



TASK FORCE SERIES

A Shared Future: The Economic Engagement of Greater Chicago and Its Mexican Community

REPORT OF AN INDEPENDENT TASK FORCE

Douglas Doetsch, Clare Muñana
and Alejandro Silva, *Co-chairs*

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**THE CHICAGO COUNCIL
ON GLOBAL AFFAIRS**

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Project Director – Juliana Kerr Viohl
Principal Author – Beatriz Ponce de León

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Mural, painted by Jeff Zimmermann, in the Pilsen neighborhood of Chicago.

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Foreword

Nations and cities around the world are experiencing the greatest movement of people across borders in a hundred years. This largely economic migration is bringing both benefits and challenges. In search of jobs and opportunity, migrants are fueling economic growth, revitalizing neighborhoods, enhancing global connections, and transferring resources to the societies they have left.

The recent wave of migration is also seen increasingly as problematic in many societies. The new migrants come from more diverse ethnic, linguistic, and religious backgrounds than their nineteenth- and early twentieth-century predecessors. They have arrived in greater numbers in a shorter time span than in the past, and are settling in locations not accustomed to migrants, such as suburbs and small towns. Questions are increasingly hotly debated as to whether these newest migrants can and should be integrated and whether the doors to migration should continue to be open.

The issues of migration and migrant integration, most often associated with coastal U.S. cities and states, are vital to Chicago and the Midwest. Like other leading U.S. cities, Chicago has been a migrant destination since its founding. Today more than 18 percent of the Chicago metropolitan population is foreign born. Mexicans, U.S.- and foreign-born, now account for 16 percent of the total metropolitan population. Recent migrants have, in fact, dispersed throughout the upper Midwest and become meatpackers in Iowa, factory workers in Michigan, and construction crews in Indiana. Of the total U.S. foreign-born population, 11 percent is found in the Midwest.

Recognizing the importance of immigration to the Midwest, The Chicago Council sponsored a task force on U.S. immigration policy beginning in 2003. Its June 2004 report, *Keeping The Promise: Immigration Proposals from the Heartland*, was an effort to influence national opinion and policymaking on many aspects of immigration. The Task Force supported strongly comprehensive U.S. immigration policy reform similar to approaches offered by the Bush administration and by Senators McCain and Kennedy in their legislative proposals now under consideration by Congress.

In that task force's deliberations, it became equally clear that integrating immigrants who are already here is at least as important as regulating future flows of immigrants to the well-being of our communities. The Chicago Council now decided to focus its attention on

the economic integration of Mexican immigrants and their children in the Chicago metropolitan area. The examination began in 2004 with a series of six roundtable conversations between Mexican and non-Mexican leaders and experts on a wide range of issues. The open and positive nature of those meetings led to the creation of a full task force.

The Task Force

The Task Force on the economic engagement of greater Chicago and its Mexican community was convened in October 2005 by The Chicago Council on Global Affairs (founded as The Chicago Council on Foreign Relations). Chaired by three prominent Chicagoans, Douglas Doetsch, partner of Mayer Brown Rowe & Maw LLP; Clare Muñana, president of Ancora Associates; and Alejandro Silva, chairman of Evans Food Group, the Task Force included 45 representatives of business, government, media, nongovernmental organizations, education, health, and religious groups from both the Mexican and non-Mexican communities in roughly equal numbers.

The Task Force pursued its agenda through eight monthly meetings. Each meeting included presentations by experts to stimulate discussion on the key issues related to the integration of the Mexican community, including economic opportunity, education, civic engagement, political participation, and health, social, and cultural issues. The Task Force created smaller working groups, each focused on one of these areas, which met two or three times to examine key issues in greater depth and propose recommendations to the Task Force as a whole.

Acknowledgments

The Chicago Council wishes first to thank the three Task Force co-chairs, Douglas Doetsch, Clare Muñana, and Alejandro Silva, for their exemplary leadership. We are deeply grateful for their extraordinary commitment of ideas, energy, and time to this project. Their passion for the subject and dedication to the project has been crucial to the outcome.

The Chicago Council also extends its sincere appreciation to all the Task Force members who contributed their personal experience, professional advice, and thoughtful insight to the deliberations that formed the foundation of our findings and recommendations.

The Task Force findings drew heavily also on the highly informative and thoughtful presentations by the session speakers on the issues addressed in the report. We thank Armando Almendarez, Jose Aybar, Xochitl Bada, Frank Beal, Allert Brown-Gort, Amparo Castillo, Christina Gomez, Michael Frias, Joshua Hoyt, Juanita Irizarry, John Koval, Rob Paral, Salvador Pedroza, Sylvia Puente, Jesse Ruiz, Carlos Sada, Juan Salgado, William Testa, Maria de los Angeles Torres, Eric Whitaker, and Martha Zurita for taking time out of their busy schedules to meet with our group.

A very special acknowledgment is due to Beatriz Ponce de León, the principal project consultant, who was charged not only to be the lead drafter of this report, but also played a key role in shaping the agenda, recruiting speakers, and identifying issues and resources throughout the Task Force process. Her ability to condense months of deliberations and working group recommendations into a coherent, comprehensive, and readable report is laudable. She brought throughout the work of the Task Force a steady spirit, unflinching courtesy, and deep conviction about the importance of the effort. The Chicago Council and the co-chairs are deeply appreciative of her contribution.

The Chicago Council is also grateful to Ellen Hunt, who joined the Task Force team months after work had begun, to serve as our editor. In addition to editing the substance of the report and assisting in the preparation of the manuscript, Ellen spent long days working closely with Beatriz in rewriting chapters to ensure the clarity of the text.

The Task Force collaborated with a number of local and regional organizations, most notably the Institute for Latino Studies at the University of Notre Dame, the Midwest's most prominent institution devoted to policy-relevant research on Latinos, including Mexicans. We are especially grateful to Allert Brown-Gort and Sylvia Puente, who served as consultants on this project and provided invaluable expertise, counsel, and connections to the work of the Task Force. In fact, the entire project would not have been possible without the extraordinarily generous commitment of personal and institutional resources made by Sylvia Puente and Allert Brown-Gort. Magda Banda, Patricia Santoyo, Yojana Vasquez, and Martha Zurita of the Institute for Latino Studies also worked hard to ensure that our findings were supported with current data. The Task Force collaborated closely with the Consulate General of Mexico and is grateful for the support of Consul General Carlos Sada and his team.

A number of The Chicago Council's staff played key roles in developing and implementing the project. Richard Longworth, the former executive director of the Global Chicago Center, and Daniela Abuzatoaie, former assistant director of the Global Chicago Center, shaped the project and obtained the necessary funding to implement the Roundtables and the Task Force. Juliana Kerr Viohl, the assistant director of the Global Chicago Center, stepped in after the project began and prepared session briefings, oversaw the logistics, and managed the assembly and production of the final report. Sharon Houtkamp, senior program officer, and interns Graham Webster and Nicole Summers provided key assistance in editing, fact-checking, and research.

Finally, The Chicago Council extends its deepest gratitude to The Chicago Community Trust, the lead sponsor of this project, and to the Boeing Company, the Exelon Corporation, the McCormick Tribune Foundation, Anonymous, Mayer Brown Rowe & Maw LLP, Evans Food Group, Clare Muñana, Ernest Mahaffey, MacNeal Hospital, and the Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum. The generosity of these donors and of all those who generally support The Chicago Council made this project and report possible.

Marshall M. Bouton

President

The Chicago Council on Global Affairs

August 3, 2006

Preface

Chicago has discovered the benefits of community acceptance the hard way, with successive generations of immigrants overcoming disrespect and worse to win a seat at the table of opportunity. This generation of Chicagoans intends to honor those hard-learned lessons by acknowledging the current wave of Mexican immigrants as their neighbors and their fellow builders of a shared future.

We have all come to this quintessential American city for the same reasons, to pursue happiness and prosperity as individuals and families. We have come as descendants of American slaves, of the world's disenfranchised and its poor—once hyphenated Americans all. Since its first settling by an African-French businessman and his Potawatomi wife, Chicago has always been a city of immigrants. Where we have come from—no easy road—informs our way forward in good conscience.

Of the 1.6 million Latinos residing in the region, about 1.3 million, or 80 percent, are Mexicans, most of them Mexican immigrants and their children. Already the largest ethnic group in the Chicago metropolitan area, in the next three decades the Mexican population in the region is expected to more than double.

It is urgent to analyze the impact of this demographic trend on the city, both in terms of what Chicago and the suburbs can do to foster the integration of Mexicans and what Mexicans themselves can do to integrate. Continuing impediments to integration for all Mexicans are threats to Chicago's ability to remain prosperous and globally competitive.

The members of this Mexican American Task Force call on metropolitan Chicago to help advance the social, civic, and commercial integration of these new immigrants. We propose not just specific recommendations for doing so but well-documented reasons for doing so. And we do so in an effort to keep the American dream alive, to build Chicago's prosperity, and to do the right thing.

We do so mindful that peoples are in movement across borders to big cities throughout the world, and that their isolation and marginalization in adopted communities is increasingly resulting in social strife. In this global context, the Mexican American Task Force hopes to offer an alternative model of forming harmonious collaboration for the benefit of all.

