

MUNICIPAL INNOVATIONS IN IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION

INDIANAPOLIS MODEL, 2000-2007

American Cities Series

*Ricardo Gambetta
Aida Ashouri*

edited by Jamie Durana



“No city can thrive if the community is divided along the lines of ethnicity. The Mayor’s Commission on Latino Affairs was an important piece in the effort to help newly-arrived Latino Immigrants to integrate into the mainstream community. I’m very proud that during our term MCOLA was able to develop and implement successful programs and initiatives in the areas of business development, public safety, city services, recreation, education, art, culture among others.

The MCOLA members were a very diverse group of community volunteers who worked on the front lines, directly dealing with the newest residents of our community’ and they were able to share with local government the steps to be taken to ensure the successful integration of new arrivals in the Indianapolis community.”

Bart Peterson

Former Mayor of Indianapolis (2000-2007)

-August 10, 2009-

About Municipal Action for Immigrant Integration

Municipal Action for Immigrant Integration (MAII) is a project in NLC’s Center for Research and Innovation. The primary goal of the project is to promote civic engagement and naturalization among immigrant communities in cities and towns across the US. MAII is designed to be a resource for NLC members, fostering a knowledge-sharing network to help cities learn from the successes and mistakes of their counterparts across the country.

About the National League of Cities

The National League of Cities is the nation’s oldest and largest organization devoted to strengthening and promoting cities as centers of opportunity, leadership and governance. NLC is a resource and advocate for more 1,600 member cities and the 49 state municipal leagues, representing 19,000 cities and towns and more than 218 million Americans.

Through its Center for Research and Innovation, NLC provides an applied think tank capacity by developing, conducting, and reporting research on issues affecting cities and towns.

MUNICIPAL INNOVATIONS IN IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION

INDIANAPOLIS MODEL, 2000-2007

American Cities Series

*Ricardo Gambetta
Aida Ashouri*

edited by Jamie Durana



Foreword

When the National League of Cities established the Municipal Action for Immigrant Integration (MAII) project, we were aware that a federal issue such as immigration brings special challenges to local communities. During the past year, MAII has been working with mayors and other local officials to address the immigration issues affecting cities and towns across the country. While we found that many local governments have recognized the importance of reaching out to immigrant communities and have established good working relationships with their new neighbors, other communities have found the transition more difficult and are looking for resources and successful models used by other local governments. Even the communities enjoying success are looking for new ideas to incorporate that will better ensure success of immigrant communities.

As part of our Municipal Action for Immigrant Integration Initiative, we are launching a new series of reports entitled: Municipal Innovations in Immigrant Integration (American Cities Series). This first issue is focused on the “Indianapolis Model, 2000-2007.”

Prior to joining NLC, I served as the director of Latino affairs for the City of Indianapolis and then-Mayor Bart Peterson. This report brings back many great memories and while we were not able to resolve all the challenges, I believe our team made real progress in assisting the immigrant community. Specifically, we worked to improve the quality of life of our new residents; to open city services to the growing immigrant population; to improve the relationship between law enforcement and new immigrant residents; to encourage the growth of our immigrant business community; to support and strengthen our immigrant organizations; and to open, expand and improve the relationship between City Hall and the local immigrant population. Thanks to this comprehensive approach we were able to build a strong foundation for the future.

I want to thank former Mayor Bart Peterson for his vision and strong leadership in the area of immigrant integration during those eight years. I also want to thank all the city officials, members of the Mayor’s Commission on Latino Affairs and the many volunteers, community partners and sponsors. Thanks to their efforts and support, we were able to develop and implement all the successful programs and initiatives described in this report.

This first report is dedicated to all our American mayors and local officials. I am hopeful that this series of NLC reports will provide inspiration, new ideas and successful practices that can be replicated in local communities across the country.

Sincerely,

Ricardo Gambetta

Manager,

Immigrant Integration, Inclusive Communities Programs

Center for Research and Innovation

National League of Cities

Introduction

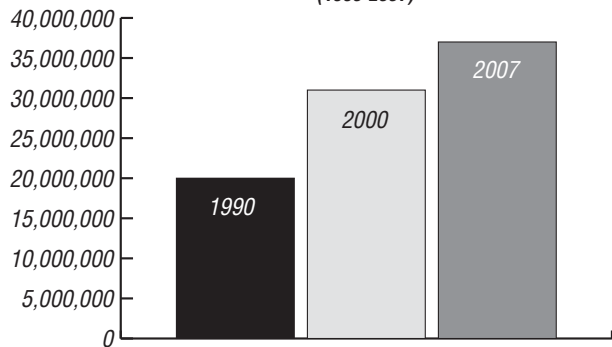
In the 1990s and first half of the present decade, there was a significant increase in immigration in the United States. Municipal governments were faced with the challenge of developing policies to address the changing demographics of their communities. Between 1990 and 2000, the City of Indianapolis faced a staggering increase of its Latino population — almost 300 percent (see fig. 2). The city established a commission to engage the growing Latino immigrant community under the leadership of Mayor Bart Peterson. This commission — the Mayor’s Commission on Latino Affairs — served as an advisory panel to Mayor Peterson and developed programming to integrate the Latino community. Mayor Peterson and his staff made reaching out to the immigrant community, and immigrant integration, a priority in his administration.

