

Latino Dialogo *in Texas*

Exploring Latino issues in Urban Planning

Report

February 15, 2008

Department of Architecture and Urban Planning

College of Architecture

Texas A&M University

Edited by
Cecilia Giusti, PhD
Miriam Olivares, MS

Disclaimer: The points of view in this document do not represent the institutions involved. They represent solely the views of the Dialogo participants as they were expressed during the one-day event.

NOTE FROM THE EDITORS

It is our pleasure to make public the results of the First Latino Dialogo in Texas. Our objective here is to present the variety and depth of the discussion that resulted from this one-day event.

As in any compilation, this document cannot duplicate neither the vitality of the discussion, nor the enthusiasm that participants brought to the event. For those who came and expressed their ideas, we want to personally express our sincere gratitude. Without their active participation this event would not have been possible. They came from all over Texas with the sole objective of making a contribution towards better communities where Latinos can actually be involved as equal players.

The Dialogo participants are the actual contributors for this report. Our mission, as editors, has been to assemble the wealth of ideas into one document that hopefully mirrors the intention of the participants and shows the many ideas proposed. This document can be used as a reference for practitioners and researchers, and can contribute in improving quality of life in our communities.

We would like to thank several people and institutions for their support in making this event become a reality. Texas A&M University has showed its commitment to support diversity by increasing diversity and making it a priority in their long term objectives. We are personally thankful for their strong support. We credit the Latinos and Planning Division of the American Planning Association for having had the vision to start Dialogos around the country and for supporting the efforts of Texas organizers to continue with their long term vision.

We also want to thank Forster Ndubisi for his personal encouragement, as well as Jesus Hinojosa, Jorge Vanegas, Charles Graham, Tom Reagan, Karan Watson, Tito Guerrero, Tom Wilkinson, Ed Garza, Emil Moncivais, Leonardo Vazquez, Vicky Carrasco, Juan Villa, Martin Zimmermann, Jason Schubert, Elsie Echeverri-Carroll, Carl Ford, Sonia Garcia, Marlynn May, Robin Abrams, Edward Murguia and Michael Neuman.

We were fortunate to receive the support of many master and doctoral students who offered their time to volunteer as proceedings editor. Special thanks to Dolores Gonzales who, as the event coordinator, took care of numerous details, such as registration, travel and food arrangements, to achieve a successful event.

Organizing the Dialogo took many hours away from our families, we want to express our personal thanks to them.

Cecilia Giusti, Editor

Miriam Olivares, Co-Editor

Overall Discussion and Summary of the First Texas Dialogo

EVENT SUMMARY

The First Latino Dialogo in Texas was held at the Texas A&M University, campus College Station on February 15, 2008. The Texas Dialogo gathered 110 participants from all over Texas, representing a multidisciplinary and much diverse assembly in terms of expertise, nationality, and affiliation. This resulted in a rich discussion on the many issues affecting Latinos and communities in Texas, with the overall aim of contributing to the development of a local and national agenda of the American Planning Association APA Latinos and Planning Division.

This first Dialogo in Texas is part of an overall effort of the American Planning Association APA – Latinos and Planning Division (LPD). Other dialogos have been organized in different parts of the country with the objective of defining, from the bottom-up, a national agenda for Latinos and Planning in the country. We sincerely hope that the discussion held during this one-day event resulted in a substantive contribution to this national effort.

In order to assure broad participation, a steering committee was formed with representatives from Texas A&M [Department of Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning (LAUP), the College of Architecture (COA), the Center for Housing and Urban Development (CHUD)], the City of College Station, the City of Bryan, and the Brazos Valley Council of Governments.

The Dialogo started with the welcoming remarks from representatives from these organizations: first, Dr. Forster Ndubisi, Head of the Department of LAUP; then Professor Tom Regan, Dean of the COA, and Dr. Jerry Strawser, Interim Executive Vice President and Provost of Texas A&M University; they were followed by Mr. Emil Moncivais, on behalf of the President of the APA, and by Ms. Vicky Carrasco, national Co-chair of the APA-Latinos and Planning Division. Finally, Dr. Cecilia Giusti, Chair of the event, started the full-day Dialogo encouraging the active participation of all attendees.

All morning discussions focused on the most pressing needs and challenges facing Latinos and communities in Texas. Predefined themes (surveys were sent prior to the Dialogo) were discussed in a roundtable setting. Each roundtable had one facilitator (researcher or practitioner) and one proceedings editor (TAMU graduate student volunteer) who assisted in taking notes and summarizing the discussion. .

At noon, the keynote speaker, Mr. Ed Garza, former Major of San Antonio, a distinguished graduate from Texas A&M COA, and a Latino with much knowledge on planning and development issues, addressed the participants with a stimulating presentation. Mr. Garza narrated his personal experience and presented an inspiring vision on how to enhance Latino communities with better planning.

