



Immigrant Integration Task force Meeting

February 27, 2014

Room 267

MINUTES

Attendance:

Task force Members: Diego Anselmo, Audrea Caesar, Monica Colin, Ellen Dubin, Steven Garfinkel, Stefan Latorre, Thanh-Thu Luong, Marianne Lyall-Knusel, Victoria Manning, Amy Michelone, Tin Nguyen, Jennifer Pearsall, Jennifer Roberts, Robert Shore, Kim Vazquez, Sam Wazan, Curt White, Lacey Williams, Emily Zimmern

City Staff: Ashley Duggins, Jessica Goddard, Alexis Gordon, Krystal King, Brad Richardson

Absent: John Chen, Mariana DeLuca, Daniel Hernandez, Anika Khan, Wil Russell, Kristin Wade

1. Welcome

Ms. Gordon called the meeting to order at 3:11pm. Mr. Latorre (Chair) introduced himself and Ms. Zimmern (Vice-Chair).

2. Background and Charge

Mr. Latorre reviewed the PowerPoint presentation (see Appendix A) outlining the beginnings of the creation of the Immigrant Integration Task Force (“Task Force”) and its charges given by City Council. Task Force members are appointed for one year, and the group will meet regularly and report their findings to City Council at the completion of that year.

3. Introduction of Task Force Members

Ms. Zimmern asked the Task Force members to introduce themselves and express what they are most looking forward to about working on the Task Force. After all the Task Force members introduced themselves, Mr. Latorre acknowledged Brad Richardson (Manager, Economic Development), Nancy Carter (Chair, Charlotte International Cabinet), Wayne Cooper (Honorary Consul to Mexico), David Howard (Council Member, At-Large), and John Autry (Council Member, District 5), who were in attendance.

Councilman Howard explained how he had been inspired to sponsor the resolution that created the Task Force because of a meeting he was invited to by the Mexican Consul General. He expressed the importance of Charlotte taking care of its immigrant populations before the city can expect to become a true destination for foreign economic development. He noted that Charlotte is the only city with a Task Force with a charge like this, and that other cities will be looking to Charlotte as an example.

4. Immigrants in Charlotte: A Statistical and Spatial Overview

Ms. Zimmern explained that before delving into the study of immigrant integration, it is important for the Task Force members to have accurate information about the growing diversity of Charlotte's communities, such as who immigrants in Charlotte are and where they live. She introduced Dr. Owen Furuseth and Dr. Heather Smith, Professors in UNC Charlotte's Geography Department, who presented a PowerPoint on "Immigrants in Charlotte: A Statistical and Spatial Overview" (see Appendix B).

Dr. Smith explained that, according to the U.S. Census Bureau ("Census"), the U.S.'s population growth between 2005 and 2050 will be greater than other industrialized countries, with 82% of that growth being immigrants and their descendants. The foreign-born populations that will have the largest growth in the U.S. are from Mexico, India, Philippines, China, Vietnam, El Salvador, and Korea. Over the last 30 years, Charlotte has become an "immigrant destination," transforming from Old South to New South.

The classic immigrant settlement model identifies "Gateway Cities," such as New York, Chicago, and San Francisco, as key immigrant entry points. These cities typically have major waterways, which facilitate the movement of people and goods. In this model, immigrants settle in the poorest and least desirable neighborhoods; closer to the city center, where more job opportunities can be found; and pre-existing immigrant communities are located. This type of settlement leads to ethnic enclaves, such as a Chinatown or Little Italy.

Charlotte, however, has not followed the traditional immigrant settlement model. Instead, Charlotte is considered one of the 21st century immigrant gateway cities, which are characterized by rapid growth, new economies, interior locations (no major waterways), little or no immigration traditions, and immigrants settling in suburban locations. This results in highly dispersed immigrant populations with no traditional ethnic enclaves.