Douglas Doetsch, Clare Muñana, Alejandro Silva

Task Force Co-chairs

Terms and Data Used in This Report

This report focuses on Mexican immigrants and their children, who comprise almost 80 percent of Latinos in the Chicago metropolitan area, but Mexican-specific data is not always available. When information refers to Latinos, it is for purposes of accuracy, but the reader should keep in mind that Mexicans are the vast majority of Latinos in the region. In cases where charts are taken from published material that used the word Hispanic, that term has been kept. It is a synonym for Latino.

When the report uses the term “Mexican,” it includes all those in the Mexican community and of Mexican descent, regardless of their country of birth or current citizenship, including Mexican Americans. The term Mexican immigrant applies to any person born in Mexico, whether a naturalized U.S. citizen, permanent resident, or undocumented.

The terms Chicago region, metropolitan Chicago, Chicago area, or greater Chicago are interchangeable and refer to the six counties that comprise Chicago and its suburbs: Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, and Will counties.

The statistics in this report come from a variety of available sources. A detailed list of these sources can be found on page 115.

The data used was the most current at the time of the report’s development. New U.S. Census figures released in August 2006 estimate the total Latino population in the six-county area at 1.65 million in 2005, up from 1.6 million in 2004.

Executive Summary

Throughout Chicago’s history, immigrants from all corners of the world have played critical roles in shaping its character and economic life. While it was mostly European immigrants who helped transform Chicago from a trading post to an industrial city, Mexican immigrants and their children have become a part of Chicago’s regional economy and are helping to shape its future.

The Mexican population, at 1.3 million already the largest ethnic group in the Chicago metropolitan area, is expected to more than double by 2030. Chicago’s future workforce will be composed to a significant degree of the children of today’s Mexican immigrants.

It is urgent, therefore, that we enhance the economic potential this young population offers the region by ensuring that they are prepared to participate fully in Chicago’s future as a global, knowledge-based economy.

The Mexican American Task Force, comprised of 45 business and civic leaders from both the Mexican and non-Mexican communities, was formed to identify the challenges and opportunities of integration affecting Mexican immigrants and their children in the Chicago region, regardless of citizenship or country of birth, and to make recommendations on how these might be addressed. The Task Force has focused on the issue most crucial both to the Mexican community and to the region’s long-term growth and success—the economic integration of Mexican immigrants and their children.

Mexicans matter to the economy.

- In the 1990s, as the total U.S. population grew by 13 percent, the national Mexican population rose by 53 percent, and the Chicago region’s Mexican population increased by 83 percent.
- By 2004, Mexicans accounted for 41 percent of all immigrants in Chicago and more than 16 percent of the region’s population. More than half of them live in suburban communities, including the far reaches of the six-county metropolitan area.

The growth of the Mexican population has an impact on local and regional economies, education systems, governments, and public health institutions in ways that must be anticipated and addressed

by policymakers. And the Mexican community brings new assets for the development of the region.

Successful integration of Mexican immigrants and their children into Chicago's economic and social spheres will require a partnership between Mexican and non-Mexican Chicagoans—a partnership vital to the region's prosperity.

The integration of the Mexican community has some marked differences from that of other immigrant groups who have come to this region in the past:

- Chicago has never before faced the task of incorporating such a large proportion of its population from a single foreign country, all sharing a common language and culture, in such a short period of time.
- The task of integrating large numbers of immigrants is complicated by a postindustrial economy that demands increasing levels of education and limits traditional avenues of immigrant economic and social mobility.
- The pace of today's global economic change demands that Chicago take immediate action to ensure that its workforce has the training necessary to compete in a knowledge-based economy, and build on the linguistic and cultural assets that many immigrants possess.

Mexican immigrants are a highly motivated and entrepreneurial workforce already making an enormous contribution to the economy of the region.

Consider these facts:

- Mexicans are 80 percent of the Chicago Latino community.
- Nearly 10 percent of the region's total household income is accounted for by the Latino community.
- Almost 15 percent of the Illinois labor force in 2004 was Latino.

- Between 1990 and 2003, the growth in number of Latino workers nearly equaled the total number of new jobs created in the region.
- Between 2000 and 2003, Latinos accounted for nearly half of the total growth in owner-occupied homes in the region.
- Latinos are a young population with a median age of 26.2 and are expected to increasingly fill labor gaps and contribute to the region's tax base.
- Mexico is Illinois' second-largest trading partner.
- Mexicans' bilingual and bicultural capabilities represent opportunities for business and cultural exchange with the \$2.4 trillion market of the world's 21 Spanish-speaking countries.

Yet, the full integration of Mexican immigrants into the economic and civic life of the region is hampered by many problems, such as a lack of English proficiency, adjustment to American cultural norms, limited connections to the wider community, and low levels of education.

This report focuses on ways that Chicago's civic leaders can bolster the region's economic power by harnessing the full capacity of the Mexican community. The report makes recommendations for ways in which Mexicans and the wider community can partner at all levels of government, business, education, and civic life.

The Task Force believes that by adopting the recommendations in this report our region will expand opportunities for employment, entrepreneurship, and asset-building; provide quality education and health care; and increase political and civic participation for the benefit of the Mexican community and for all of greater Chicago's residents.

Illinois and Chicago have been leaders in developing immigrant-friendly policies and programs that enable immigrants to lead productive and stable lives, regardless of national legislation on immigration policy. Our recommendations build on this leadership.

The Task Force recognizes that some of the new initiatives recommended will require greater resources and expenditures from public sector budgets. But the Task Force strongly believes that investment

in the full integration of the Mexican community is an investment in the social and economic future of the city and region, and will be richly repaid in the years to come.

To achieve these goals, the Task Force makes the following recommendations, grouped into four areas.

I. Economic Opportunity and Asset Development

Mexicans are buying homes, opening businesses, and sending funds back to family in Mexico. They fill labor gaps and contribute to robust industries. But although some Mexicans have moved into the building trades and into professions requiring a college education, the majority of workers are still concentrated in low-wage jobs. And while Mexican entrepreneurship is thriving, business owners will require access to capital, broader networking, and business management training to expand.

Illinois' projected high-growth industries in health, education, trucking and transportation, and skilled jobs in manufacturing present opportunities for Mexicans with bilingual capabilities, higher levels of education, and improved technical skills.

Many Mexicans, both U.S. and foreign-born, face obstacles to gaining better employment and financial prosperity, including cultural differences and:

- low education levels and inadequate English skills
- limited contacts beyond their circle of friends and family
- problems with validating degrees and other work credentials earned in Mexico
- underutilization of banking and other financial services

Mexicans will be able to contribute more fruitfully to Chicago's economy as workers, business owners, and consumers if these obstacles can be removed.

ECONOMIC RECOMMENDATION 1:

Widen and deepen employment opportunities for Mexicans in the region by promoting job advancement and creating employment in new job sectors.

- The Task Force urges business, labor unions, workforce development boards, community colleges, and community based-organizations to partner in providing customized training for Mexicans and other immigrants. This training would integrate on-site work skills training with English classes; develop new career pathways into areas of job growth such as health, education, transportation, and financial services; and assist in job placement with targeted employers, industries, and trade unions.
- The Task Force urges state and professional accreditation organizations to establish licensing and accreditation procedures for international credentials that open opportunities for immigrants to gain employment in their fields of expertise, without compromising quality or safety.

ECONOMIC RECOMMENDATION 2:

Enhance economic growth in local communities in the city and suburbs by supporting Mexican entrepreneurship.

- The Task Force urges local mayors to recruit and work with Mexican business owners for revitalization of commercial districts and depressed residential areas, by informing them of municipal business opportunities and resources and linking them to local business networks.
- The Task Force urges Mexican business owners to expand their networking and skill-building opportunities by participating in local chambers of commerce, community development and labor organizations, and other entrepreneurial networks.
- The Task Force urges Mexican entrepreneurs to partner with private investors, banks, and government agencies to expand their businesses through venture capital and shared equity.

ECONOMIC RECOMMENDATION 3:**Promote financial literacy and asset development, including banking and home ownership, among Mexican households.**

- The Task Force urges financial institutions, employers, schools, and community-based organizations to expand existing efforts to increase financial literacy through bilingual programs.
- The Task Force urges financial institutions to continue accepting alternative forms of identification, such as individual taxpayer identification numbers and the *matricula consular*, and to find other ways to overcome barriers posed by the USA PATRIOT Act.
- The Task Force urges city and suburban governments to preserve and expand the number of affordable housing units to meet the needs of Mexican families.

II. Education of Tomorrow's Workforce

Like other immigrants before them, Mexicans come to Chicago in search of a better life for themselves and their families. They work hard so that their children can obtain a good education, pursue successful careers, and enjoy better lives than they did.

As employment in the Chicago area continues shifting from manufacturing to service and technology, the increasing need for a highly trained, educated, multilingual workforce requires that the region offer high-quality education from preschool through college for all its residents, including Mexicans.

Mexican immigrants come to the U.S. with low levels of education, and Mexican children have among the lowest levels of high school and college completion of all ethnic and racial groups in the region. The Consortium of Chicago School Research at the University of Chicago reports that almost half of Latino students drop out of public high schools in Chicago, and those who do finish are less likely than other high school graduates in Illinois and the country to attend college. Further, school districts with high percentages of low-income and students of color are more likely to have teachers who are inexperienced and have lower basic academic skills.

Improving academic achievement among students from greater Chicago's Mexican community and building upon their bilingual assets will require more equitable funding of schools and investment in the people and programs to make them work.