This report focuses on the initiatives the City of Indianapolis developed during the Peterson administration. First, we describe some of the programs and campaigns that the city employed, then we identify the important role ethnic media played and then finally we address the potential to apply principles employed in Indianapolis to other cities across the country.

The Peterson administration was recognized for its diversity. In order to maintain a cohesive community and gain the greatest benefit from diversity, ensuring immigrants and minorities are integrated rather than isolated is critical. The actions of the mayor and his staff resulted in a city that experienced boosts in business and international trade; innovative programming to address public safety; and a festival that drew a diverse crowd of thousands annually.

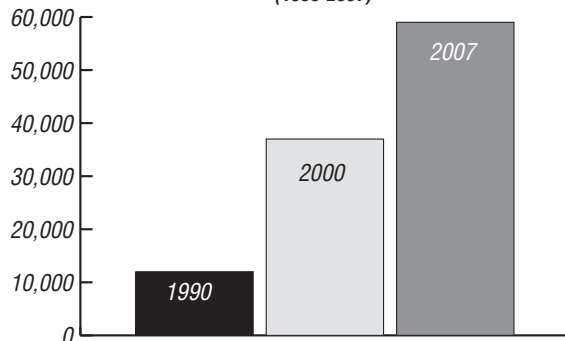
Figure 1

**Foreign-born population, United States
(1990-2007)**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 1990, Census 2000 and US Census Bureau, 2007 American Community Survey.

**Foreign-born population, Indianapolis
(1990-2007)**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 1990, Census 2000 and U.S. Census Bureau, 2007 American Community Survey.

Timeline, Figure 2

- 1990 According to the census, 8,450 Hispanics were living in the city: 4,525 were Mexicans, 1,027 Puerto Ricans, 324 Cubans and 2,574 South Americans.
- 2000 According to the census, the total Hispanic population was 33,450, 64 percent Mexican and the rest from South America, Central America and the Caribbean region.
- 2000 Mayor Bart Peterson established the first Mayor's Commission on Latino Affairs and appointed the first Director of Latino Affairs.
- 2000 Karen Celestino-Horseman was elected the first Hispanic to the City-County Council of Indianapolis-Marion County.
- 2002 According to a census update, the Hispanic population in Indianapolis was 36,705.
- 2002 After a year of negotiations, the government of Mexico selected Indianapolis as the location for its new consular office in the Midwest. Consul Sergio Aguilera was designated Consul General of Mexico in Indianapolis.
- 2002 The Consulate of Mexico opened in Indianapolis, becoming the first international diplomatic delegation in the city.
- 2003 According to census updates, the local Hispanic population rose to 41,326, with nearly 300 percent growth from 1990 to 2000.
- 2003 Indianapolis had the sixth-highest growth rate in the US among its Hispanic population.
- 2004 The Indianapolis Hispanic Chamber of Commerce joined the Greater Indianapolis Chamber of Commerce and became the Hispanic Business Council.
- 2005 Mayor Peterson led the first Mayoral Business Delegation to Mexico in the city's history.
- 2006 Ricardo Rivera was elected the first Hispanic Judge of the Small Claims Court and Jose Salinas was elected the first Hispanic Judge of the Superior Court in Indianapolis.
- 2006 More than 20,000 people marched across the streets of Indianapolis in favor of Immigration reform, the largest march in the city's history.
- 2006 The Immigrant Welcome Center was established.
- 2007 The sixth Mayor's Latino Forum reached a record number of attendees, with more than 14,000 participants.
- 2007 According to census projections and local demographic reports, more than 120,000 Hispanics became residents of Indianapolis.

Establish a Commission

The Mayor's Commission on Latino Affairs (MCOLA) was officially announced on February 11, 2000, at a press conference at the Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art in Indianapolis. On August 1, 2000, Mayor Bart Peterson signed Executive Order No. 9, formally establishing MCOLA. The executive order acknowledged the barriers that existed between the Latino immigrant community and the broader community and the detrimental effect these barriers could have on the quality of life of all residents.

MCOLA was an advisory panel for the mayor that also worked to increase understanding between the general public and the Latino immigrant community and promote their access to city services. MCOLA developed plans for programming and fundraising that were implemented by the Mayor's Office on Latino Affairs. When MCOLA was established, it consisted of 15 members and a director of Latino affairs, a new position in the mayor's office. Its mission was to "promote the Latino community by working to enhance and sustain the quality of life for Latino families and individuals; by removing conditions causing exclusion from the larger community; and by working to sustain the cultural roots and diversity of the Latino nationalities of Indianapolis and Marion County."¹

MCOLA ultimately grew to include 20 members. Due to the high turnover, there was an opportunity for diverse representation from the community and MCOLA members were drawn from diverse backgrounds². Additionally, MCOLA was governed by two co-chairs, one female and one male. Commissioners, who served one-year terms, were appointed by the mayor and reported directly to him as unpaid volunteers. Members often continued on to appointments to other city boards and commissions after concluding their work with MCOLA.