The afternoon plenary session focused on the issues facing Latino planners in Texas. Each roundtable presented their list of "top 10" issues affecting communities in Texas and participants discussed how to address them. The final session was led by Ms. Carrasco and TAMU Professor Emeritus Jesus Hinojosa and resulted in a lively discussion—an open "dialogo"—among participants. This forum allowed all participants to share their ideas, concerns, and made practical suggestions, in an inclusive environment. The event was officially closed by Dr. Karan Watson, Dean of Faculties and Associate Provost of Texas A&M University, ending with a reception and the Aggie Mariachi Band.

Dr. Giusti was the main facilitator throughout the day and Ms. Miriam Olivares, co-chair of the Dialogo, assisted participants and volunteers in order to ensure the success of the event. Participants suggested having similar Dialogos in other regions of the state.

The main consensus was the need to establish an inclusive agenda, incorporating a culture that may be embraced by local communities. Participation and capacity building issues were found to be key elements in promoting better communities. The Planning community needs to be better informed and more involved in finding new methods to incorporate the views of Latinos in its planning efforts. It was a common theme to search for creative ways to achieve a better integration of new ideas, styles, and family values into current planning practices.

An official website for the Dialogo is found at http://archone.tamu.edu/conted/Dialogo/Dialogo_Home.html

ABC-40 News covered the event during the morning sessions and during the reception. You may access the story at <http://www.abc40.com/Global/story.asp?s=7881376>. The Dialogo was also reported in The Eagle, the local newspaper.

Overall Discussion Summary of the First Texas Dialogo

DISCUSSION SUMMARY

This report shows in detail, the discussion, proposals, and exchange of ideas that this one-day event generated. The nine roundtable discussion topics –education, economics, transportation, health, social issues, building capacity, urban issues, land use and the environment- were chosen by the participants who voluntarily responded to a survey when they registered for the event. While these topics do not exactly match those from the Latinos and Planning (LAP) division current National Agenda -as they were formulated after previous Dialogos around the country-, many similarities were found, as will be presented in this report.

Texas is large and diverse, and Latinos are the largest minority. The consensus among all participants was first, and foremost, the need for higher levels of participation of Latinos in the planning process. This issue actually mirrors one of the priorities of the LAP National Agenda, which states the importance of increasing the number of Latinos participating in the planning process in their communities. Participation in the planning process was viewed from two perspectives: first, the participation of Latino citizens to get more involved in the planning of their communities, and second, as the participation of Latino planners as professionals in these communities. In both areas, the consensus was that participation is lacking, and the main focus of the discussion was to find ways to improve participation.

Overall, the Dialogo in Texas also agreed on the need to improve the perception communities have about Latinos and the perception Latinos have about their own capacity to influence and shape their communities. One evident observation was the relatively small number of Latino planners in Texas, and the urgent need to increase the awareness of the profession among Latino citizens. Another element often mentioned was the lack of trust of Latinos in local institutions, and much of the discussion was on ways to improve this perception. Education, health, social services, and transportation services and infrastructure were found to be lacking in greater numbers among predominantly Latino communities; especially among low-income households in these communities. As a consequence, it was suggested to put more efforts to address their needs, incorporating more input from local citizens, increasing outreach activities, and incorporating bilingual staff. Charades, focus groups, and outreach campaigns were proposed as channels to increase participation. The idea was to ensure ways in which Latinos can influence how cities decide on local issues, from basic urban regulations, land uses, and urban designs. Due to the high share of Latino population in Texas, dialogants found a potential opportunity to leverage on Latino values to improve current community practices.

The needs of Texas metropolitan areas were perceived as different from rural communities. Besides, the fact of being a border state made the Texas case unique compared with previous Dialogos. These different needs were proposed to be addressed in later Dialogos, specifically one along the Texas-Mexico border area, to discuss more in detail issues like immigration, binational agreements, and labor issues. Also,

Next, a report on the discussion on each of the nine topics is presented based on the roundtable discussions. Each topic has a summary of the discussion, followed by the top issues identified and proposals given by participants. In this way we aim at making a contribution to the LAP National Agenda, both by identifying the issues of concern, and making proposals in the specific areas of concern in the State of Texas.

Education

DISCUSSION SUMMARY

Throughout this roundtable it was evident that participants perceived education as a critical factor to positively influence Latino individuals to succeed in life and have a career, improve poverty level, and avoid delinquency later in life.

If education determines those factors that ultimately have a profound impact on a functional society, to “generate” good Latino citizens, education issues should be aggressively addressed to assure a better foundation for our society. Specifically, the discussants find it important to promote and improve mechanisms in place to educate parents about available academic opportunities and financial aid, educate kids in early stage and their parents to instill the importance of education. Additionally, programs should be tailored to overcome language barriers and low levels of community participation.