EDUCATION RECOMMENDATION 1:**Understand the needs of the growing Mexican population in suburban and city schools, and develop plans that increase the education assets available to support their academic achievement and educational attainment.**

- The Task Force urges city and suburban school districts in the six-county area to review, improve, or replace their bilingual education programs to ensure that students achieve fluency in reading and writing in English, and to expand dual-language programs that develop second-language capability for all students from kindergarten through high school.
- The Task Force urges Chicago Public Schools, suburban school districts, and the Illinois State Board of Education to continue to fund efforts to build and staff schools in neighborhoods with growing populations.

EDUCATION RECOMMENDATION 2:**Expand the pool of trained and qualified bilingual and bicultural teachers and administrators for early childhood education, and elementary and high schools.**

- The Task Force urges schools and university departments of education to partner with community-based organizations to recruit and support local Mexican teacher and principal candidates from traditional and nontraditional backgrounds.
- The Task Force urges departments of education in local colleges and universities and the Illinois State Board of Education to partner with Mexican educational institutions to implement a teacher training and certification program enabling teachers from Mexico to work in Chicago and suburban school districts.

EDUCATION RECOMMENDATION 3:

Raise expectations for high academic achievement among Mexican students, their parents, teachers, guidance counselors, and principals, and provide resources to assist in meeting these expectations.

- The Task Force urges Latino leaders, foundations, business leaders, and educators to support programs from middle school through high school that prepare Mexican students to complete college. Programs should focus on educating parents and students on the importance of a college education and provide assistance with navigating the college application process.
- The Task Force urges Chicago Public Schools to partner with business, foundations, and other philanthropic organizations to implement a longer school day and longer school year, allowing for more academically rigorous curriculum and enrichment programs, including sports and the arts, with priority given to schools with high Mexican populations.

EDUCATION RECOMMENDATION 4:

Strengthen parent and community participation and leadership in city and suburban schools to improve educational outcomes for Mexican students.

- The Task Force urges school districts to partner with Mexican and other Latino community organizations to develop a Latino leadership school action network, beginning with members of Local School Councils and suburban school boards, to help create leaders in schools by training parents, teachers, administrators, and guidance counselors.
- The Task Force urges Mexican hometown associations, Spanish-language media, and Mexican-owned businesses and community-based organizations to strengthen the active participation of parents in the schools, and to support Mexican students from preschool to college.
- The Task Force urges local business leaders, including retirees, to partner with schools to provide expertise in organizational

development, and mentorship and internship activities for students, and to fund innovative academic and after-school programs, low or no-interest loans, and scholarships at colleges and universities.

III. Civic Engagement and Political Participation

The Mexican community is engaged in important civic and leadership activities through churches, cultural institutions, Local School Councils, and community groups such as Mexican hometown associations. But achieving and maintaining their full economic integration requires that greater numbers of Mexican immigrants become American citizens and voters.

Obstacles to civic engagement and political participation by the Mexican community include:

- high percentages of non-U.S. citizens among adults
- a large population under age 18 among the U.S.-born
- low voter registration
- limited English skills
- racial discrimination and possible anti-immigrant sentiment
- political networks limited to their own ethnic group

Expanding access to community-based English classes and citizenship instruction, and increasing voter registration are central to enhancing civic and political participation. Cultural institutions and the media play important roles in promoting cross-cultural understanding.

CIVIC AND POLITICAL RECOMMENDATION 1:

Foster participation of Mexicans and other Latinos in civic leadership through collaboration among business and philanthropic communities, state and local governments, and Latino leaders.

- The Task Force urges the Mexican community to partner with Chicago's business and professional communities and philan-

thropic institutions to build the capacity of organizations that work with immigrants, such as hometown associations.

- The Task Force urges Mexican and other Latino organizations to establish relationships with corporate, civic, cultural, and community organizations to encourage the participation of Mexican leaders on their boards, and urges Chicago's business and professional leaders to examine the makeup of boards, and to make an active effort to identify Mexican leaders to join them.
- The Task Force urges Mexican and other leaders to identify and support Mexican candidates for Local School Councils, suburban school boards, and zoning and planning boards.

CIVIC AND POLITICAL RECOMMENDATION 2:

Increase political participation of the Mexican community by promoting citizenship, voter registration, and voting, as well as by building coalitions.

- The Task Force urges civic Chicago to partner with the Mexican community to promote youth participation in the political process by educating young people in schools, through government agencies, community programs, internships and mentorship opportunities, and involvement in political campaigns.
- The Task Force urges the Mexican community to partner with corporations, foundations, government agencies, and community-based immigrant organizations to increase programs teaching English as a second language, citizenship classes, and naturalization and voter registration campaigns.

CIVIC AND POLITICAL RECOMMENDATION 3:

Promote knowledge and understanding of the Mexican community through cultural institutions, media, community initiatives, and adoption of policies that protect human and civil rights.

- The Task Force encourages Mayor Richard M. Daley to consider issuing a memorandum to all city departments reaffirming Chicago's commitment to being a multicultural city, and urges

the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus to prepare a similar proclamation to be passed by local municipalities, and to partner with Mexican and other immigrant leaders to implement an education campaign for mayors on immigrants' rights and issues.

- The Task Force urges Spanish and English radio, television, and print media to expand programming that educates and informs the Mexican community about issues such as financial literacy, voting, education, and jobs, and to produce programming that demonstrates ways in which Mexicans and other immigrants contribute to life in metropolitan Chicago.

IV. Health and Social Services

Because they are a young population, Mexican immigrants and their children are also generally a healthy population. However, they have unmet health needs that must be addressed:

- *Insurance:* Mexicans are the ethnic group most likely to be uninsured or underinsured, leading to health problems that go untreated and high medical bills that put a financial burden on the entire family. Poverty, language, cultural norms, racism, and immigration status have been found to influence the quality and effectiveness of health care that Mexicans and other immigrants receive.
- *Disease Prevention:* Rising rates of obesity and diabetes among adults and children are of concern because of the serious long-term health problems they bring. Increased access to health education, screenings, and other preventive care is critical for the Mexican community, especially for children and adolescents.
- *Social Services:* Social services provide necessary support for Mexican individuals and families. Yet, obtaining social services, especially in suburbs unprepared for the influx of Mexicans and other immigrants, is often difficult due to language and cultural barriers, and a lack of adequate resources.

The full economic integration of the Mexican community will require that their basic health and human service needs are met, enabling parents to work and provide for their families, their children to succeed in school, and families to participate in all aspects of community life.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL RECOMMENDATION 1:

Increase access to affordable, accessible, culturally competent care for the Mexican population in the Chicago metropolitan region.

- The Task Force urges state legislators to make public health insurance and access to services available to all Illinois residents regardless of immigration status through programs such as All Kids, Family Care, and universal healthcare initiatives.
- The Task Force urges corporate, private, and hospital foundations to partner with high schools, local community colleges, four-year colleges, and healthcare institutions to develop programs that recruit and train bicultural and bilingual health professionals.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL RECOMMENDATION 2:

Expand programs and resources that encourage disease prevention and wellness in Mexican communities in the city and suburbs.

- The Task Force urges local and state departments of public health, research universities, and foundations to provide resources for programs that promote preventive care in the Mexican community through schools, churches, community-based organizations, community health promotion programs, and other grassroots initiatives.
- The Task Force urges local and state departments of public health and human services to partner with schools, community-based organizations, media, and Mexican youth to implement programs promoting nutrition, exercise, and other wellness efforts, and to establish more green space in Mexican communities.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL RECOMMENDATION 3:

Provide financial and professional expertise to create a stronger social services infrastructure in the suburbs able to meet the needs of the growing Mexican community.

- The Task Force urges regional organizations, such as the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus and the Suburban United Way, to

work with city and suburban social services organizations to increase availability of services in suburban communities with large or growing Mexican populations.

- The Task Force urges suburban mayors to partner with immigrant and other community leaders to establish Community Welcoming Centers in suburbs that have growing Mexican and other immigrant populations.

A Call to Action

As we have demonstrated throughout this report, the Mexican community plays a vital role in Chicago today and will do so even more in the future. While there has been a Mexican presence in the area since the late nineteenth century, the latest wave of Mexican immigrants has brought new challenges and rich opportunities to city neighborhoods and suburban communities. Building on their talents, skills, and economic potential will require vision and commitment from our leaders, investment of resources, cross-cultural dialogue, collaboration across sectoral and political lines, and creativity from Chicagoans of all backgrounds.

City dwellers and suburbanites, lifelong residents and recent immigrants, Mexicans and non-Mexicans alike, ours is a shared future.

As members of the Mexican American Task Force, we call upon civic, business, and philanthropic leaders; Mexican community and business leaders; educators; state and local government officials and other policymakers; and all of greater Chicago to consider these findings and implement these recommendations. We, the Task Force, offer this report for the economic engagement of greater Chicago and its Mexican community, in the spirit of a mutual responsibility for a global city providing opportunities for all.

Task Force Report

I. Introduction

Strong hands, vibrant cultures, and creative minds have built Chicago, forging a great city of opportunity, a resilient metropolis able to take advantage of the economic, political, and social changes that have come its way. Throughout its history, immigrants from all corners of the world have played critical roles in shaping the character and economic life of the Chicago region.