Why has Charlotte risen as a new immigrant gateway? Dr. Smith outlined three reasons: Charlotte has a growing economy that presents a need for workers across the occupational spectrum; Charlotte has a landscape of opportunity, where entrepreneurship is encouraged and year-round employment is available; and Charlotte is welcoming, largely due to its inexperience and history with immigration, resulting in less prejudice towards immigrants.

According to the Census' 2010-2012 data, 13.6% of Mecklenburg County was foreign-born. Of these, only 32.2% had received their U.S. citizenship. While over 50% of these immigrants entered the U.S. before 2000, a high percentage immigrated to the U.S. even

during the economic recession in the late 2000's. Over half of the immigrants came from Latin America, with just over one-quarter coming from Asia.

The stereotypical image of immigrants being poor is not necessarily true in Mecklenburg County. For the same 2010-2012 period, in Mecklenburg County the median immigrant household income was \$54,417, which was nearly equal to the median U.S.-born household income of \$56,602. More than 55% of immigrant households had an income (including benefits) of over \$35,000. At nearly 27%, the majority of Mecklenburg County's immigrants hold occupations in management, business, and the sciences and arts, which are viewed as "white collar" occupations. The next highest occupation was the service industry, which encompassed all levels (high and low). The typical "blue collar" jobs, such as production, transportation, and material moving occupations, had the lowest percentage of immigrant workers – only 14.5%.

The next two slides covering the metrics affecting immigrant receptivity and quality of life included citizenship, languages spoken at home, education level, mean household income, and occupation, and home and automobile ownership. The numbers in red signified the populations that are most at risk, while the numbers in green signified the populations least at risk.

The last five slides contained maps of Mecklenburg County's foreign-born population in 2012. One map showed the total number of foreign-born in the county, and the other four maps showed the foreign-born populations from Latin America, Asia, Africa, and Europe, respectively. Of note is that on each of the maps the center of Charlotte always showed a very low concentration of immigrants, no matter which ethnicity. These maps are useful in determining where there may be a disconnect between where services are located and where immigrants live, particularly those who may not have access to transportation.

In response to the question of whether maps have been created for previous decades and whether there has been a shift in immigrant populations, Dr. Furueth said that since the 1970s the immigrant population has been spreading outwards from the center city. He added that he can produce the maps for each decade and provide them to the Task Force.

Mr. Wazan asked in which populations Middle Easterners were represented in these maps. Dr. Furueth replied that Middle Easterners are mostly included with the Asian immigrants, but some may also be accounted for in the European and African immigrant populations. He added that the data is taken from the Census and largely depends on what people self-report.

Ms. Caesar inquired if the foreign-born population maps could be overlaid with income data for specific areas in the county. Dr. Furueth responded that the Census data is divided into "tracks" and that it would be possible to compare the ethnic make-up and income levels reported for each Census track in Mecklenburg County.

Dr. Furueth was asked how commercial data could be included. He acknowledged that it was a challenge to link this type of data to specific immigrant groups, and that while this

data can be tied to census tracks, there is no quantifiable data and only inferences can be made.

Ms. Luong inquired if data for specific ethnic groups was available in addition to the data for groups that encompass whole continents (for example, instead of Asians as a whole, separating out data for East Asians, Indians, etc.), considering that each community or group has a different immigration history. Dr. Furuseh responded that the purpose of today's presentation was to provide a general overview, but that he has studied this and does have the data, which he offered to provide.

In closing, Dr. Smith and Dr. Furuseh explained that, historically, the southern U.S. has seen the lowest immigrant populations, until 25 to 30 years ago. This is largely because of segregation and that the South was, in large part, poorer than other regions. Dr. Furuseh expressed his excitement about the Task Force, saying that this is Charlotte's chance to get immigrant integration right.

5. Reflection on Charlotte's International Community

Ms. Zimmern asked the Task Force to individually answer the following three reflection questions on the sheet of paper provided:

- 1) How does this information reinforce your thinking about the work of the Task Force?
- 2) How does this information change your thinking about the work of the Task Force?
- 3) What do you want to learn more about?