It was suggested to leverage on Latino characteristics to improve education system a)cultural understanding/awareness of Latino individuals who can be recruited to become teachers, b)Latino kids awe authority of teachers and c)parents wanting their kids to succeed beyond their current life.

One issue that was discussed numerous times was the equity of financial resources among school districts. According to the discussants, school districts that have a high number of Hispanic students have lower tax revenue, therefore their financial and educational resources are limited compared to other school districts.

Drop-out rate is seen as a direct trigger for delinquency. Latino communities, as said, prefer socialization, working in groups and the sense of belonging. Discussants suggest that community involvement should be promoted by schools and churches to attract kids to do sports and engaged in community activities instead of joining gangs that also give an option of socialization.

To assure the success of college students, the logical follow up from graduation, is the opportunity to work. Latino kids from illegal families are not allowed to work, therefore they normally join the illegal workforce. Some participants believe that HB 1403 should be discussed.

Another characteristic that is perceived about Latino communities is the low level of participation. The reasons behind could relate to language barriers, policies in place that discourage participation, and the need to increase trust from Latinos to others.

TOP ISSUES

1. Educational and financial equity among school districts in TX

2. Language Barriers among Latino parents
3. Socialization as a mean to avoid influence of gangs, and increase cultural-esteem
4. Programs tailored specifically for Latino culture (bilingual, Latino values, etc.)
5. Flexible regulations and policies that promote participation rather than creating barriers
6. Civic and community participation both ways between church/universities/community groups and Latino citizens to educate and train parents and children
7. Recognition by children and their parents of the importance of education
8. Embracement of diversity, and awareness of the importance of different ethnic background
9. Immigration reform should be revised (HB 1403)
10. Development of supporting system for all families

PROPOSALS

- Need of outreach and mentorship programs to
 - a. Provide guidance and support, and reduce language barriers
 - b. Improve self-esteem and trust to others
 - c. Educate parents/ kids about opportunities and operation of the Texas education system
 - d. Train teachers for cultural awareness and diversity embracement and recruiting more Hispanic teachers
- Improve the school/church/sports socialization sensation for the kids to avoid negative influences
 - a. To leverage on Latino preferences to work in group, collaborate, and to create the sense of belonging
- To achieve recognition of the importance of education among children and their parents
 - a. Instill in children and parents the importance of education during early stages
 - b. Place responsibility on universities to help those families and youngsters
- Hispanics should volunteer, advocate, and participate civically

TOPIC 2

Economics/Financing

DISCUSSION SUMMARY

This roundtable discussion concentrated on economic opportunities available for Latinos. Number and quality of jobs were major concerns. As most Latinos get low-skilled jobs, resulting in low income wages and, consequently, affordable housing is a major concern. This issue was related to the lack of access to education and training opportunities in Latino communities. Location issues were also a concern. Re-investment on downtown areas is resulting in a gentrification process that is affecting negatively Latino neighborhoods. Smaller cities, on the other side, have little job opportunities for unskilled labor force. Another concern was the lack of communication between Latinos and “the others”. This was explained by lack of trust, cultural values, and language barriers.

Much discussion concentrated on education and training of the Latino labor force. Participants pointed out that Anglos are generally encouraged to attain higher education, while Latinos are more geared to pursue vocational training. Participants indicated that capitalization and mechanization of the agricultural industry has displaced the migrant labor workforce, resulting on a decrease in job opportunities.

Work ethics, entrepreneurial capacity, and cultural values within the Latino community were mentioned as assets to be preserved and cherished.

Several policies were proposed to address these issues. First, to expand education and training opportunities in order to lead to better paying jobs and more successful businesses. It was also proposed to improve communication channels to increase levels of participation of Latinos. It was mentioned that Latinos are not taking advantage of current programs available for them. One explanation mentioned was that Latinos do not trust institutions, particularly local police. Policies that encourage local businesses within communities were also proposed.

TOP ISSUES

1. Number and quality of jobs available in Latino communities
2. Gentrification is affecting Latino neighborhoods in older cities
3. Limited job opportunities for low-skilled labor in small cities
4. Mismatch of jobs and housing. People need to work more than one job to afford housing and utilities

5. Limited human capital expressed on few college graduate
6. Lack of trust in U.S. agencies, including banks and police
7. Growth is occurring rapidly in the Colonias; eighty percent were migrant farm workers; now changing to a service industry base
8. Work ethics is an asset expressed on an entrepreneurial business culture among Latinos

PROPOSALS

- To address education and training:
 - a. Providing role models to students in high school
 - b. Programs to promote human capital investment
 - c. Linking job training to jobs needed in community
 - d. High school level and post-secondary education
- Capitalize on the cultural spirit and work ethic:
 - a. Goods and services and level of service
 - b. Integrate and capitalize the strong entrepreneurial business culture with the rest of the city
- Housing and jobs
 - a. Variety of housing development incentives
 - b. Equitable distribution of housing to jobs in city
 - c. Increase affordable housing development
- Increase trust between Latinos and police
 - a. Identify leaders and stakeholders
 - b. Work to build the trust between Latinos and government agencies
- Communities should work together
- Eliminate the stigma associated with older cities

Transportation/Mobility

DISCUSSION SUMMARY

There is little reliable information about the needs of Latinos in terms of mobility requirements as there is lack of participation in the planning process. There is mistrust on the public sector that results on little input from Latinos in the transportation and mobility decision-making process.