In 1870, Chicago boasted the highest proportion of immigrants of any North American city, with half of its residents born outside the United States. Metropolitan Chicago continues to have one of the largest immigrant populations in the nation, ranking seventh in number of foreign-born residents. Like much of the United States, Chicago drew its immigrants first from Northern, then Southern and Eastern Europe, as Germans, Swedes, and Irish were followed by Italians, Poles, and Bohemians, among others.

Most of these immigrants assimilated into what has been called the “melting pot” of American culture within a generation or so, aided by jobs requiring little education, immigrant settlement houses, and ethnic churches and neighborhoods. These mostly European immigrants helped to transform Chicago from a trading post to an industrial capital.

In the postindustrial age, immigrants from Mexico and other Latin American countries and Asia have halted population declines, altered the cultural landscape, and are contributing to economic growth throughout greater Chicago. They play a vital role in Chicago’s transformation into a first-tier global city.

Today, with more ease of travel to native lands and greater recognition of the rich culture that immigrants have always brought with them, immigrants do not so much assimilate as take part in a two-way integration with their adopted country, adapting to its customs and values while sharing their own traditions and enriching the language and culture of the United States. Mexicans have been in the region since the late nineteenth century when they came to work in the steel mills and railroads, and have become a part of Chicago’s multiethnic character. In the last 20 years, however, the increasing numbers of Mexicans in Chicago have had a great impact on the local and regional economies, education systems, governments, and public health institutions in ways that must be anticipated and

addressed by policymakers. They also present new assets to be integrated into the life of the region.

The integration of the Mexican community has some marked differences from other immigrant groups who have come to this region in the past:

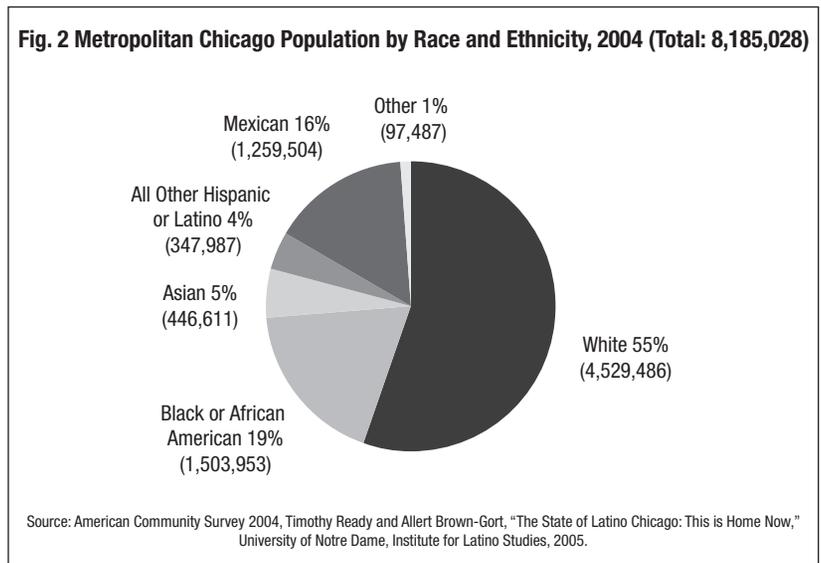
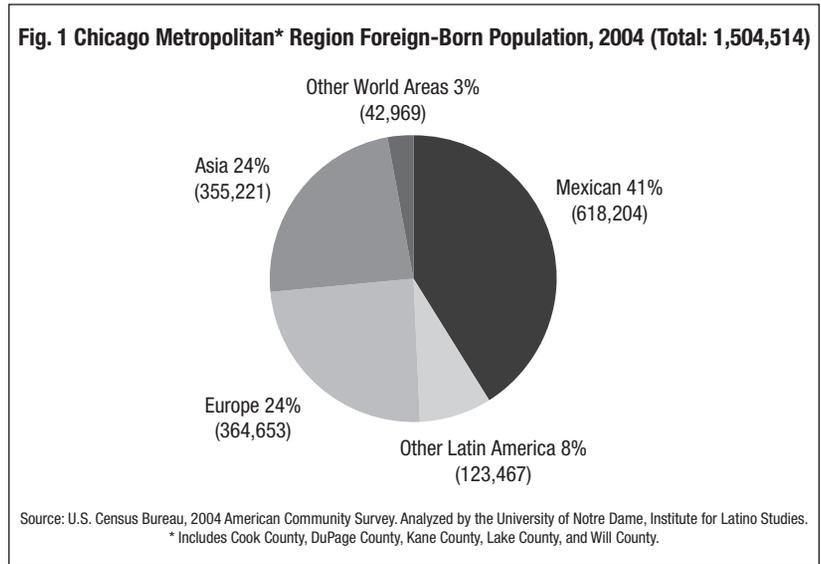
- Chicago has never before faced the task of incorporating such a large proportion of its population from a single foreign country, all sharing a common language and culture.
- The task of integrating large numbers of immigrants is complicated by the evolution of a postindustrial economy that demands increasing levels of education, credentials, and formal training—factors that limit traditional avenues of immigrant economic and social mobility.
- Since Latinos are expected to comprise one-third of the region’s population by 2030, and their median age is almost six years younger than that of the general population, Chicago’s future workforce will be composed to a significant degree of the children of this population.
- The pace of change in today’s economic competition demands that Chicago take immediate action to remain an economic leader by ensuring that its workforce has the training necessary to perform the jobs required, and doing so in a way that builds upon the linguistic and cultural assets that many immigrants possess.

Successful integration of Mexican immigrants and their children into Chicago’s economic and social spheres will require a partnership between Mexican and non-Mexican Chicagoans. This partnership is vital to the region’s prosperity.

Mexicans Matter

In the 1990s, as the total U.S. population grew by 13 percent, its Mexican population rose by 53 percent, and the Chicago region’s increase was even greater at 83 percent. The 1.3 million Mexicans in the Chicago area are by far the single largest ethnic group. By 2004, Mexicans accounted for 41 percent of all immigrants living in the

region and comprised more than 16 percent of the region's population (see figures 1 and 2). More than half of them live in suburban communities, from towns adjacent to the city to the far reaches of the six-county metropolitan area.



Mexican immigrants are a highly motivated and entrepreneurial workforce already making an enormous contribution to the economy of the region. Consider these facts:

- Mexicans are 80 percent of the Latino community.
- Nearly 10 percent of the region's total household income is accounted for by the Latino community.
- Almost 15 percent of the Illinois labor force in 2004 was Latino.
- Between 1990 and 2003, the growth in number of Latino workers nearly equaled the total number of new jobs created in the region.
- Between 2000 and 2003, Latinos accounted for nearly half of the total growth in owner-occupied homes in the region.
- Latinos are a young population with a median age of 26.2 and are expected to increasingly fill labor gaps and contribute to the region's tax base.
- Mexicans' bilingual and bicultural capabilities represent opportunity for business and cultural exchange with the world's 21 Spanish-speaking countries.

Mexican immigrants are an essential economic force in Chicago, but their full integration into the economic and civic life of the region is hampered by the traditional problems confronted by all immigrants, such as a lack of English proficiency, adjustment to American cultural norms, limited networks to the wider community, and low education.

In addition, Mexican immigrants face discrimination not only because of their foreign status but because of the color of their skin, especially as some reports indicate that an anti-immigrant and possibly anti-Mexican sentiment may be on the rise. The economic integration of Mexicans is made difficult as well by their concentrations in low-wage work and their lower rates of education as Chicago evolves into a technology- and knowledge-driven economy.

Although no one knows for sure, best estimates are that about 25 percent of Mexican immigrants in Illinois are undocumented, which restricts their opportunities to integrate and endangers their American-born children's chances to succeed.

The Chicago region has successfully overcome issues like these among previous waves of Mexican and other immigrants. Its leaders can use this past as a guide to the future, studying what worked and what failed, using those successful approaches that still apply in today's world.

Seizing the Moment

The difficulty facing us now is the speed with which integration must be achieved, especially for the children of immigrants. Fully 84 percent of Latino children are born in the United States. They will soon be a significant proportion of Chicago's regional workforce and must be adequately educated and prepared to compete in a global, knowledge-based economy.

Chicago and Illinois have been leaders in reforms of local immigrant policies, such as the state's acceptance of the *matricula consular*, an alternative form of identification issued by the Consulate General of Mexico. Other efforts are under way to tackle immigrant policies, through projects such as Illinois' New Americans Initiative, a public-private partnership to increase U.S. citizenship in Illinois.

The Mexican American Task Force has focused on the aspect of integration of the region's largest immigrant group that is most crucial both to the immigrants' and to the region's long-term growth and prosperity, the economic engagement of Mexican immigrants and their children.

This strategic focus has many facets, including education, civic and political engagement, and health care and social services, but all are linked to economics. Mexicans cannot contribute fully to Chicago's economic prosperity without sensible policies that enable them to lead stable, healthy, productive lives, and develop their human potential.

As Mexicans' incomes rise, many of the problems they now face will decline proportionately. The economics of education is a well-established, push-pull dynamic: As education levels rise, so do earning power, buying power, quality of life, and upward mobility. On the other hand, continued low education leads to unfulfilled lives, social disorder, and high public costs.

The sooner we can develop this potential economic power, the sooner and greater will be the wealth creation for the society at large as well as for the Mexican community. The economics here are those of mutual benefit: It is in Chicago's enlightened self-interest to

aggressively promote the economic integration of these new neighbors, hungry for advancement and eager for a better future for their children.