¹ City of Indianapolis, "Executive Order No. 9, 2000: Establishment of the Mayor's Commission on Latino Affairs," (August 1, 2000), http://www.indy.gov/eGov/City/CorpCounsel/Documents/EO_9_2000.pdf.

² Martha Pabon (former MCOLA co-chair), interview via telephone with National League of Cities, June 23, 2009.

Improve Public Safety and Community Relations

Public safety is a matter of concern for both residents and city officials, yet lack of communication and misperceptions can impede the effectiveness of public safety efforts. It is often difficult to establish trust between the immigrant community and local law enforcement agencies when mutual understanding and open lines of communication are not in place. Lack of trust can lead to underreporting of crime and avoidance of police assistance. Therefore, language and cultural competency training is critical.

The city's foreign-born population more than doubled in the 1990s and this significant increase contributed to communication problems between the police and the immigrant community.³ The change in population brought the city face-to-face with an issue for which it was unprepared — Latino gangs. City officials recognized this problem and engaged the police force in an educational campaign and cooperation with Central American authorities and U.S. Law enforcement agencies.

Diversity and Representation

To ensure that positive relations exist between local law enforcement and immigrant communities, law enforcement agency hiring practices should reflect the diversity of the community. In 2002, the first Latino police liaison was appointed. The responsibilities of the liaison included working closely with the community on issues of crime prevention and CrimeWatch — an effort to educate residents about the importance of reporting crime; working regularly with MCOLA and others to help improve communications at every level; coordinating with Indianapolis Police Department (IPD) media relations for press conferences and news releases; and reaching out to Latino media. The first Latino police recruiter was also appointed to improve the status of representation of the immigrant community in the police force. A Latino Citizens Police Academy was created, and the first Indianapolis Fire Department (IFD) Latino spokesperson and first bilingual IPD spokesperson were appointed. In 2000, the IPD had only one Latino police officer, and by the end of 2007 there were more than a dozen Latino police officers.

Bridging the Gap: Reaching Out to the Community

To bridge the language and cultural gap between the immigrant community and the local police, mandatory Spanish language and cultural competency training were established at the police academy. English to Spanish language translation software was developed for use in the field. Designed to be used in patrol car laptops, the software allowed responding officers to communicate with Spanish-speaking citizens through a series of drop-down menus. Officers were also encouraged to use the program to memorize key Spanish phrases during their downtime.

The mayor's office and MCOLA developed a communications plan, which included regular appearances by the mayor, mayoral staff and the chief of police in local Latino media outlets.

Other efforts to work directly with the immigrant community included assigning a Latino detective to work cases within the Latino immigrant community, developing crime and fire prevention programs targeting the immigrant community and expanding a bike unit to support an increase in police presence in the Latino communities.

³ Living Cities: The National Community Development Initiative and The Brookings Institution Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy, Indianapolis in Focus: A Profile from Census 2000 (Washington, D.C.: Living Cities and The Brookings Institution, 2003).

The office of the mayor and MCOLA worked together with the Indianapolis Police Department to produce a series of initiatives addressing public safety in Indianapolis:

- *Mexican I.D. Card.* Lack of valid identification prevents many immigrants from engaging in various activities, such as opening a bank account. It can also leave them vulnerable to theft and robbery. The Mexican Consulate in Indianapolis, which opened in 2002, began issuing an identification card known as a matricula consular, or consular card, to assist the local Mexican immigrant community. Sixty-four percent of the immigrant community in Indianapolis is Mexican. The consular cards, which identify the holder as a Mexican national living abroad, helped Mexican immigrants conduct routine business with banks and the city government. The I.D. card also helps bridge the communication gap between Mexican residents and law enforcement, fire and emergency responders, and health care professionals. The consular cards can also help boost the local economy by helping cardholders open savings accounts and purchase goods from local companies and vendors, which previously would not have been possible without acceptable identification.
- *International cooperation.* During Mayor Peterson's tenure, addressing Latino gang activity became an important issue for the city. Gang members in Indianapolis were primarily affiliated with Latino gangs from the Southwest and West Coast regions of the U.S.⁴ Gang activity in Indianapolis included a range of criminal activities, from vandalism to drug trafficking. In response to this new and developing public safety threat, the mayor's office and MCOLA arranged a visit to Honduras to participate in a training program led by the minister of security and his team. During the program, IPD officers were educated about managing the threat of violent gangs in their city. Following this trip, in 2005, MCOLA provided funding for a delegation of experts from Honduras to visit Indianapolis to provide additional training for local police. The delegation also participated in MCOLA-organized community events with representatives of the immigrant community, the public school system and Latino media. The following year, a similar training opportunity allowed IPD officers to shadow the Gang Intervention Partnership Unit of the Metropolitan Police Department in Washington, D.C.