The overall view is that Latinos are more likely to use mass transit services without the prejudice often found among the Anglo population. This was linked to the fact that most of the Latino population have less access to personal vehicles due to income limitations and are more used to using public transit in their country of origin. Equally, Latinos are perceived as more likely to walk and use other modes of transportation than the Anglo population. One example is the use of bicycles. However, little is done in cities in Texas to accommodate their needs.

People are not used to expressing their opinions. A big portion of Latinos come from poorer parts of their country and they do not have a prior experience of anyone asking them for their opinion. While people need sidewalks they do not voice their needs. It might be because of cultural or economic reasons but, the people need to be aware of their right to want such facilities.

It was mentioned that in places like Houston private property owners and home owners associations are more powerful than the government due to deed restrictions. Thus, they dictate what happens in the community.

It was proposed to search for public-private alternatives to invest in improvements on the mobility infrastructure in Latino communities. "People do not need help, they need equal access."

TOP ISSUES

1. Little community engagement in the planning process
 - a. Biased results in surveys done due to lack of participation
 - b. Distrust in government
 - c. Lack of knowledge of the planning process
 - d. Latino community is not used to voicing their opinions. Under-representation of Latino community
 - e. Lack of communication (technical and language barrier)

2. Transit is limited and inefficient for Latinos
 - a. Vicious Circle: low ridership due to lack of Anglo participation and unfeasible projects.
 - b. Perception of reduced property values due to transit
 - c. Limited accessibility (i.e. no feeder routes)
3. Transportation accessibility to jobs
 - a. Lack of reliable and affordable access to jobs, recognizing the community needs
 - b. Pedestrian accessibility, bicycles
4. Land-use and transportation integration
5. Options for financing transportation
 - a. Public-private partnership
 - b. Lack of awareness of transportation options (tax incentives)
6. Disconnect between city planning process and transportation planning
 - a. Transportation needs to be included in all planning areas (economic development, health, job creation, etc.)

PROPOSALS

- Encourage public-private partnership to develop transit systems in the United States
- In order to increase the transit, we need to do surveys
- To increase Latino participation it was proposed to organize public meetings in a different format
- People know what they want. Use language to appropriate convey to the public

TOPIC 4

Health

DISCUSSION SUMMARY

Health discussion was focused on the premise that long-term, holistic, preventive approach should be integrated on policy making and implementation. Discussants agreed that health system issues are the result of economic and cultural barriers, access constraints, and to some degree to lack of networking and partnerships to leverage on society's strengths.

Specific to Latino communities, this roundtable discussed the good practices Latino families still preserve, the issues related to illegal residence status and the need to educate and change perception and delivery of health services to this group.

Mental health and environmental planning were two topics that were covered in depth. Regarding mental health, it was stated that cultural stigmas, lack of education or cultural values detract from Latinos seeking care or seeing mental health as a real health concern. Rural communities have systemic negative biases towards mental health, therefore financial and managerial barriers result in closing of facilities and make access to and provision of services difficult. Federal policies dictates health services (i.e. emergency services), but does not address the real root of problems nor take a holistic approach. Need a much broader view of health, and impact families' quality of life.

Participants also showed interest in the effect that parks department can have promoting wellness for all ages through outdoor activities.

Health services availability is perceived by the group of discussants as directly affected by income level. They expressed concerns regarding the health insurance system, and the fact that health should be seen as a right, not a privilege.

Several suggestions were presented to improve the general health system in Texas.

TOP ISSUES

1. Broader and holistic approach, rather than curative and individualistic view. Alternative health care (homeopathic, natural medicine)
2. Build on positive aspects of Latino and all communities
3. Gender and health
4. Envisioning goals and how to achieve them
5. Outreach initiatives to disseminate knowledge about health and information about services

6. Regional approach rather than rural vs urban
7. Integrate planners' broader perspective
8. Financial barriers, access to resources and affordability
9. Strengthen networks/partnerships, achieve connectivity and transparency
10. Roles within nuclear family, social, and cultural factors/values impact health
11. Education for health service providers, and for community regarding lifestyle choices
12. Environmental health and impact of exposures to hazards