Immigrant integration is a communitywide process of cross-cultural learning and sharing of resources. This report focuses on ways that Mexicans and the wider community can partner at all levels of government, business, education, and community to expand opportunities for employment, entrepreneurship, and asset-building; provide quality education and health care; and increase political and civic participation for the benefit of the Mexican community and for all of greater Chicago's residents.

In making recommendations for the economic integration of Mexican immigrants and their children, the Task Force has looked for successful existing programs that can be replicated or expanded to reach a larger number of people. The Task Force recognizes that some of the new initiatives recommended will require greater resources and expenditure from public sector budgets, both city and state, a difficult undertaking in this time of budgetary constraints. However, investment in the full integration of the Mexican community is an investment in the social and economic future of the city and region and will be richly repaid in the years to come.

II. Economic Opportunity and Asset Development

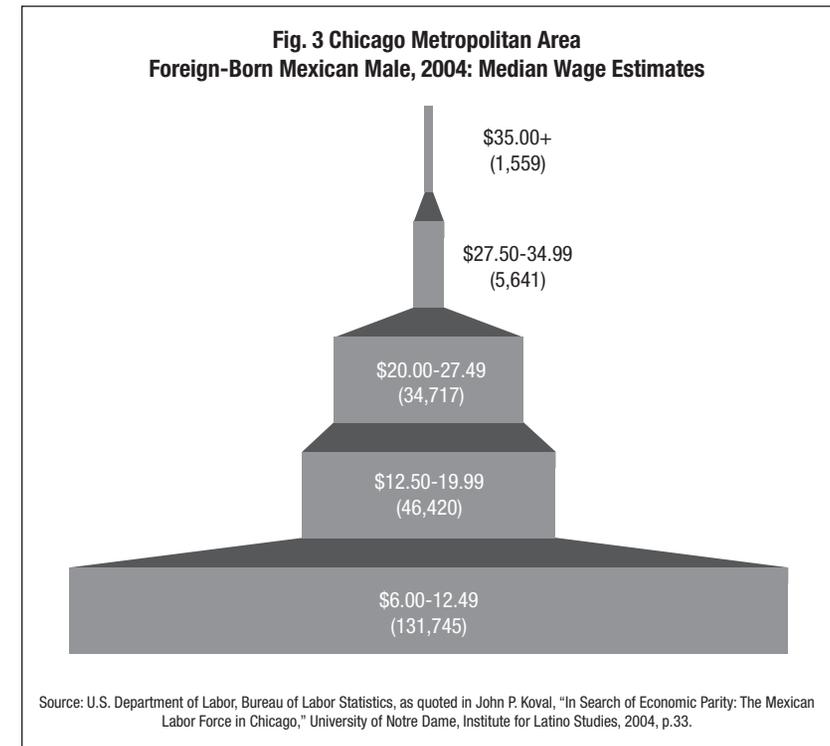
The economic integration of Mexican immigrants and their children has already begun. From the recently arrived day laborer putting up drywall in condo conversions to the young Chicago-born principal opening a dual-language charter school to the suburban couple launching a new restaurant, Mexican immigrants and their children have become a part of Chicago's regional economy and are helping to shape its future. They work, shop, and invest every day in city neighborhoods as diverse as Bridgeport, Lincoln Park, and Little Village, as well as in suburban communities such as Blue Island, Oak Brook, and Round Lake.

Though it is generally acknowledged that immigrant populations cause temporary dislocations in labor and housing markets, the main effect of increased population through immigration is to enlarge the size of the economy within U.S. borders. Mexican immigration has done just that, revitalizing many city and suburban neighborhoods in metropolitan Chicago and enabling the growth of thriving construction, restaurant, home maintenance, manufacturing, and hospitality industries. And while more than a million Illinois residents have left the state in the past 20 years, their places have been taken by the million or more immigrants who have made Illinois their new home. In fact, some observers argue that it is the Mexican immigrants and other arrivals who have prevented the loss of congressional representation and population-based allocations of federal dollars.

Today, because of their rapidly growing numbers, bilingual abilities, and close ties to their home country, Mexicans are playing an increasingly significant role in Chicago's bid for a top spot in the global economy—making the economic security and prosperity of Mexican immigrants and their families important not only for them, but for the entire region. Bilingual, bicultural Mexicans represent a potential link to the \$2.4 trillion market of 21 countries in which Spanish is the primary language and where economic cooperation with the United States is being pursued. Already, Mexico is Illinois' second largest trading partner. Illinois exported \$2.8 billion in products to Mexico in 2005 with items ranging from machinery to chemicals to plastics.

Mexicans are a vibrant and promising economic force in Chicago, but the majority of workers are concentrated in low-wage, low-skilled jobs while employment growth is in high-wage, high-skilled industries. In 2000, median wage estimates showed that there were more

foreign-born Mexican men in the Chicago region earning from \$6 to \$12.49 per hour, the lowest wage category, than those in all other wage categories combined, with less than 1 percent earning at the highest rates of \$35 or above (see figure 3). Similarly, median annual earnings of Latinos are approximately \$21,500 compared to \$36,600 for white non-Latinos, according to a recent survey of the region.



Many Mexicans, both U.S.- and foreign-born, face obstacles to gaining better employment and financial prosperity, including low education levels and inadequate English skills; limited contacts beyond their circle of friends and family; problems with validating degrees and other work credentials earned in Mexico; underutilization of banking and other financial services; and cultural differences. For undocumented immigrants, the obstacles are even greater. Removing these obstacles will enable Mexicans to contribute more fruitfully to Chicago's economy as workers, business owners, and consumers.

This chapter reviews the economic participation of Mexicans in metropolitan Chicago, and presents recommendations for expanding economic opportunities through better jobs, entrepreneurship, and asset-building strategies.

Findings and Recommendations

Economic Profile

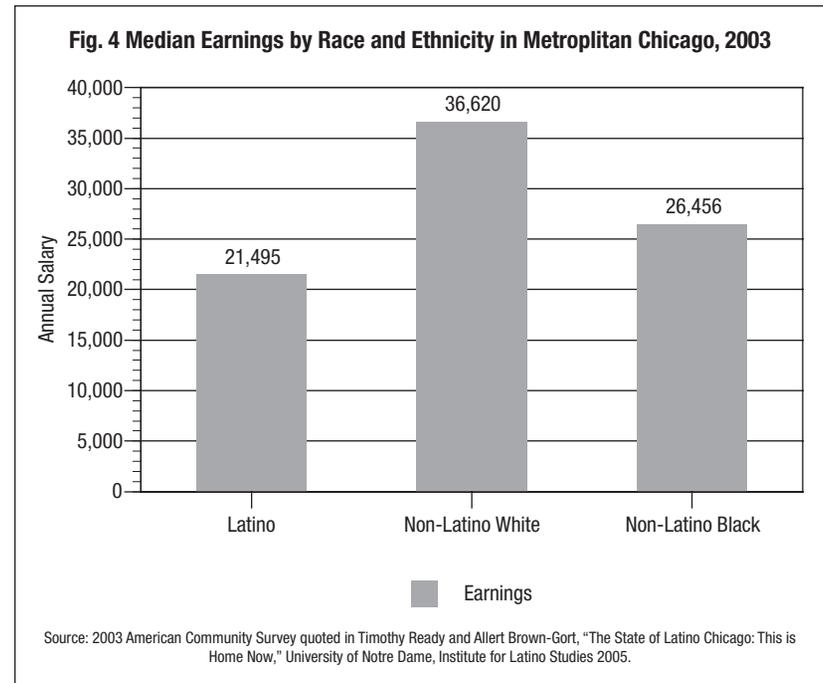
Mexicans are buying homes, opening businesses, and sending funds back to family in Mexico, but they need to close the gap in earnings and household income to provide expanded economic opportunities for their families.

Between 1990 and 2000, median household income for Latinos increased more rapidly in metropolitan Chicago than in other parts of the country, rising from \$30,200 to more than \$44,300. And by 2003, nearly one-third of Latino households had an income of \$60,000 or more and 20 percent earned \$75,000 or more. These figures show tremendous progress and reflect the robust economy of the region.

With \$20 billion in combined household income, Latinos in metropolitan Chicago have significant buying power. Businesses and marketing firms recognize this, targeting Latinos with advertising for products ranging from mortgages to cars to soft drinks and cell phones in both the Spanish language and mainstream media.

Yet, \$20 billion is nearly 10 percent of the region's total household income, while Latinos are 20 percent of the population. This discrepancy can be accounted for primarily by the concentration of Mexicans in mostly low-wage jobs. On average, Latino workers earned just 60 percent of what non-Latino white workers earned in metropolitan Chicago in 2003 (see figure 4). Closing the gap depends on Mexican workers being able to obtain the skills and education to enlarge the field of jobs available to them.

A similar pattern is evident in home ownership rates. Home ownership rates for Latinos are just above 50 percent, considerably under the 79 percent rate for whites in metropolitan Chicago. Between 2000 and 2003, however, Latinos accounted for 46 percent of the increase in owner-occupied housing in greater Chicago, a significant figure given that Latinos are just under 20 percent of the region's population.



Numbers are even more impressive for the greater Chicago's Mexican population alone. Between 1990 and 2000, home ownership rates rose for U.S.-born Mexicans from 52.4 percent to 57.5 percent and rose even more dramatically for Mexican immigrants, jumping from 43.1 percent to 55.2 percent. Mexicans and other Latinos are now a desirable client in the mortgage industry, as evidenced by local banks' increasing emphasis on the Latino consumer. But higher paying jobs, increased access to mortgages, and more affordable housing are needed to enable more Mexican immigrants to own their own homes.

