haven.

<sup>5</sup> Interview with Sergeant Lou Casanova, Fair Haven Substation, May 2, 2007.

**Results Measurements.** A notable increase in the number of crimes being reported by the immigrant population<sup>6</sup>; a notable increase in the number of interactions between the police and the immigrant community; improved relations between the police and the immigrant community; and increased public safety.

**Enforcing criminal wages through the New Haven Police Department.** Beyond the mandate of improving relations between the police and the NHPD and encouraging victims to report crimes lay another challenge of working to enforce the criminal provisions contained in state laws to prevent exploitation of immigrants in the workplace, including underpayment or non-payment of wages. To that end, in the Spring of 2006, Yale Law School, JUNTA and Sergeant Casanova met to develop an appropriate mechanism to ensure police participation in affirmative enforcement efforts. All three entities now routinely collaborate in wage enforcement cases. As Sergeant Casanova noted, “before 2006 I was not at all involved in issues related to non-enforcement of wages. Today it is a routine part of the work that we do with the immigrant community in the city. In the majority of the cases where we have intervened, the outcome has been immediately successful.”

**Results Measurements** include adequate redress to victims of workplace abuse—approximately thirty (30) individuals have had their cases resolved through direct intervention by the NHPD; effective enforcement or criminal provisions of state laws to protect workers; successful collaborations between the NHPD, JUNTA, Yale Law School and the immigrant community..

**Creating a Municipal Identification Card for Residents of the City of New Haven** - After carefully exploring the concept of a resident identification card, the city agreed to develop a program to create multi-purpose resident identification cards for all residents, irrespective of their immigration status. The card will contain basic information about the person (name, address, date of birth) and will have a photograph of the resident. In addition to serving as identification cards *per se*, the cards will also serve as library cards; will facilitate access to the public beaches (free of charge), the public golf course (reduced fee); the recycling center (free of charge); and will include a *Parcxmart* debit feature that will allow residents to load money on the card to be used at parking meters, garages and approximately 50 participating merchant stores. The children’s version of the card will offer parents the option of including emergency contact information.<sup>7</sup> The plan is expected to be implemented in early July of 2007.<sup>8</sup>

**Results Measurements** that are expected include increased public safety as a result of 1) increased crime reporting by victims and witnesses without proper identification; 2) the facilitation of access to bank accounts for residents who don’t currently possess acceptable identification cards; 3) improved child safety for children who may get lost or are otherwise in

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<sup>6</sup> Then New Haven Police Department did not keep track of reporting on the basis of a person’s immigration status. However, during an interview with Sergeant Lou Casanova of the Fair Haven Substation, he stated that the increase in reporting in the immigrant community has been “huge...nothing short of outstanding.” Interview with Lou Casanova, May 2, 2007.

<sup>7</sup> Among the security features that the card will contain is a tamper proof holographic overlay and UV script.

<sup>8</sup> Collaborating partners in this endeavor are the *First City Bank*, JUNTA, ULA, and Yale Law School.

danger; 4) increased access for residents to city services; and 5) increased economic development for merchants participating in the Parcsmart program

### **Working with Financial Institutions to Allow Customers to Open Bank Accounts -**

In partnership with JUNTA, the City of New Haven has been engaging in discussions with local financial institutions to improve immigrant access to bank accounts. As a result of these efforts, Sovereign Bank (with a branch in Fair Haven) agreed to change their identification requirements in order to accept the Mexican Consular identification card as a sole form of identification to open a bank account. JUNTA, in turn, began to collaborate with the bank to offer financial literacy training to community residents. Most recently, the city has engaged in a direct partnership with *First City Bank* to develop a curriculum for low income and immigrant residents of the city focusing on facilitating access to financial institutions; engaging in comprehensive financial literacy training and ensuring culturally competent services are offered to city residents, including the immigrant population.

**Results Measurements** include a marked increase in the number of immigrants opening bank accounts at Sovereign Bank; an increase in public safety resulting from a decrease in the number of immigrants carrying cash on their person or storing it in their homes as evidenced by an 18% reduction in crimes in Fair Haven; an increase in financial literacy knowledge among low income and immigrant residents (approximately sixty-five (65) residents have taken part in classes over the course of a year)..

**Creation of an Office of Immigrant Affairs -** The city is currently in the process of creating an *Office of New Residents* with a mission to provide bilingual services to city residents in need of orientation, direct assistance, referral and general information; to engage in culturally relevant forms of outreach and assistance to immigrants in becoming familiar with the city's services, programs and opportunities; and to shape the integration of immigrants into civic life and their participation in the economic, social and cultural spheres. The office will be located in a prominent location in the main entrance to City Hall. It is expected that this office will be officially opened this summer of 2007.

**Results Measurements** include an increase in knowledge among new city residents of available city and community services; an increase in civic participation among immigrants; facilitation of access for immigrants to city services; facilitation of communication and participation between immigrant residents, community organizations representing immigrant constituencies, and the city; increased individual and systemic advocacy by the city on behalf of immigrants and city residents.

**Funding -** Staffing for all of these initiatives has been provided by the City of New Haven. The only initiative requiring significant resources has been the creation of the municipal identification program, for which the city secured private funding from the First City Bank Corporation.

### **CONCLUSION**

New Haven is a city of immigrants. This city – indeed the entire nation, is composed largely of immigrants, and their struggles and victories have come to define our identity. As one looks back

at this nation's immigration history, we find that immigrants today are similar to those of centuries ago, with patterns of struggle, hostility and resistance on the one side; and resiliency, tenacity and triumph on the other.

Immigrants continue to enrich our communities, transforming the social, economic and cultural landscape of cities. New Haven's approach to immigration is pragmatic, drawing on lessons learned from history. The City of New Haven recognizes the tremendous contributions that immigrants make as part of our community, and we will continue to provide opportunities that support and encourage their efforts as citizens in our city.



*“New Haven understands that citizens themselves benefit when all residents feel they have a stake and are not pariahs. A place is far better off when people want to come to it than if they are fleeing in fear, and when practical solutions take precedence over mean-spirited solutions.”*  
Michelle Wucker, op-ed contributor “A Safe Haven in New Haven, New York Times, April 15, 2007.