PROPOSALS

- Long-term planning and broad view of health: not only individual issues, absence of disease or treatment. Find causes of current mortality to go upstream and prevent diseases
- Education about health practices (immunizations, healthy lifestyle and nutrition) and symptoms to individual, family, community and service providers level. Children initiatives like nutrition programs, awards in school, etc. to promote wellness and change health habits. Lack of affordability results often in self-medication; need to educate about its risks
- Health impacts as a result of environmental conditions -from household level to natural disasters- and occupational exposure
- Physical and mental access to healthcare: Providing service out of 8-5 scheme, transportation, socioeconomic factors, communication and language barriers, social structured conditions and inequalities. Distribution of healthcare providers is skewed, more in urban than rural
- Planning can address social factors. Geographic relationship affects interactions, environmental planning can promote positive relationships, well-being and health. People tend to plan for next week at most, but planning and temporal disconnect is an issue
- Distribution of healthcare: Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) and rural health centers. WalMart supposedly is planning to open clinics. Can this be a starting model for integration between the public and health needs at locations where private sector has already reached?
- Early intervention is key to breaking cycle of negative health choices
- Policy focuses more on children and elderly, try to target other age groups
- Department of Parks and Recreation:
 - a. Name to Parks and Wellness to allow education and programs for kids and families
 - b. Active recreation
 - c. Accessibility: Exploring ideal distances to parks (15 min) and creation of one-stop areas (library, clinic, parks, public transportation). Houston is testing one already
 - d. Mandate and include connectivity (physical) in land-use planning; make walkability
 - By partnerships between government and local organizations
 - Demographics dictate the needed parks and activities: older need to walk; younger need to play sports, etc.

- e. Houston is experimenting with playgrounds for children with special needs only
- Social networking, connectivity and partnerships are crucial, combining forces to overcome barriers. Planners should identify social networks and help foster them in communities. Promoting citizenship and participatory planning to improve health system
 - a. Negative perceptions and culture of social norms proves to create conflicts between different cultures (Anglos and African-Americans)
 - b. Cultural systems, lack of trust may create barriers
- Consider Latino factors for health agenda:
 - a. Study why Latinos living in poverty have same lifespan as wealthy whites. Cultural belief that Latina women do not drink heavily, do not use tobacco products, and birth control. Lifestyle factors may be true in first generations, but apparent loss in subsequent generations might be due to the influence of the U.S. culture
 - b. Latina women come into society of the U.S. and need to play the role of provider and caretaker. Traditional mother role concerns are shifting to career concerns and influencing life-choices, important to balance caretaker versus working women role
 - c. Sense of un-welcomeness for Latinos. It seems Latinos do not practice primary care, but wait for ER services
 - d. Latino community is highly patriarchal. Fathers/ husbands should be involved as they are providers. This would help eliminate time constrains and thus bad health choices (ie; inactivity)
 - e. Need to focus on positives of Latino communities. Education is seeing increasing numbers of Latinas; can we empower and make change by involving and target Latinas? Latinos habits include outdoor activities, preserve those values
 - f. Colonias are a big concern
- Immigration matters should be integrated into health policy:
 - a. City of Austin offers immigration info center at local library
 - b. Improve immigration policy: state and country need to readdress policy, deal with illegal and breaking of laws but must also create and allow the system to deal with it
 - c. Border issues: act and think binationally. Create incentives. Border should not be a barrier; build physical and cultural bridges
 - d. Era of coalitions, bringing multiple organizations together. Society trying to deal with complex issues and address system and national policy failure. Coalitions require transparency to learn about each other

Social Issues

DISCUSSION SUMMARY

Social issues discussion touched on the fact that community involvement equalizes resources within towns. If both voters and leaders do not actively participate in planning, the results are unfavorable to the community. Through community involvement natural leaders can evolve.

Communication and language barriers, resulting in disconnection between citizens and policymakers, are a concern among discussants. It was also stated that Hispanic population seem to remain silent and not communicating their concerns and when crimes occur. The question if Americans are perceived as “approachable” by Latino individuals was asked. Because Spanish has become a part of the equation to plan our communities, it was suggested that offering a bonus to individuals who learn Spanish could be a means to improve communication between both groups. It was pointed out that Hispanic radio stations are widely tuned in by Latino communities, and could be use as an effective channel of communication.

Social issues concerning power definition were discussed, and the question of “who defines what is right or wrong for society?” was asked. Some ideas about racism were also stated.

Another aspect of disconnection due to communication happens when trying to define the service areas of urban and rural jurisdictions. Also, identification of real needs many times are obscured by planning of programs and their outcomes, without giving emphasis to listen to Hispanic communities expressing their needs.