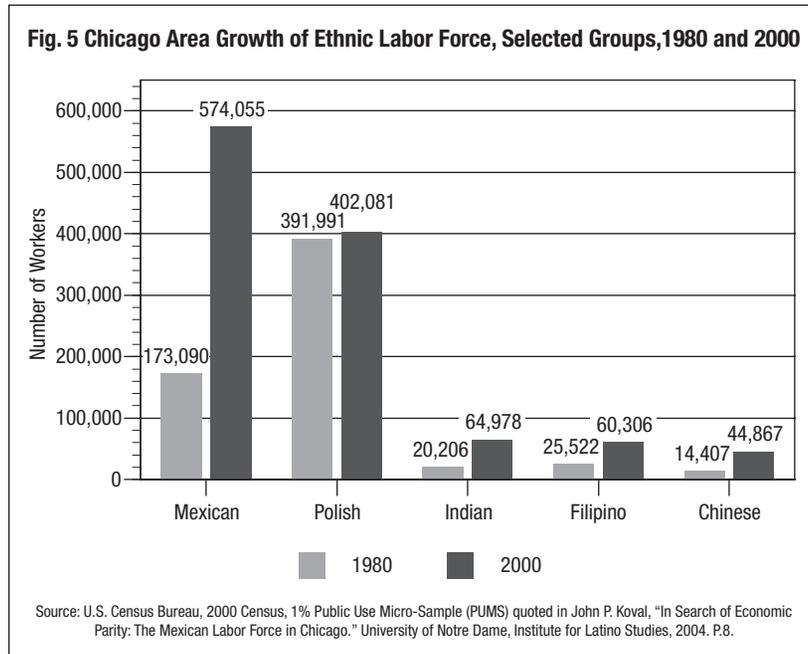
Labor Force Participation

Mexicans fill labor gaps and contribute to robust industries, but they are concentrated in low-wage jobs.

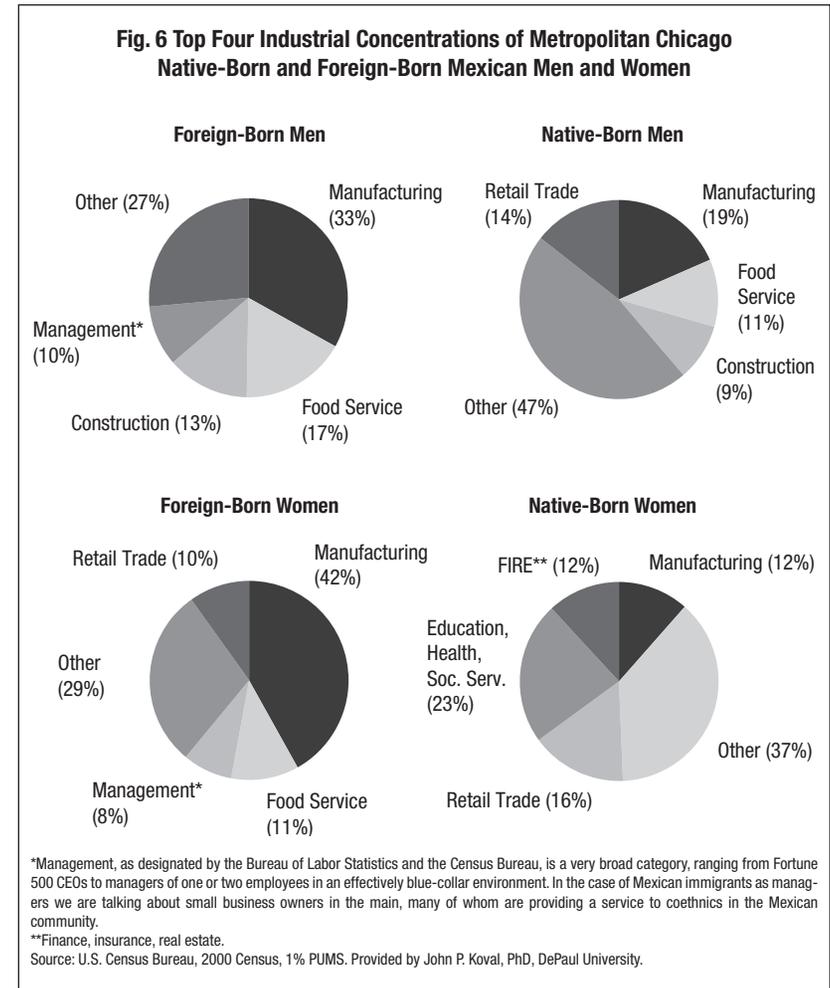
To successfully expand their job opportunities, Mexicans need to become a skilled, well-trained workforce able to advance in existing jobs and break into new fields that require new knowledge, abilities,

and credentials. Finding practical and effective ways of connecting workers to employers will require collaboration between the Mexican and non-Mexican communities.

In 2004, almost 15 percent of the Illinois labor force was Latino. “The State of Latino Chicago,” from the University of Notre Dame’s Institute for Latino Studies, reports that from 1990 to 2003, the growth in Latino workers, with Mexicans the vast majority, was 295,000, almost the same as the number of new jobs created in the region. The most recent data available for the Mexican labor force in the region shows that the number of Mexican workers tripled between 1980 and 2000 (see figure 5). Although the Latino labor force has grown, across the country the group remains concentrated in nonprofessional service occupations—occupations that rank low in earnings, education requirements, and socioeconomic status, according to the Pew Hispanic Center. This is also the case for Mexicans in Chicago.



For example, foreign-born Mexican men and women are more likely to be in manufacturing than their U.S.-born counterparts, and U.S.-born Mexican women are the only workers with significant representation in education, health care, social services, financial services, and real estate (see figure 6).



Mexicans have tended to work in specific “occupational niches,” men primarily in manufacturing, food service, construction, and home maintenance, and Mexican women in light manufacturing, hospitality, food service, and retail. In fact, half of all immigrant Mexican men in the labor force in metropolitan Chicago are employed in only 13 different job categories and half of immigrant Mexican women are in 11 different job categories, compared to 38 for white men and 24 for white women.

Mexicans have moved into building trades, but are concentrated in lower paying jobs.

There is a similar dynamic taking place in the building trades. While Mexicans and other Latinos in Chicago are entering the trades in increasing numbers, they are concentrated in the lower-skilled, lower-paying trades. A report for the City Colleges of Chicago says that from 2001 to 2005, Latinos became 86 percent of union drywall finishers, and 36 percent of cement masons, roofers, and bricklayers, but represented less than 20 percent of those in higher paying union jobs, such as carpentry, plumbing, and electrical work.

While in some Chicago-area unions there are many Mexican members, there are other unions where Mexicans are underrepresented. Given the increase in the area's Mexican population, the inherent opportunity to grow the Illinois labor movement that this presents, and organized labor's ability to improve wages, benefits, and working conditions for Mexican workers, both groups would benefit from expanding their existing contact to foster their respective development.

Manufacturing presents opportunities for Mexican workers if they improve their language and technical skills.

The number one sector for employment of Mexican immigrants in the region is manufacturing. This is not the case in any other U.S. city with a large Mexican population. Despite the decline in manufacturing jobs regionally and worldwide, Chicago is still the manufacturing capital of the United States, presenting an opportunity for Mexicans to build the technical, language, and other skills needed to advance within this sector.

The manufacturing sector is crucial to the regional economy. The Workforce Board of Metropolitan Chicago reports that the manufacturing sector contributes \$0.48 in purchases within the state for every dollar spent on manufacturing output, putting \$34 billion back into the Illinois economy. And for every manufacturing job created in Illinois, another 2.7 jobs are created in other sectors, which in 2000 equaled 1.4 million jobs that relied on the manufacturing sector.

To remain competitive, manufacturers need highly skilled workers. A 2005 Skills Gap report by Deloitte Consulting found that “the vast majority of American manufacturers are experiencing a serious shortage of qualified employees, which in turn is causing a signif-

icant impact to business and to the ability of the United States to compete in a global economy.” These include shortages in frontline workers such as machinists, operators, craft workers, distributors, and technicians as well as engineers and scientists. This sector has room for both upward mobility and new employment for Mexican workers, but will require innovative partnerships with adult education and job training organizations.

Fostering Upward Mobility in Manufacturing Jobs

The manufacturing sector in metropolitan Chicago continues to be crucial to the regional economy. To stay competitive, manufacturers must attract and retain highly skilled workers.

Instituto del Progreso Latino has led the way in moving Mexicans into higher skilled, higher paying manufacturing jobs. During the past 12 years, in partnership with the City Colleges of Chicago, Instituto has developed a nationally recognized Manufacturing Technology Bridge program to assist English-language learners in developing the competence and technical capacity to compete for higher skilled jobs. Instituto provides students with a strong foundation in computer skills, math, reading, writing, and blueprint reading and “bridges” students into the City Colleges of Chicago's technical training in machining, industrial maintenance, or computer numerical controls.

In July 2005, Chicago's Mayor's Office for Workforce Development chose Instituto to lead a city-wide effort, “Manufacturing Works: Chicago's Workforce Center for Manufacturing.” This initiative is dedicated to closing the gap between manufacturers who need workers and workers who need jobs. Beyond filling job openings with qualified workers, Manufacturing Works identifies job openings that remain unfilled due to a lack of qualified workers and encourages the public workforce system and private training institutions to create a pipeline of skilled workers.