The mayor's office and the chief of police arranged a police training mission to Chile later in 2005 in coordination with General Alberto Cienfuegos, the general director of the chief of uniformed Chilean police. The trip was funded through support from non-profit organizations and the business community in Indianapolis. During the trip, IPD officers received training in Spanish language and cultural competence. Similar training opportunities were extended to the Indianapolis Fire Department in an effort to improve relations with the Latino and immigrant communities.

- *Campaign against crime.* The campaign against crime in the Latino community featured programs on local television aimed at the Spanish-speaking community⁵. The campaign was the first of its kind in the city and garnered recognition from the National Latino Peace Officers Association. In response to crimes going unreported, a 24-hour Spanish language crime hotline was established. Callers could leave messages in English or Spanish and could either remain anonymous or leave a name and call-back number. Print and television advertisements were used to promote the hotline, including a print advertisement that featured a Spanish slogan: "Luchemos juntos contra el crimen" (Let's fight crime together).

⁴ Indianapolis Police Department, "Hispanic Street Gangs," (bulletin, January 26, 2005).

⁵ Roberto Ponce (Ponce Publicidad), interview via telephone with National League of Cities, July 7, 2009.

A television series called, “Conversation with the Community: Public Safety in Indianapolis” was produced to educate the community about public safety issues. The 30-minute long program aired monthly and covered topics such as: Mayor Peterson’s Crime Package Plan; a discussion panel on local and national crime issues; recommendations from the Mayor’s Crime Prevention Task Force; the police merger; the criminal justice system; crime prevention; community policing; and other topics such as local government reform efforts and city services.

Due to their fear of immigration authorities, undocumented immigrants tend to not report hate crimes. In response to the unreported violence and prejudice between Latinos and other ethnic and racial communities, the issue of race relations was a focus of the mayor’s office. Soon after taking office, the mayor organized the first race relations summit in the city’s history with the participation of several hundred representatives from immigrant organizations, the private and non-profit sectors, the public school system and local government.

- *Latino media campaign against drinking and driving.* Due to high rates of alcohol-related auto accidents and DUI arrests among Latino men, the mayor’s office instituted the Latino DUI Educational Campaign, a joint effort between MCOLA and the Governor’s Council on Impaired and Dangerous Driving (GCIDD). MCOLA partnered with the GCIDD to develop the campaign, which focused on educating the immigrant community about the effects and consequences of driving under the influence of alcohol, as well as impaired driving laws and the consequences of violating them. This initiative became a pilot program for other cities in Indiana with sizeable Latino communities, such as Fort Wayne.

The theme of the campaign centered around the family and used images of those who may be affected by impaired driving, such as a crying child or a grieving woman, to illustrate the severe consequences of impaired driving. The campaign included media outreach through television, radio and billboard advertising, as well as grassroots components. The planning and development of this campaign also included leaders in the Latino community.

- *Raising awareness about child safety.* The Hispanic Public Service Campaign on Child Safety was developed with the cooperation of a local advertising firm and featured Latino moms as champions of the protection of their families. The campaign was designed to educate the Latino community in Indianapolis about the importance of utilizing appropriate child restraints and the consequences of failing to do so. As part of the campaign, State Farm Insurance donated car seats and conducted clinics to teach parents how to install them in their cars. The campaign included a 60-second radio PSA titled “Rebeca” that aired on two Spanish-language radio stations in Indianapolis. “Rebeca” was also featured in California and North Carolina.

Provide Access to City Services

City services can be taken for granted by most residents, but can be difficult to maneuver for newly arrived immigrants. Services such as trash collection or activities like filing for taxes are not necessarily clearly understood by newcomers. Therefore it becomes critical for the city to inform new residents about city services and attempt to bridge any gaps, especially when it comes to crucial issues like emergency preparedness.

The City of Indianapolis recognized these needs and took the first steps by mandating the translation of city documents into Spanish and other languages. City employees also received cultural competency training and Spanish language classes. Continuing with the inclusion of Spanish in city services, a bilingual customer service center was established, in addition to an international telephone line with translation for languages spoken within the immigrant community.

Diversity within municipal government is equally important to addressing needs of the immigrant community. Seeing staff that reflect the diversity of the city can help immigrants feel welcomed. Having access to employees who reflect the interest of the immigrant community encourages them to be active in the city. The city began an internal effort to hire qualified minorities and Spanish-speaking employees. These efforts led to a record number of Latinos being appointed to the city boards and commissions.