An issue that was discussed pertains to illegal Hispanic immigrants. It is perceived that citizens living illegally in the U.S. have a high level of concerns to contact authorities or government agencies when they need help. Apparently they are scared to be questioned about immigration status, therefore they do not seek for help regarding safety or community services. However, it was mentioned that they feel comfortable talking to other Hispanic individuals. It was reported that police departments have critical need to count with Spanish speaking officers to serve and patrol Latino communities. Additionally, it was discussed the issue that many Hispanics prefer not to have valid identification card, making difficult for law enforcement agencies to deal with crime among the Latino sector.

TOP ISSUES

1. Community prioritizing their own issues
2. Communication barriers. No connectivity between community and policymakers
3. Lack of citizen participation. Community involvement. Lack of voice by the minority community
4. Lack of celebration of diversity. Level of comfort between white Texas/ Hispanic Texas
5. Fear of the unknown

6. Resource awareness is limited
7. Law enforcement
 - a. Crime reporting
 - b. Lack of trust
 - c. Legitimate identification
8. New immigration & language barriers
9. Education barrier
10. False stereotypes
11. Access of minorities to a better quality of life. Poverty and inequality (i.e. access to mental health professionals). Low levels of funding for organizations pertaining to Latinos
12. Health and lack of emphasis on the concept of “wellness”

PROPOSALS

- To work to bring trust and create comfort between authority figures and Hispanics. Try to approach Hispanics from their level, and not as authority or higher position level
- To find ways to listen to Latinos, improve communication and identify real needs to integrate into planning agenda
- Try to understand why the participation of Latinos in public hearings and meetings are lower than necessary

Building Capacity

DISCUSSION SUMMARY

Building capacity was defined by participants in a diverse arrange of concepts. Building capacity is seen as the inventory of programs that help to mentor and build financial robustness. It allows succeeding and being self-sufficient when opportunities are identified. It is perceived as a combination of people, resources, places, tools, and their functions. Building capacity is about the human aspects of the relationship of people that come from different backgrounds and including everyone. Building capacity is to achieve having citizens to voice community needs. It is resource development in the broadest concept, social-civic infrastructure that can affect change. The planner-educator is seemed as a mechanism to build capacity in the community, to show opportunities and teach how to overcome barriers, to identify targets and goals. The planner can instill empowerment in Latino communities for them to believe goals can be reached.

Cultural integration to build capacity was a recurrent topic. Discussants believe that acceptance, integration, assimilation and understanding are essential to overcome barriers. Differences should be perceived as a positive characteristic of diverse communities rather than a factor that divides. Also, to build capacity we need to avoid dominance of stronger groups, all sectors and groups should be included on the decision making process.

Understanding about the system, its components, potentials and weaknesses is perceived as a helpful catalyst to build capacity. To leverage on individuality, cultural differences, creativity and lessons learned from Latino communities could strengthen the system to increase capacity. It was also discussed that is important to identify who determines the goals and the capacity to achieve them.

TOP ISSUES

To build capacity, we need to...

1. Celebrate diversity:
 - a. Close the gap by learning to capitalize on the similarities and differences in the communities
 - b. To value the Latino value and understand what is Latino and what is the rest
 - c. accept both ways and leverage in values of trust, faith, hope and respect
 - d. Acknowledge and implement best practices and lessons learned internal (in situ) and external (internationally) from Latino communities

2. Frame a common ground to facilitate understanding, acceptance, integration, assimilation, and awareness among and between communities. The understanding is that all these five words go both ways
3. Gain knowledge and develop tools to be self-sufficient and self-empowered. To promote sense of ownership to achieve communities that take control of their destiny
4. Link the parts with the whole: i.e., one needs to acknowledge the importance of the individual and its place in the system, and of the system itself. Avoiding sacrificing the value of individuality
5. Work bottom-up to go to the root of the problem. Raise awareness with mentoring programs within education pipeline
6. Understand contextual understanding in which questions, issues, and such are raised
7. Find paths of change: i.e., one needs to create cohesion, critical mass, and alignment (i.e. help communities to become politically savvy)
8. Address the built environment: i.e., in terms of capacity building one needs to take a look at the physical space (facilities, open space, roads, schools, etc.) that can be a catalyst for positive change in the community
9. Define capacity building as a process: what, how, who, etc.
10. Seek empowerment through legislation or incentive for public sector involvement to enable communities to achieve needed goals, to promote engagement into the decision making process, into the system. Favor the development of common goals and alignments, and avoid the influence of personal agendas (critical mass)

PROPOSALS

- Intellectual capital (professionals, academics and students) can be invested to influence positively the community. Building capacity requires planners committed to social, educational and political scenarios
- Cultural programs may produce knowledge and leadership among citizens
- Establishment of programs and grass-root processes to create community integration for everyone to be heard and forward their aims until achievement
- Need to strengthen the life long learning pipeline from K to 16 and beyond, both formally and informally. Increase exposure of and awareness about education and improve methods to deliver it
- Real issues must be identified to invest on priorities (e.i. roads vs. water)
- Analysis of how cities and agencies relate to diverse populations, and the role played in communication and promoting 'union' or segregation in their system by spatial inventory
- Achieve neutrality among planners, we need to educate them, increase knowledge of planning among our communities to understand their opportunities and benefits
- To establish connectors between multiple stakeholders to improve interfaces (negative vs. white space) and allow things to happen