High-growth industries present opportunities for Mexicans with bilingual skills.

The State of Illinois Industry Employment Projections for 2002 to 2012 show that Latinos are concentrated in only one of the top six projected growth industries—accommodation and food services—and many are at the low-wage end of these jobs, painting a bleak picture for future employment in better paying occupations unless serious investments are made in education and training.

Among the top six growth industries in Illinois, there are a variety of jobs in education, health, and social services where bilingual and bicultural skills are an asset (see figure 7). Mexican immigrants with credentials from Mexico can work in these occupations by validating their credentials and updating their training to practice here, and

Fig. 7 State of Illinois Industry Employment Projections: 2002-2012	
Largest Growth Industries	Number of New Jobs
Health Care and Social Assistance	124,752
Administrative and Waste Management Services	81,029
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	66,034
Accommodation and Food Services*	59,845
Educational Services	56,752
Retail Trade	51,733

*Industries with high Latino concentrations.
Source: Illinois Department of Employment Security, Economic Information & Analysis Division. Analyzed by the University of Notre Dame, Institute for Latino Studies.

young Mexican Americans can be guided into these careers while they are still in school.

Low educational attainment, limited English, underdeveloped job skills, and undocumented immigration status hold Mexican immigrants back.

“The Latino Good Jobs Challenge,” a survey analysis by the Institute for Latino Studies, found that Latino workers who do not speak English well or are undocumented are likely to experience “lower pay, fewer benefits, shorter terms of employment, and less employer investment in training.” They are also more isolated from information about good jobs, with a greater chance that they will be unemployed or working in temporary or day labor positions.

This poses several challenges for Mexican immigrants, especially the undocumented. In addition to having fewer job opportunities, immigrant workers are paid less and are at far greater risk of being killed or injured on the job than native-born workers. If they are hurt on the job, foreign-born workers are less likely to get appropriate health care because they lack health insurance and are often unaware of available health services, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Task Force members report that there are fewer English and job training classes available for Mexicans immigrants than are needed in the area, as evidenced by long waiting lists at community organizations and colleges that provide these services. Studies have found that immigrants seeking assistance at job centers often receive inappropriate assessments and that staff are reluctant to refer adults who

do not speak English to job training or education. Further, many training and educational opportunities are restricted to legal permanent residents.

A tightly integrated model of job training, English instruction, and basic skills enhancement has been well documented by the U.S. Department of Labor as effective with populations like the Mexican immigrant population, yet very few training organizations use the model.

The number of Mexican professionals is growing, but is still small compared to the general population.

In Chicago, the growing number of Latino professional associations and business networks, such as the Hispanic Bankers Association, National Society of Hispanic MBAs, the Chicago Latino Network, Hispanic Lawyers Association of Illinois, the Hispanic Alliance for Career Enhancement (HACE), and the Illinois Hispanic Chamber of

A Career Pipeline for Latino Professionals

Founded in Chicago in 1982, the Hispanic Alliance for Career Enhancement (HACE) is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to helping increase the numbers of Latino professionals and leaders through leadership and career development, beginning in high school and through college and on to the professional years. HACE works with leading corporations, the government, and other institutional employers to develop a career pipeline for Latino students and professionals.

The organization offers comprehensive year-round conferences, monthly open houses that provide access to executives at blue-chip American companies, career development workshops, training, mentoring, scholarships, and networking opportunities for Latino professionals at a regional and national level. HACE currently works with over 25,000 Latino professionals through its operations in five major regions of the country: Chicago, New York, Miami, Houston, and Southern California. And HACE has programming at over 25 of the leading universities in the country, where their systematic and methodical series of programs builds Latino leaders and communicators with a strong career orientation and high academic achievement. All HACE services are free to Latinos. From its early years when HACE worked with approximately 500 Latinos per year, the organization has expanded to serve an estimated 12,000 individuals, providing thousands of Latinos with professional opportunities at leading employers.

HACE’s mission is to incubate and nurture Latinos so that the community generates an increasing number of Latino professionals in all employment sectors and these individuals take increasing leadership and civic roles in their workplace and the community. HACE aims to develop more Latino professionals in the U.S. and is committed to ensuring that the image of Latinos reflects the great contributions they make.

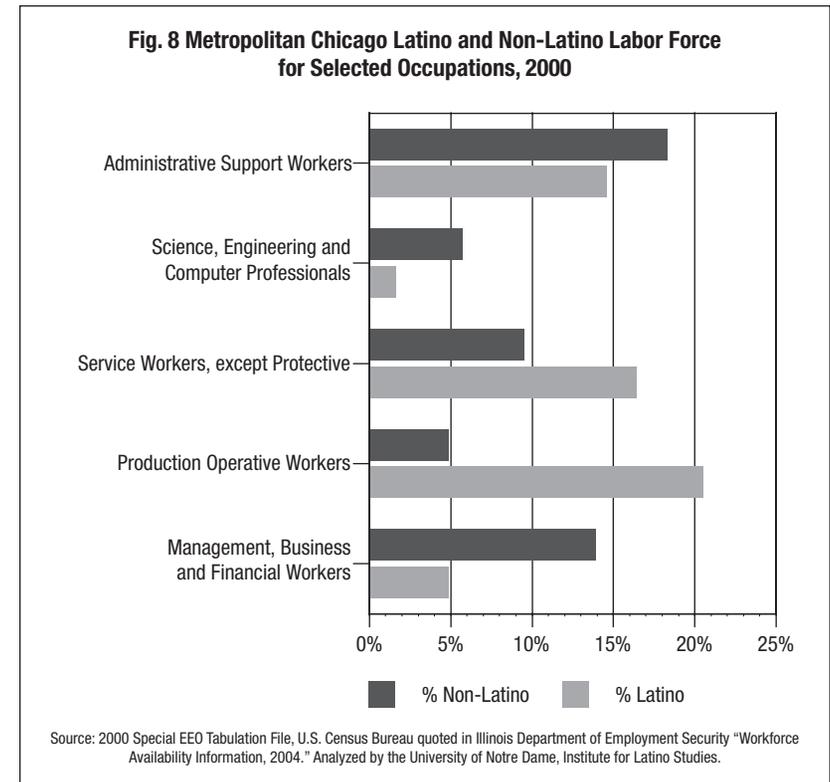
Commerce, attest to the rise in Mexican professionals in the area. These groups promote networking and mentoring and have become a reliable source of highly qualified Latino professionals for recruiters, marketers, and political candidates. Many Mexican professionals also participate in non-Latino professional organizations and clubs, which provide them with valuable opportunities for building relationships with non-Latinos in their professions.

Who are these Latino professionals? While figures are not available for the Chicago area, a 2006 national survey conducted by the Chicago-based HACE found that more than 86 percent of the Latino professionals who responded are U.S. citizens, almost all speak English fluently, and 89 percent are fully bilingual or have some Spanish speaking and writing skills. Practically all have completed some college and 80 percent have obtained a bachelor's degree or more. Respondents to the survey work in a broad range of professions ranging from Fortune 1000 and privately held companies to nonprofit organizations. Yet, Latinos are still greatly underrepresented in professional fields, making up only 1.6 percent of science, engineering, and computer professionals in metropolitan Chicago, for example (see figure 8).

Difficulty with validation of international education and work credentials limits opportunity for Mexican professionals to pursue their careers.

Each year, Mexican-trained teachers, nurses, lawyers, accountants, and other professionals come to Chicago with skills and expertise that could benefit the economic development of the region. But they cannot work in their fields because their credentials are not recognized and they are not licensed by local accrediting bodies. The failure to recognize credentials and training that immigrants bring to the region results in significant underutilization of human capital.

A report on "Integrating Immigrants in the Workplace," by the Institute for Work and the Economy at Northern Illinois University, reports that the United States lacks a formal system for recognizing the credentials of foreign-educated workers. Although statistics are difficult to obtain, a Canadian study showed that individuals stand to gain from \$8,000 to \$12,000 Canadian annually if their previous learning were "recognized, credentialed, and accepted." An article in *International Migration Review* said that in the first year after becoming legal permanent residents, 50 percent of immigrants entered lower skilled jobs than the jobs they left in their country of origin. Among the highest skilled immigrants from Latin America and the



Caribbean, more than three-fourths ended up in lower-skilled jobs than they had abroad.

Currently, foreign-trained workers largely bear the burden of obtaining third-party validation of their credentials by organizations such as World Education Services, but there is no guarantee that the credentials will be accepted by a prospective employer. In addition, each state has separate laws and regulations governing entry into a broad range of licensed professions. Although Illinois has begun to address this issue through an initiative aimed at encouraging employment of foreign-educated nurses, the subject has received little focused attention in the United States.

The Institute for Work and Economy has just begun a study to establish the scope of the problem, and plans to examine state regulatory barriers and other structural issues in seven Midwestern states, including Illinois.