Certain outreach efforts were designed to inform the immigrant community about city services:

- *ESL program.* Researchers at the Center for Urban Policy and the Environment completed a study of Latinos in Central Indiana and found that estimates of the number of Latino immigrants who speak only Spanish ranged from 23 to 44 percent.⁶ These researchers found significant need for programs to help Latinos improve their English skills.⁷ In 2000, Indianapolis began its first televised English as a Second Language (ESL) program with the “Crossroads Café/Indianapolis,” which aired from 2000 to 2003. This was a joint project between WCTY/Channel 16, MCOLA and various local schools that included original tutorials, live discussions between teachers and students and information on civics and American culture.⁸
- *Public transportation.* IndyGo, the public transportation service in Indianapolis, developed a bilingual campaign that was focused on educating the immigrant community about public transportation. The campaign covered topics like how to ride the bus and buying bus tickets, and provided bilingual maps and brochures, Spanish-language training for drivers and customer service staff, a bilingual customer service phone line, hiring of bilingual personnel and community outreach. In addition to the television, radio and print advertising, IndyGo and MCOLA produced a short video presentation that was presented at community meetings and local public schools.
- *Tax preparation.* Free bilingual tax preparation was provided by La Plaza Inc., a community organization, and an information hotline was created to respond to any inquiries about filing taxes. Information about the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) was spread through television and radio announcements on Spanish language stations.⁹

6 Laura Littlepage, *Emerging Issues in Education: Latino Population Boom Impacts Indianapolis* (Indianapolis, IN: Center for Urban Policy and the Environment, Indiana University, 2006).

7 *Ibid.*

8 National League of Cities, “Indianapolis Launches Television Series,” *Nation’s Cities Weekly*, September 11, 2000.

9 City of Indianapolis, “MCOLA/GIPC to launch new tax preparation television campaign in the Hispanic Community,” (press release, March 12, 2007), <http://www.indy.gov/eGov/Mayor/PR/2007/3/.../2007312i.aspx>.

- *Emergency preparedness.* “Operation Eagle” was a city run emergency preparedness campaign specially designed for the immigrant community. The campaign utilized television, radio and print media to provide information about natural disasters, terrorist attacks, and flu pandemics. “Operation Eagle” was a grassroots effort that included local immigrant organizations, faith-based organizations and religious assemblies.
- *Public Works.* The Department of Public Works (DPW) plan included a translation of city regulations and trash collection information into Spanish, and several local beautification and graffiti clean-up efforts that involved volunteers from the immigrant community.¹⁰ The clean-up efforts provided the city with an opportunity to spread information about the DPW.¹¹
- *Public Health.* MCOLA responded to the healthcare needs of the immigrant community by compiling a list of policy recommendations after a series of community meetings with immigrants, health department staff, local doctors, insurance company representatives, health advocates and representatives from local hospitals. The majority of the recommendations were implemented, and one in particular, regarding the provision of cultural competency training and translation services to the immigrant community, had a significant impact.¹²

Immigrant Welcome Center

In 2006, the Immigrant Welcome Center was established in Indianapolis with the goal of connecting new immigrants with access to services such as ESL classes, job training and health care. The Center’s work hinges on its use of Natural Helpers — established immigrants drawn from the community. After participating in a training course, these volunteers assist newcomers in acclimating to their new community and provide camaraderie through the transition. Natural Helpers continue to grow in their roles through involvement in relevant workshops and training sessions.

Amy Minick Peterson, former first lady of Indianapolis, was the driving force behind the establishment of the Center. Members of the Greater Indianapolis Progress Committee (GIPC) and Mrs. Peterson conducted research on the needs of the city’s immigrant population in order to establish the Welcome Center. Today the center serves as a resource for not only new immigrants, but other organizations and city agencies.

Immigrant Welcome Center website, <http://www.immigrantwelcomecenter.org/history.html>

¹⁰ Some of these initiatives were done in collaboration with Keep Indianapolis Beautiful Inc., We Care Neighborhood Association and the Department of Public Works.

¹¹ Pamela Taylor, “Mainstream community: Helping Latinos integrate Indianapolis,” NUVO Newsweekly, September 14, 2005.

¹² Wishard Health Services, “Wishard Health Services Offers Tools to Access Healthcare,” (news release, May 9, 2006), <http://www.wishard.edu/162.html>.

Foster Business and Community Development

During 2000 to 2004, Indianapolis had the fifth-highest rate of Latino population growth of any metropolitan area in the United States.¹³ As a result, building wealth in the Latino immigrant community became a priority issue.

While the city supported MCOLA's activities, private sources of funding were essential to the success of MCOLA programs due to limited availability of municipal funds. Using funds provided through foundations, the business sector, charities, and community was also found to be more effective than obligatory solutions by the city¹⁴.

Efforts to promote business development in the immigrant community were funded through private and public initiatives:

- *Strengthening Mexico-U.S. trade relations in Indianapolis.* The Mayoral Business Mission to Mexico was organized by the Consulate of Mexico in partnership with the Mayor's Office and with the support of the U.S. Department of Commerce and the U.S. Embassy in Mexico. The week-long mission, which took place in September 2005, involved members of the business community, academics and city officials in an effort to expand international trade and business.

