

## **African American Quality of Life Executive Summary: Through June 2006**

This summary provides highlights of the numerous initiatives set forth by the various implementation teams of the African American Quality of Life Committee. As presented to Mayor and Council on October 27, 2005, the implementation teams will update Council every six months. These teams consist of:

- Health
- Police & Safety
- Arts, Culture, & Entertainment
- Business & Economic Development
- Neighborhood Sustainability
- Employment & Education

Since the presentation to council, the implementation teams have met with the community as needed. They have provided monthly reports consisting of detailed information on the actions taken to complete the initiatives to the City Manager and community representatives. Additionally, the implementation teams conducted two quarterly presentations to community organizations and citizens. Overall, the meetings, monthly reports, and the quarterly presentations have provided up-to-date information ensuring the results of the initiatives are applicable to the concerns of the African American community.

### **Health**

Currently, four out of nine initiatives addressed by the health team are in the implementation and completion stages. One highlight includes a partnership with the Austin/Travis County Mental Health Mental Retardation Department (MHMR) in which a mental health counselor is being provided and funded to help with health screenings and outreach. Another initiative includes the hour-long Health Talk radio program on KAZI 88.7 FM through which information on health and preventive care issues is provided to the African American community. The Community Care Services Clinic received \$796,983 in grant funding from Texas Primary Care Office-Incubator to staff and equip the new Far North clinic located in the St. John area. In the first 6 months, the clinic has seen 768 patients of which thirty-four percent were African American. Additionally, a mobile outreach prevention team has provided over 311 medical screenings targeting African American neighborhoods.

### **Police & Safety**

Significant progress has been achieved in all ten initiatives set forth by the police and safety implementation team. The accomplishments include the use of force policy initiative which emphasizes using the least amount of force necessary. This initiative was incorporated into the street tactics training for over 185 officers. In response to the committee's recognition of a deficiency in APD's ability to identify, document, and discipline officers, a Guidance Advisory Program (GAP) has been implemented. GAP tracks officer behavior and provides a resource to be used by sergeants and lieutenants for evaluations. To increase police and community interaction to facilitate a better understanding of the African American culture, APD has had continued success, including the youth programs at Eastside Story, recognizing the

accomplishments of Boy Scout Troop 783 comprised of boys from public housing, and the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Community Networking Conference with attendance of 500.

### **Arts, Culture & Entertainment**

Advancement has been made on each of the ten arts, culture and entertainment initiatives outlined by the implementation teams. This includes the completion of the “Diverse Austin” Austin Convention & Visitors Bureau website. For the first time tourists and interested parties within and outside of the Austin area have access to African American history in Austin, cultural attractions, calendar of events, and local signature events such as the 2006 Texas Relays, the Juneteenth Celebration, and the Urban Music Festival. Austin’s newest festival dedicated to music was a tremendous success with an estimated 5,500 in attendance during the Texas Relay Weekend. The team’s recommendation for the hiring of a Community Liaison led to the successful negotiation for over 24 African American conventions. Highlighted examples of these conventions include the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People State Branches Conference, the Conference on Minority Transportation Officials (COMPTO), and the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority National Conference. On June 22, 2006, the City Council authorized the award of an 18-month service agreement with Metropolitan Group in Portland, Oregon for consulting services to develop a citywide Community Cultural Plan which will include recommendations submitted by the arts, culture and entertainment team. A joint venture between the Parks and Recreation Department, the University of Texas Center for African American Studies, the Center for American History, and the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library and Museum led to the production of Austin’s first African American Film Festival, entitled “*Marching On: Independent African American Films From 1935-1950*”. Held throughout Black History Month, this program provided public receptions with James Wheeler, a world renowned film archivist, collector and historian as special guest.