Next, Ms. Zimmern divided the members into three groups to discuss their thoughts on the presentation in regards to the Task Force's charge by City Council. Each group shared what topic generated the most interest during their discussions. The first group reported that the topic of eliminating barriers – to transportation, education, understanding of local laws – generated the most interest. The second group explained that they mainly discussed and questioned what the Task Force's charge is and what the next steps are. They also said that they wished to share immigrant success stories. The third group expressed their interest in studying immigrants across all spectrums, including social and faith aspects, and not just socio-economic aspects.

6. Calendar Outline and Closing

Mr. Latorre thanked everyone for their input. He explained that the Task Force will be meeting on the fourth Thursday of every month, and that there will be a reflection at every meeting to capture feedback from the members. The next few meetings will be used to bring information to the Task Force on "Promising Practices" from peer cities and leading organizations, such as today's presentation from Dr. Furuseh and Dr. Smith. Community Listening Sessions will be held in April, May, and June in varying locations in order to gather data and feedback directly from immigrants. These meetings will be in addition to the monthly Task Force meeting and members are expected to attend at least one of them. A community survey will be released in the spring. In the summer, sub-committees will be

formed based on City Council's charges and the feedback from the Community Listening Sessions and sub-committee meetings will take place. The sub-committees will report on their findings and the Task Force will begin prioritizing its recommendations in the fall. In the winter, the Task Force will review the survey feedback and compile a report. The Task Force is expected to present its findings and recommendations to City Council one year from the date of the first meeting (today).

Mr. Latorre then asked the Task Force for their feedback on this first meeting. Jennifer Roberts asked what the scope of the Task Force is and how far ahead their recommendations should be looking (i.e., 1, 5, 10 years down the road). Ms. Gordon responded that City Council is leaving it up to the Task Force to decide based on the community feedback they receive. The Task Force can make a combination of recommendations and prioritize those that they deem to be critical.

Noting that the Task Force is made up of both city and county representatives, Ms. Roberts also asked if the Task Force's recommendations should be limited to or focus on just City services or extend to Mecklenburg County. Ms. Zimmern replied that since City Council's charge is local, the Task Force should focus on studying what the City of Charlotte can do for the integration of immigrants, while keeping in mind that this will still affect the broader Mecklenburg community. Ms. Roberts suggested that the Task Force consider including recommendations that can be extended to the county and school system should there be interest in doing so.

Mr. Wazan asked about the possibility of getting a copy of the 2007 report by the Mayor's Immigration Study Commission and Ms. Gordon explained that the report is available on the Office of International Relations' website. He also asked when the sub-committees will be formed and what topics and tasks they will be covering. Ms. Gordon explained that this is not yet known and the Task Force will determine this based on its discussions and the community feedback. Mr. Wazan commented that his personal mission is to inspire immigrants to reach out and be self-motivated to adapt to Charlotte.

Mr. Latorre noted that the question he is asked most deals with the Task Force's scope. The Task Force was not created to advocate for immigration reform. Its scope is to evaluate the needs of all immigrants, whether documented or undocumented, and provide recommendations to help all immigrants. Mayor's Kinsey's goal was for all immigrants to feel at home in Charlotte, which is why she signed Charlotte on to the Welcoming Cities movement.

When asked by an audience member why the Task Force is not focusing on immigration reform, Ms. Zimmern responded that this is not the charge given by City Council, whose concern is about serving all immigrants, no matter who or where they are. Immigration reform cannot be changed at the local level, so there is no reason to focus on it.

Ms. Williams pointed out that many people on the Task Force work with undocumented immigrants, which makes their task paradoxical. She asserted that this topic is the "elephant in the room," pointing out that while the city wants to be welcoming to all, there is still this dirty part (the policies against the undocumented immigrants). Ms. Gordon

responded that City Council did not assume that this would be an easy conversation. Mr. Nguyen agreed with Ms. Williams, adding that in the absence of reform, the Task Force can still address specific issues such as transportation, policing, education, and more. Ms. Roberts commented that they will need to prioritize topics but not avoid tough questions.