During the visit the delegation met with top Mexican officials, the president of the U.S.-Mexico Chamber of Commerce and top Mexican business executives. The mayor and his staff met with the Mexican President's chief of staff, the Minister of Economy and Finance, the Minister of Energy, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mexican Congressional leaders, the deputy mayor of Mexico City, U.S. Ambassador Tony Garza, and representatives from the Mexican media. The mayor and his staff raised private funds to cover the expenses of the trip.

- *Indianapolis Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprise Program.* This initiative created an environment that promoted meaningful business opportunities for minority- and women-owned businesses. The program built productive partnerships and improved the success and integration of minority- and women-owned firms. Started by Mayor Peterson, the program improved the method of certification for such businesses and included those certified on the city's "certified vendor list." During the certification process, business owners were taught about topics such as information on boards and articles of incorporation. Between 2000 and 2006, the number of certified minority- and women-owned businesses in the city increased from 260 to more than 600.¹⁵
- *Latino Business Initiative.* With the construction of the Indianapolis International Airport came the Latino Business Initiative. The mayor requested that minority-owned businesses be included in the airport construction project. MCOLA worked with consultants to help facilitate the integration of minority-owned businesses into the project. The initiative helped integrate Latino business owners into the community and spurred other minority- and Latino-owned business¹⁶.

¹³ John Clark, "Connecting Mexico and the Hoosier Heartland: Ten Principles for Clear and Innovative Thinking about Immigration in Indiana," (Indianapolis, IN: Sagamore Institute for Policy Research, 2006).

¹⁴ Juan Gonzalez (former MCOLA co-chair), interview via telephone with National League of Cities, June 30, 2009.

¹⁵ Municipal Action to Reduce Poverty, National League of Cities, Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprise Program: Indianapolis, IN, (Washington, DC: National League of Cities, 2006).

¹⁶ Roberto Curci (Latinus Group), interview via telephone with National League of Cities, July 6, 2009.

- *Guide for Latino business-owners.*¹⁷ MCOLA and the Greater Indianapolis Chamber of Commerce developed a guide for small business-owners in the Latino community. The guide features information on legal aspects on how to open a business; banking and financial education; insurance; minority business certification; bidding for city contracts; support for small businesses; and local resources. It was published in English and Spanish.
- *Neighborhood beautification outreach.* MCOLA and Keep Indianapolis Beautiful, Inc. (KIB) organized a public awareness campaign for the Latino community in October 2004.¹⁸ Spanish-language television, radio and print advertisements were created in cooperation with consultants in order to raise awareness about the environmental and aesthetic benefits of trees, such as providing green spaces, attracting businesses and increasing property values¹⁹. The campaign included a tree-planting program. Before the KIB campaign, significant outreach had not been done in the Latino community about the environment. KIB hired a bilingual employee in an effort to help establish connections within the Latino community.²⁰

Beginning in 2003, MCOLA held Annual Neighborhood Beautification and Graffiti Removal Days. These clean-up days initially focused on the city's West side, but ultimately grew to include neighborhoods across Indianapolis. The Department of Public Works supported this MCOLA effort with staff and vehicles.

¹⁷ The Immigrant Business Guide can be downloaded at <http://www.indychamber.com/pdf/HBCSmallBizGuide.pdf>.

¹⁸ Keep Indianapolis Beautiful, Inc., Fall Volunteer Newsletter, (September 2004), http://www.kibi.org/pdfs/fall04_cal.pdf.

¹⁹ Keep America Beautiful, Inc., 2004 Annual Review, http://www.kab.org/site/DocServer/2004_annual_review.pdf.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

Develop Opportunities for Recreation and Learning About Arts and Culture

Access to public parks and cultural events can serve as a keystone when building a bridge between the immigrant and broader communities. As with other city services, new immigrants may be unaware that such spaces and opportunities are available and may not take advantage of many of the public sources of recreation. This matter was successfully addressed in Indianapolis following a report prepared by Latinus Group, a local consulting company. As a result, the city was able to implement a plan to help the immigrant community become more engaged in city-wide recreational and cultural activities.

The Mayor's Latino Forum

The Mayor's Latino Forum, or Latino Fest as it later came to be called, was an annual event that became a focal point for convening Latinos from all over the region. It was also an opportunity for those outside the immigrant community to become familiar with a new culture. The Latino Fest provided a venue for sports events, including: the Mayor's Soccer Cup; a concert; a fireworks show; and a health fair²¹. The health fair offered free dental exams, mammograms and immunizations. This was an opportunity for the immigrant community to take advantage of free health services and for the city to connect with the community. Additionally, there were workshops, a small book fair and an education and college fair.

Indy Parks Immigrant Outreach Plan

It became noticeable that the Latino community was taking advantage of certain portions of the public parks, but avoiding others. This prompted an investigation regarding the use of local park facilities by Latinos. The city funded this investigation through a private grant, obtained in part due to the efforts of MCOLA and Indy Parks, the Indianapolis department of parks and recreation. Latinus Group was hired to help the City of Indianapolis and the parks department to understand the factors that affected the usage of the Indy parks facilities and programs by the Latino community. The subsequent report, *Indy Parks and Recreation: Latino/Hispanic Usage Report*, included a set of policy recommendations for the city to follow. Indy Parks used these recommendations to revise its services and programs for the growing Latino immigrant community.