- Avoid stereotyping Latino communities to make decisions for the system
- To promote self-sufficiency through social entrepreneurship, taking advantage of creativity, innovation, and practices in place for survival
- To identify financial resources and the best way to invest them
- To break paradigms of militant fashion of few community members, avoiding individual agenda and switch to common goals to benefit everyone

Urban Environment/Urban Design

DISCUSSION SUMMARY

This roundtable concentrated on the ways in which the presence of Latinos is re-shaping the way cities arrange themselves. The term “indigenous urbanism” was the focus of discussion involving not only the urban form of communities but also other aspect that explain such form. Specifically, participants discussed how the many aspects of Latinos in the communities are making the needs within cities different: from a different use of public spaces, more active social support system, and different understanding of family relationships beyond the nuclear unit.

Some specifics characteristics discussed about the urban form in Latino communities were: first, more walking neighborhoods as there are more people on the streets; second, more centric (opposed to linear) forms ; third, larger social networks resulting in more pronounced sense of community, and multigenerational living pattern. The design of plazas and other “significant” public spaces was a positive contribution from Latinos into the American space.

In the past- parks have been great centers and accommodate people, but them as technology advances, people begin to move into their homes and into their cars. Now- do we put back the parks and urban nature? The environment is changing- so is it more conducive to being indoors rather than outdoors.

Diversity was viewed as an asset brought by Latinos into urban design in urban areas in the US. As Latinos socializing is done in public realm rather than private realm, a need for more public spaces is seen as a requirement to realize it. Overlay of traditional value systems, as Latinos and non-Latino communities may have to learn from each other. This should be a two-way interaction.

TOP ISSUES

1. Urban Form: plazas have been central part of community; reinforcing family oriented urban design, social capital, social cohesion; society does not walk anymore, so we are missing the social interaction
 - a. Linearity VS centric approach
 - b. Walkability and more people on the streets
 - c. Multigenerational living arrangements
 - d. Support social capital: more “dense” social fabric - Urban design issue: 2nd and 3rd ring suburbs are where the affordable housing is located; Latinos tend to cluster together and live in the same area because they are following family

- e. Latinos belong of different groups (Cubans, Mexicans, Puerto Ricans) and have specific needs/wants/lifestyles/methods
2. Neighborhoods
 - a. More family-oriented
 - b. Social spaces – public spaces: more use of public areas
 - c. Environment are not conducive for youth to integrate into social life and be productive
 3. Immigration / diversity: It was perceived as a force for advancements
 - a. Absorption (or not) into the city where Latinos settle
 - b. The proposed construction of the wall on the border with Mexico was discussed as a barrier
 - c. To what extend there is a process of “hybridization” of culture in the process: need to transfer history/ elements of groups and individuals (music, farm animals, struggle) into design elements to meet everyone’s needs
 4. Housing
 - a. Quality of housing among Latinos was a major concern among participants and this was related to neighborhood quality
 - b. There is a challenge to design housing in “hybrid” communities
 - c. Limitation of housing opportunities among Latino neighborhoods
 5. Equity
 - a. Access to educational and economic resources in Latino communities
 - b. Access to the planning process
 6. Education
 - a. Changing with neighborhoods result on a shift of community values
 - b. The process of sensitization is a two-way cultural issues: from the Latinos and the “rest”
 - c. Community governance was related to planning codes and how to incorporate them
 7. Environment
 - a. Sprawling was connected with youth troubles and health issues as obesity
 - b. Environmental justice was linked to the needs for urban nature and urban parks
 - c. Community governance was related to planning codes and how to incorporate them

Other Top Issues Discussed

8. The case of border Colonias was seen as a separate issue. They concentrate problems with environment, infrastructure, violence, education; now ewer, as they are realizing as having greater voting power as strong Latino community in south Texas
9. Border towns: American side- towns are dead, downtowns are dying; and people are going to Mexcio for lunch, vibrancy, etc.
10. Coastal community development issues- outreach w/ Latino coastal communities (Sea Grant)