Ms. Dubin mentioned that “Cities of Migration” has webinars that might be useful for the Task Force and Ms. Zimmern asked Ms. Gordon to send this information out to the members. Ms. Zimmern acknowledged that everyone has personal feelings about immigration reform, but that the Task Force will have to remember to operate within the charges given. She noted that there are three things that will result in the Task Force being successful: having the right people at the table, obtaining good data, and having a healthy process. These processes will be mapped out at the next meeting, which will need to be a collective effort by everyone on the Task Force.

Ms. Gordon directed the Task Force members’ attention to their packets, explaining that these contain a Task Force member contact list, copy of the City Council resolution, and welcome letter from the Chair and Vice-Chair. She asked the members to send her their contact information if they had not done so already. She welcomed them to reach out to her if they want to discuss something in more detail.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:20pm.

Session 1: Reflections on Immigrants in Charlotte: A Statistical and Spatial Overview

1. How does this information reinforce your thinking about the work of the Task Force?
 - a. I was hoping to develop a wide (diverse) range of community viewpoints and connections to learn more about health disparities—I believe this will be the case. We have a highly diverse (professionally speaking) group.
 - b. I expected the results that I heard today. The breakdown by ethnic group (Latino, African, European, etc.) was precisely what I would have expected. Since the majority of our immigrant population is from Latin America, I would expect a significant 90%our efforts would be dedicated to this group.
 - c. Complex issues probably require complex approaches. Overall 2 approaches- Information to non-American born community; Information to American born community
 - d. Is this a county-wide issue or concentrated in certain areas of the county? People are coming—why? We must be doing something right. How does the current immigration debate impact this migration?
 - e. There are a lot of new immigrants in need of assimilation.
 - f. Reinforces my belief that the city must reach out to all foreign-based populations to improve service provision.
 - g. Nontraditional also means disconnected means people can be cut off from services. We have got to find a way to connect folks.
 - h. Immigrant communities live in suburban settings, are incredibly diverse and old models of immigrant integration don't apply in new immigrant gateway cities.
 - i. Immigrants have tendency to cluster. While the percentage of whites are reduced according to the Bar Chart on pg 4, upon visual inspection it seems that the numbers might be the same. (Purple Areas) The formation of our Task Force is inclusive, that we are intentional about immigrants, past the judge's personal comment, "Meet your neighbor. Vote."
 - j. It is very useful to know more about the way immigrants live in Charlotte in order to address their needs in a better way. The Task Force will help to achieve a better understanding
 - k. This confirms what I saw as a teacher in the 1990s in Charlotte and what I see now as an administrator providing services to immigrants at a district level. We do have an opportunity to be intentional and proactive.

- l. The metrics affecting immigrant receptivity and quality of life really reinforce the importance of this task force. Seeing how different immigrant groups are negatively impacted.
 - m. The presentation reflects exactly where our ESL classes are the largest and we keep wait lists. It is important to build partnerships in these areas to further serve immigrants.
 - n. Living in Charlotte since 1993, I noticed the change of the ethnic landscape and it corresponded with the data presented today. I started seeing more Latinos, Asians, Africans, etc coming into my parent's growing store and seeing new businesses pop up around Central and South Blvd. Because of the 21st century immigration model, there is much more room for racism and nativism.
 - o. Reinforces awareness of the scope of the need. Also points out need to educate general public about trends and scope of changes in our community.
 - p. The Task Force is important because we have such a large immigrant population. Want them and us to thrive. Quality of life and equality are basic human rights. It will also benefit our economy if we care.
 - q. It reiterates that we need a collaborative approach addressing immigrant issues due to the complexity and diversity of immigrant groups.
2. How does this information change your thinking about the work of the Task Force?
- a. My thinking has not changed but I believe my Administration's thinking will be changed when I report back. I can see a broader opportunity for the entire MCHD to reach out to the community.
 - b. I was surprised by the dispersed population information. It appears we would need to grow our efforts pretty much city wide.
 - c. Possibly target older US and more recent immigrants of variety of socio-economic group.
 - d. Does not change my thinking only strengthens my desire to improve services and foster engagement of this growing *vital community.
 - e. Most of the big future growth will be Mexican children citizens
 - f. Gives me a new perspective about the importance of establishing our own precedent here in Charlotte as a welcoming city. So that we can attract more immigrants from around the country.
 - g. It doesn't, just reinforces.