Some of the changes this report brought about included bilingual English-Spanish signage in parks; a bilingual customer service telephone line and website; provision of programs geared toward the Latino community; and ensuring that the Indy Parks staff is representative of the overall diversity of the community.²² By the end of 2007, a second report was developed by a different private consultancy with the purpose of evaluating the initial phase of the Indy Parks Immigrant Outreach Plan. The second report included a survey and interviews with city staff and community leaders. The report concluded that most of the policy recommendations and programs had been successfully implemented.

21 Martha Pabon (former MCOLA co-chair), interview via telephone with National League of Cities, June 23, 2009.

22 Latinus Group Enterprise Facilitators, *Indy Parks and Recreation: Latino/Hispanic Usage Report* (Indianapolis, Ind.: Latinus Group, 2004).

Sample Findings and Recommendations

- **FINDING:** Indy Parks materials were available only in English, restricting availability of information.
 - **Recommendation:** Establish communication with the Latino community via Spanish-language media to ensure that information is accessible.
- **FINDING:** Many in the Latino community — particularly immigrants — are likely to have multiple jobs and irregular work schedules, making it difficult for them to make use of Indy Parks facilities during regular hours of operation.
 - **Recommendation:** Develop flexibility in operation hours and dedicate some facilities to be available 24 hours a day to help to attract Latino patrons.

Source: Latinus Group Enterprise Facilitators, *Indy Parks and Recreation: Latino/Hispanic Usage Report* (Indianapolis, Ind.: Latinus Group, 2004).

Maximize the Effect of Media Campaigns

Soon after Mayor Peterson took office, a team of city officials was assembled to develop a comprehensive external and internal communications and media plan to reach out to the Latino immigrant community. Objectives of the plan were to:

- Establish relations with Latino community leaders and media organizations;
- Advise public information officers and other city communications staff about public media campaigns involving the Latino immigrant population;
- Give presentations at community events before Latino businesses and organizations and in the Latino media;
- Coordinate staff participation in relevant events;
- Give cultural competency training to media and communications staff;
- Plan regular mayoral press roundtables; and
- Appoint a director of Latino affairs as official spokesperson for the mayor's office in the Latino media²³.

A weekly television program called "Ask the Mayor" was aired on a local Spanish-language network. "Ask the Mayor" featured the mayor and senior city officials during the regular local newscast. Input from the community was welcomed as viewers were able to call in with questions or concerns for response from the mayor's office²⁴. The mayor and his staff were also regular guests on various live Spanish-language talk shows on local radio stations. These are examples of open communication between the mayor's office and the community. MCOLA produced monthly televised public service announcements about city services, its activities and upcoming events on the local government television station. MCOLA's meetings were televised, airing on both the local government television and Spanish-language stations.

Open lines of communication between the Latino media and mayor's office allowed the mayor's office to reach the city's Latino community with information about decisions and activities. The Latino media, in turn, was able to act as a catalyst, prompting the mayor's office to act on community matters, such as poor living conditions in an apartment complex that was home to many Latino residents²⁵.

Based on the relationship between ethnic media outlets and the mayor's office in Indianapolis, the following are suggestions for city officials preparing to implement media campaigns targeting their immigrant communities:

- Develop relationships with leaders at local ethnic media outlets;
- Prepare bilingual materials (city services brochures, city websites, etc.);
- Use photographs as much as possible to improve the impact of print media;
- Ensure that materials and media events are culturally sensitive;
- Take advantage of all media formats (i.e. television, radio, print and online media) to reach the largest possible audience;
- Organize regular mayoral roundtables and press conferences with members of the local ethnic media;
- Consider the appointment of bilingual public information officers; and
- Include ethnic media outlets in regular media events and activities, not only those geared toward immigrant communities.

²³ The Director of Latino Affairs also served as the mayor's communications adviser on matters relating to ethnic media.

²⁴ Marco Dominguez (Indyvision TV), interview via telephone with National League of Cities, June 25, 2009.

²⁵ Marco Dominguez (Indyvision TV), interview with National League of Cities, July 20, 2009.

Conclusion: Learning from the Indianapolis Model

The immigrant integration efforts undertaken in Indianapolis successfully engaged the Latino immigrant community. Activities described in this report helped satisfy the need for improved access to city services, recognized Latinos as part of a broader community and reassured the immigrant community that it had an ally in the city²⁶. Other results included a better relationship between law enforcement and the Latino immigrant community²⁷ and forged connections between communities.

Many of the programs and campaigns developed by MCOLA were “firsts” in Indianapolis, demonstrating the importance that motivation plays. Although there was an initial backlash around some of MCOLA’s activities from certain parts of the community, a willingness to engage diverse groups garnered support for Mayor Peterson’s administration.