PROPOSALS

- Need to design urban spaces to maximize social infrastructure
- Promote state laws to revive downtown areas
- Promote a paradigm shift to design the physical environment to encourage movement, access to resources, for adult/adolescent population; this is much related to healthy communities
- Bringing nature into the city and using it as a backdrop for day to day city activities (social and urban connection)
- Self-construction as an alternative in Latino companies would teach homeowners to build their own homes with smaller loan payments to make it possible for people to expand in a way that suits their income/needs
- Let people express themselves with their homes rather than regulating; need t o search for creative ways to keep a community beautiful and make it unique
- Rules and regulations must be enforced fairly. Present them in a readable fashion -brochure in Spanish-
- Customs from the community must be taken (needed for peaceful existence, social norms); then they should be put into written form that people will willingly comply to. If a law does not fit a community people will resist and not follow rule. Communities must set their own limits, then they will be respected (may be a global scale issue)
- Propose policies that regulate incentives to developers. In this way the city growth can be managed
- Political arena must have a paradigm shift in whcih density is acceptable and wanted
- Urbanism needs to be scaled to manage immigration
- Why is immigration seen in a certain way now? Wall, securities, etc. but 100 years ago- we celebrated immigration (statue of liberty, etc.). It was proposed to look at the past to see into the future

Land Use/Construction Styles/Codes/Standards

DISCUSSION SUMMARY

This roundtable discussion concentrated on planning ordinances (or their absence) on: land uses, construction codes and the standards defined by local public authorities. It was discussed, first the small participation of Latinos in the planning process, and the consequent violations of such requirements. There was a clear agreement that in many cases Latinos do not embrace many of the regulations set by planning authorities.

Education was mentioned serving two purposes: first to explain Latinos about the benefits of their participation in the planning process and second, to explain “others’ the positive things Latinos bring to communities. This is presented as a two-way task.

It was also reported corruption on the public sector related to land use practices dealing directly with Latinos as in the case of colonias.

TOP ISSUES

1. Difficult on getting Latino communities involved in public participation
2. Lack of knowledge from planning authorities about Latino communities, and vice versa
3. Regional authorities do not have power to have land control in rural areas (counties)
4. It is not clear how to capitalize the potential of Latino communities
5. Cities are not offering other land use options to communities, such as higher densities
6. Latino communities are susceptible to have undesired land uses such as landfills
7. Latino communities do not trust governments

PROPOSALS

- Education is necessary in two ways to empower communities:
 - a. To educate Latinos on the benefits of planning

b. To educate Anglo Americans on the contribution of Latinos in communities

- Education in specific topics such as land use
- Construction codes and land use regulations need to reflect the needs / values / expectations of the population in the community. Latinos views are to be discussed at the city planning level
- It may be necessary to have bilingual staff
- Would it be feasible or desirable to have different land use regulations accommodating to cultural backgrounds?

Environmental

DISCUSSION SUMMARY

The roundtable of environmental matters had a wide coverage. The discussants talked about all the aspects of life from an environmental point of view.

To favor the environmental agenda, the panelists found important to promote communication and engaged citizens, as well as to facilitate work. It was also discussed the need to improve a two-way communication between government and Latino population.

It was observed that the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality focuses more in an Anglo agenda, rather than including minorities' needs as well.

During the roundtable it was suggested that illegal immigrants should be included as part of the agenda, regardless of their immigration status. Planners should take advantage of channels of communication already working –church, schools, and networks- to establish engagement.

Discussants believe that public participation should be shifted from reactionary after an event to a planning process that gives opportunity to prepare an action.

It was stated that people tend to prioritize economic interest over environment, like the need of green space.

Environmental justice was discussed through several issues, like the fact that air pollution and water management do not favor Latino settlements,

The topic of water, as a regional, state and national issue, was discussed in a variety of aspects concerning population growth, quality and preservation, impact due to climate change among others. It was also discussed the approach of water property rights in Texas. Some argued that Latino communities need to improve their water management.

Transportation was debated as an environmental issue regarding gas consumption, connectivity of inner cities and suburbs, and the abundant use of cars among others.

TOP ISSUES

1. Environmental justice need to involve both education and a network system
2. Environmental justice need to involve both education and a network system

3. Environmental justice need to involve both education and a network system
4. Environmental quality issues involve air, pollution, hazards material, indoors, water quality and quantity
5. Natural hazard more relevant: hurricane, drought, flooding
6. Energy efficiency was related to climate change and variability
7. Waste management was seen as a major concern: from generation, storage, recycling, reuse, reduction
8. Environmental planning process issues
 - a. social economic inequality
 - b. education, communication, alternative networks, inclusion, involvement, alternative
9. Most current environmental regulations are more related to reaction to problems rather than preventing them
10. Divided society was perceived as a concern
11. Lack of capacity, incentive and interest
12. NAFTA has generated many environmental concerns, especially on border communities, and these need to be addressed especially in terms of gas emission, and traffic increases

PROPOSALS

- Land use and quality control to limit and degradation
- Building materials need to be sustainable, using, for the most part, local resources or those that can better adapt to local conditions
- Housing building materials should consider that units are expected to last over time as Latinos are less mobile population
- Non-point pollution needs to be incorporated into the environmental planning concerns
- Need to identify market awareness in order to optimize the positive impact of environmental policies
- Need to manage and control storm water with issues of flooding and pollution