### **Business & Economic Development**

Of the 17 initiatives and subsets identified by business and economic development team, 14 have been completed. One initiative includes the partnership with the African American Chamber of Commerce (AACC) to increase minority-owned business membership within the Chamber. Additionally, a partnership between the AACC and the Greater Austin Chamber’s Opportunity Austin Program was created to assist the minority chambers with participating in recruiting trips. The committee has been instrumental in hiring DSMBR staff to focus on monitoring compliance of the M/WBE ordinance, and the implementation of a notification process for contract awards. A new “prompt pay” program for non-construction contracts with the city has been created and an annual recognition program for contractors complying with the M/WBE ordinance has been developed. Revisions have been implemented to the economic development company based incentive matrix to include requirements for minority contracting. Furthermore, a process has been developed whereby the minority chambers have an opportunity to formally meet with companies requesting incentives.

### **Neighborhood Sustainability**

In the past 6 months, great strides have been made in preserving the affordability of our housing stock. The City Council approved the creation of and provided policy direction to implement a Community Land Trust (CLT). A CLT offers promise in our community of providing opportunities for families to purchase their first home, within the City of Austin.

In conjunction with improving homeownership, three homebuyer “fairs” have been conducted in the last 6 months; thereby accomplishing one of the strategies identified by the Sustainability Team. More than 125 people attend these fairs to receive education about first-time homeownership opportunities and connect with reputable lending institutions. The City has also implemented “Housing Smarts”, a homebuyer-counseling program to increase ownership and retention of current owners. In October 2006, Housing Smarts will work with area non-profit organizations to provide counseling to potential homebuyers and homeowners facing foreclosure. Additionally, Neighborhood Housing and Community Development in cooperation with the Austin Housing Finance Corporation will participate in both the City-Wide Housing Task Force and the Vertical Mixed-Use (VMU) Taskforce to provide incentives for private developers to create affordable housing opportunities in mixed-used properties meeting specific criteria. The implementation team has been conducting a series of meetings with a group of local housing officials to discuss housing patterns, and the status of affordable housing in Austin and surrounding areas. On-going discussions include current and future levels of housing requirements in the local area, systematic analysis of the direct impact on current clientele, considerations for required funding, the development of potential public/private partnerships to produce affordable housing and challenges for supportive services.

### **Employment & Education**

Considerable advancement has been made in all seven of the initiatives set forth by the employment and education implementation team. Accomplishments include the joint venture with the Austin Area Urban League to develop criteria for intern selection, intern preparation, and development of job descriptions by city departments. Ten paid internships were created with one position currently being filled. Advertisement of employment opportunities and events were through NOKOA-The Observer and Villager Newspapers and public service announcements on KAZI 88.7 FM. Another initiative includes participation by the implementation team in the Austin Independent School District and the City’s joint subcommittee to identify current initiatives, approaches, and best practices to support and enhance educational attainment for students. This partnership will allow for the development of programs that enhance opportunities for student achievement. Development of a City funded project will provide High School Equivalency Diploma (GED) preparation services and job preparation for ex-offenders. The program will include success and sustainability skills, which include completion of tasks, respect for authority, and skills training.

### **Conclusion**

In addition to the accomplishments of the African American Quality of Life implementation teams, there have been other successes. On June 8, 2006, Council approved the establishment of the African American Resource Advisory Commission. The commission consists of nine members to include three community representatives and six members who each represent one of the following entities: the Austin Urban League, the African American Chamber of Commerce, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Pro Arts Collective, the Austin Revitalization Authority, and the Alliance for African American Health. As a whole, the commission provides in-depth knowledge of the challenges and concerns of the African American community.

Furthermore, on June 8, 2006, Council established “Bond Propositions Three and Four”. Proposition Three provides funding for renovating and improving public parks, recreation centers, and other parks facilities to include \$500,000 for the Rosewood Park House. Proposition Four makes available funding for constructing, renovating, improving, and equipping six community and cultural facilities to include \$1.5 million for the African American Heritage and Cultural Facility. If passed by Austin voters in November 2006, Propositions Three and Four would go a long way towards advancing the basic infrastructure critical to the African American culture located in East Austin.

It has been an extremely active six months during which many of the initiatives brought forward by the various teams have been either partially implemented or completed. The committee has been successful in identifying programs in need of improvement and has acted toward enhancing these areas.