The success of MCOLA’s activities speaks to the potential influence of municipal immigrant affairs commissions and offices and for comprehensive approaches²⁸. The commission benefited from a diverse group of talent, bringing together expertise from various sectors, such as the financial, political and healthcare communities. Members also had diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds. This diversity allowed for strong programming and representative interests.

Room for improvement

- Since MCOLA’s activities were not all covered in the city budget, funding was secured through sponsorships and partnerships. This meant that programs were dependent upon outside sources of funding if they were to be improved or expanded. In the absence of full funding, a dedicated fundraising staff or other improved fundraising efforts would have helped to ensure a stable budget.
- The mayor’s office primarily worked with the Latino immigrant community, but could have been more inclusive to effectively integrate other immigrant communities.
- Although MCOLA’s programs were mostly successful, attempting to accomplish too many things at once and addressing multiple concerns can dilute results²⁹. Therefore it may have helped the effectiveness of programs if they focused on fewer initiatives.

Lessons for developing municipal-level immigrant integration initiatives include:

COMMUNICATION

- Open lines of communication and different methods for the immigrant community to communicate with the city can be a key tool.
- Bilingual spokespeople can help bridge gaps and encourage immigrant communities to develop trust in city agencies.
- Public educational media campaigns can be effective to spread targeted messages.

PUBLIC SAFETY

- Maintaining a proactive rather than reactive approach is critical; Indianapolis would have been more prepared to combat criminal gang activity had the problem been recognized sooner.

²⁶ Felipe Martínez (former MCOLA commissioner), interview via telephone with National League of Cities, June 22, 2009.

²⁷ Ricardo Parra, (former MCOLA commissioner), interview via telephone with National League of Cities, June 24, 2009.

²⁸ For more information, see Ricardo Gambetta and Daniel Cisneros. *Mayoral Immigrant and Latino Affairs Offices* (Washington, D.C.: National League of Cities, 2009) and Ricardo Gambetta and Daniel Cisneros. *Immigrant Affairs Committees and Councils* (Washington, D.C.: National League of Cities, 2009).

²⁹ Robert Curci (Latinus Group), interview with National League of Cities, July 6, 2009.

- Reaching out to the immigrant community can help improve crime reporting. Additionally, providing a channel for non-English speakers to report crime anonymously is a useful tool.
- Representation of the city's diversity in its staff is important and hiring members of the immigrant community allows for trust and openness.
- It is important to learn from other cities and towns — in the U.S. and abroad — that may have more knowledge or experience. For example, when Indianapolis tackled gangs and reached out to Washington, D.C., and Honduras for assistance.

ETHNIC MEDIA

- Working with ethnic media outlets allows a city to widen its audience for announcements and campaigns. Ethnic media allows immigrants to retain cultural connections and provides a source for news when access to the internet may be absent or there are language barriers. The ethnic media was a key factor for reaching out to the Latino community in Indianapolis.
- Explore other media options besides television. In Indianapolis, radio and bilingual newspapers were seen as an important way to reach out to the Latino community³⁰.

COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

- Develop opportunities for the community to come together with a common purpose or interest. Activities sponsored by MCOLA ranged from graffiti cleanup to a book festival to a college fair. These events strengthened the importance of family, educated the community about art and culture and gave children tools to succeed and the idea that it was possible for them to attend college³¹.
- Public works projects, like graffiti clean-up and community tree-planting events increase property values and beautify neighborhoods.
- Advertise city activities in the immigrant community. Newcomers may not have experience with public services or have knowledge of their use.

³⁰ Rafael Bravo (radio talk show host), interview via telephone with National League of Cities, June 23, 2009.

³¹ Angela Adams (former MCOLA commissioner), interview via telephone with National League of Cities, June 22, 2009.

Ricardo Gambetta

Ricardo Gambetta is the manager for immigrant integration and inclusive communities programs at the National League of Cities. He previously served as the mayor's director of Latino affairs and executive director of the Mayor's Commission on Latino Affairs (2000-2007) in Indianapolis. He was a member of the mayor-elect's transition team and is a former commissioner of the Indiana Governor's Commission on Hispanic Affairs. He holds a BA in political science from University Garcilaso. Gambetta has participated in extensive trainings in the areas of political and municipal management and immigration policy in the U.S., Canada, Latin America and Europe. Recently, he was a special guest lecturer at the Institute of Politics at Harvard University and the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington, D.C.

Aida Ashouri

Aida Ashouri is an intern for the Municipal Action for Immigrant Integration project at the National League of Cities. She was a fellow at the Church World Service immigration and refugee program and an advocacy intern with Migrants Rights International. Ashouri holds a MA in international affairs from The George Washington University and a BA in international studies from the University of California, Irvine.

Jamie Durana

Jamie Durana is a program associate for the inclusive communities program at the National League of Cities. She was previously a research intern at the Migration Policy Institute in Washington, D.C. Durana holds a MA in nationalism and identity from University College London and a BA in government and politics from the University of Maryland.



National League of Cities

Municipal Action for Immigrant Integration

1301 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW | Washington, D.C. 20004 | www.nlc.org