- h. The occupational and income aren't poor and disadvantaged. How do we change the broader community's perception?
 - i. The information enlightened me. I am more aware of trends than I was prior to receiving the overview. Thank you. I feel/think that with this information, I have to raise my level of awareness to more encompassing factors in communal living, not be fixated only on a group. I understand some of factors that play into immigrant clusters.
 - j. It changes my thinking in a very positive way. If this continues and works out it will be a total success.
 - k. The Latin American population seems to be most at risk. Do we want to focus the work around supporting specific populations?
 - l. It does provide more concrete numbers in order for us to move forward.
 - m. I am intrigued with the Northern area of Mecklenburg County.
 - n. It doesn't really change my thinking.
 - o. Not sure it has.
 - p. We need more public awareness about the benefits of immigrant populations vs. always hearing negatives.
 - q. I realized that there are more immigrant groups than are traditionally focused on in Charlotte.
3. What do you want to learn more about?
- a. How can MCHD be of help to deliver the services needed—for a more narrow view than my previous statements—for Environmental Health and for the broader picture of eliminating health disparities.
 - b. The basic needs of the less advantaged immigrant population and the efforts best directed to that group. Also, what can we do to benefit the largest number of immigrants in need?
 - c. Other than recommendations, are we to do any marketing? What is/are the next steps with the year end results of the Task Force recommendations?
 - d. What are the needs of this community? Who represents them? Who currently serves them?
 - e. How many are illegal?

- f. What non-profit resources are located in the foreign-born areas? What are the places of trust for non-Hispanic foreign born populations?
- g. Connections between immigrant populations, poverty and policing practices
- h. Breakdown within different ethnic communities.
- i. I wish crime rates were raised as well. I wish we have more specifics with vocational trends of immigrants to perhaps leverage strengths for open needs driving prosperity. I wish we can determine how faith is a factor in demanding clusters or shaping enclaves in the city. I wish we have more information or data regarding the compositions of Middle Easterners of various faiths (Hardened groups that need our attention)
- j. The way immigrants have integrated into this society and what their way of life is like in Charlotte. Best practices to carry out in other cities of North Carolina.
- k. What metrics does the city currently track and review (immigrant economic and engagement data)? What differences do we see between first and second generation immigrants in Charlotte? Are second generation populations more engaged or successful? How can this work impact academic success for immigrants (i.e. graduation rates)?
- l. The breakdown of each of the categories because they are very broad and general, policies and laws that prevent immigrants from integrating in Charlotte, and the quality of life for immigrants.
- m. Understanding educational levels of immigrants to know how services should be presented and what services need to be expanded. Organizing focus groups comprised of immigrants for feedback. More needs assessments.
- n. Legal scope, health disparities, access to healthcare, transportation access (huge issue), overlay of socioeconomic status, schools with concentrations of immigrants, correlation with academic performance, small businesses owned by immigrants (locations, trends, economic impact), participation in workforce (specific to industries as well—more detail if possible), impact of immigration law enforcement.
- o. I want to learn more about specific groups of immigrants and refugees rather than generally speaking about them, for example: Vietnamese, Cambodian, (illegible), Honduran, Bosnian, Syrian
- p. Feedback from community itself—survey? What are gaps in services for immigrants? What is going well in our community in terms of immigrant perspective? How do immigrants currently access services; what are the barriers? What are other communities doing?

- q. Areas where we have immigrants with similar backgrounds but different cultures with similar needs that we group our efforts.