ECONOMIC RECOMMENDATION 1:**Widen and deepen employment opportunities for Mexicans in the region by promoting job advancement and creating employment in new job sectors.***Action Items:*

- The Task Force urges business, local workforce development boards, community colleges, and community-based organizations to partner in providing customized training for Mexicans and other immigrants that integrates on-site, hands-on work skills training with English classes; to develop new career pathways into areas of job growth such as health, education, transportation, and financial services; and to assist in job placement with targeted employers, industries, and trade unions.
- The Task Force urges Latino professional organizations to partner with retired professionals and other leaders in the corporate, government, medical, and legal professions to create networking and mentoring opportunities that foster advancement of Mexican professionals into upper management positions and boards.
- The Task Force urges state and professional accreditation organizations to establish licensing and accreditation procedures for international credentials that open opportunities for immigrants to gain employment in their field of expertise, without compromising quality or safety.
- The Task Force urges organized labor, led by the Illinois AFL-CIO through its regional organizations, to partner with Mexican community leaders, colleges and universities, and potential employers to create regular forums for dialogue on training and employment, increase access to meaningful job training, and increase opportunities for entry of Mexican workers into the building trades and related areas.
- The Task Force urges employers, workforce development boards, and other publicly funded job placement organizations to actively work with Mexican hometown associations and immigrant service organizations to post job announcements and other employment opportunities.

Carreras En Salud: Closing the Skills Gap in Health Care

The need for bilingual healthcare professionals is acute in metropolitan Chicago. Latinos comprise less than 2 percent of all licensed practical nurses (LPN) and registered nurses. While many Latinos work as certified nurses' assistants (CNA), very few complete LPN programs largely due to limited language and math skills.

The *Carreras en Salud* (Careers in Health) program is a partnership between Instituto del Progreso Latino and Wright College's Humboldt Park Vocational Educational Center. The program, available to Spanish-speaking job seekers and healthcare workers, addresses the skills development gaps for Latinos and the healthcare industry's demand for bilingual healthcare professionals. Employer partners include Mercy Hospital and Medical Center, Erie Family Health Center, the Metropolitan Chicago Healthcare Council, and the Hispanic Nurses Association.

The program offers English classes and a 16-week preparation course in language and math for the medical field that prepares students for admission to Wright's LPN program. For the last five years, Wright College has been ranked the number one LPN program in Illinois with a 100 percent pass rate on the licensure exam, and a waiting list of 500 students for the rigorous program. In three years, a student can advance from a sixth-grade English capability to become a licensed practical nurse earning \$18 to \$24 an hour.

Since its launch in the spring of 2005, the partnership has enrolled more than 200 students who are at various points in preparing for demanding health careers, and has achieved greater than 85 percent retention and advancement of students.

Entrepreneurs

Mexican entrepreneurship is thriving, but will require access to capital, broader networking, and business management training to grow.

Despite the massive structural changes in the economy over the past 35 years, as the gap between education of the native-born and the majority of immigrants has grown, entrepreneurship has provided an avenue through which immigrants can prosper.

In Chicago and the suburbs, entrepreneurship is at the heart of thriving Mexican communities. Twenty-sixth Street in Chicago's Little Village neighborhood is visited by Latinos from across the Midwest for a diverse array of Mexican products ranging from handsewn wedding and christening gowns to *tamales* and herbal medicines. This strip is among the highest-grossing commercial districts in the city. Similar successful commercial areas with Mexican grocers, restaurants, insurance agents, beauty shops, *paleterías*, cell phone shops, and bakeries have sprung up in suburbs with large Mexican populations, such as Aurora, Cicero, and Stone Park.

In 2002, sales from Latino-owned businesses in Illinois totaled \$7.4 billion, an impressive jump from \$4.8 billion in 1997 (see figure 9). Ninety percent of these almost 40,000 Latino-owned, mostly Mexican businesses in Illinois were in the six-county Chicago area. This is a 28 percent increase since 1997 and evidence of the entrepreneurial spirit of the Mexican community. Almost 33,000 of these businesses are family operated and one of a kind with no paid employees, but they generate almost \$1 billion in sales.

Studies on ethnic entrepreneurship suggest that immigrants, risk-takers who have chosen to leave their homes for a better life, bring the appropriate attitude to start a business, which may partly explain the robust numbers of Mexican entrepreneurs. A known factor in the success of entrepreneurs is their participation in entrepreneurial networks, such as chambers of commerce and trade associations. Entrepreneurial networks give business owners a vehicle for collectively voicing their needs, identify a supportive community for them, and benefit society at large by nurturing civic leaders. The networks also help to promote new business and strengthen existing businesses, which in turn creates new jobs and wealth in a community.

Mexican business owners face obstacles to growth due to limited knowledge of business systems, limited networking, low English skills, and lack of capital.

Though entrepreneurship is thriving in the Mexican community, few business owners participate in entrepreneurial networks or have access to non-Mexican business leaders. Many Mexican entrepreneurs are limited by a lack of English skills and limited knowledge of business systems in Chicago.

Further, many small- to medium-sized Mexican-owned businesses cannot expand because they are unable take on more debt, do not have access to venture capital or other private equity, or are wary of sharing equity with private investors. In some cases, access to capital is also limited by poor financial recordkeeping. Like many businesses that are family owned and operated, they are reluctant to hire staff from outside the family, limiting their management capacity.

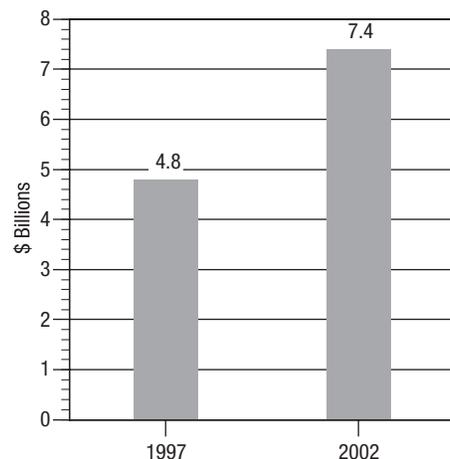
Blue Island, Illinois: Diversity Aids Revitalization

Blue Island, Illinois, has always been a diverse community, but this diversity is more relevant today than ever before. An old railroad and industrial town that borders Chicago, Blue Island was dominated in the early twentieth century by German and Irish immigrants. Today, however, more than half of the 23,500 people in Blue Island are Mexican.

In the last few decades, Blue Island suffered a significant loss in jobs, partly because a vast majority of its industrial plants closed, and the number of local businesses declined due to the development of shopping malls in nearby towns. Under the leadership of Mayor Don Peloquin, a community-led economic development plan has been proposed that aims to revitalize Blue Island and make it a model community for the future. Blue Island has tried to break down traditional barriers of language and culture by reaching out to the Latino community at the local level, such as appointing Latinos to local planning, zoning, library, and civil service boards. To maximize the number of city residents employed in Blue Island businesses, a new service will be created to establish partnerships with high schools and community colleges with referral agencies to link employers with qualified residents looking for jobs. When completed, an intracity public transportation system and new bicycle paths will offer residents cost-effective choices in commuting. Senior citizens of all ethnic backgrounds tutor young children, giving the seniors new purpose and the children new relationships with the older generations.

The mayor has found that the work ethic and family values Latinos bring to Blue Island are the building blocks of a diverse community with a vibrant citizenry.

Fig. 9 Receipts of Hispanic-Owned Businesses-Illinois 1997 and 2002 (in billions)



Source: 2002 Survey of Business Owners, 1997 Survey of Minority-Owned Business Enterprises.
Analyzed by the University of Notre Dame, Institute for Latino Studies.

ECONOMIC RECOMMENDATION 2:

Enhance economic growth in local communities in the city and suburbs by supporting Mexican entrepreneurship.

Action Items:

- The Task Force urges local mayors to recruit and work with Mexican business owners for revitalization of commercial districts and depressed residential areas by informing them of municipal business opportunities and resources and linking them to local business networks.
- The Task Force urges Mexican business owners to expand their networking and skill-building opportunities by participating in local chambers of commerce, community development and labor organizations, and other entrepreneurial networks, and urges these organizations to reach out to the Mexican business community using bilingual materials and other targeted approaches.
- The Task Force urges Mexican entrepreneurs to partner with private investors, banks, and government agencies to expand their businesses through venture capital and shared equity.

Financial Access

A lack of financial literacy, poor experience with banks in their home countries, and identification requirements hinder the ability of Mexican and other immigrants to use mainstream financial institutions and to save, invest, and build assets.

Having financial access is fundamentally linked to economic prosperity, according to a 2006 report by the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago and the Brookings Institution. The report defines financial access as “knowing what one’s financial options are and having products and services to choose.” Researchers found that while immigrants are becoming more knowledgeable about financial services, their opportunities for learning such things as how to open a bank account, purchase insurance, save for retirement, obtain a mortgage, or invest in the stock market are still limited, especially for those who do not speak English.

Students Are Bankers at Curie High School

In an effort to provide students with work-oriented, hands-on experience at the high school level, Curie Metropolitan High School on Chicago’s Southwest side participates in the “Education-to-Careers” program of the Chicago Public Schools, serving approximately 3,100 students, of whom more than 50 percent are Latino. Curie is a Chicago Public School Career Academy that connects students with educators and other professionals as they prepare for their lives after high school.

As part of its program, in January 2005, the academy opened a full-service branch of Park Federal Savings Bank at the school, the only student-operated bank in the school district. Students not only learn about opening checking and savings accounts, but also have access to affordable mainstream financial products such as IRAs, CDs, mortgage loans, and other loans. These student bankers then share their financial knowledge and skills with classmates, family, and friends.

Curie High School promotes a culture of success. Student attendance in 2005 was at 90 percent, and almost half of 11th graders met or exceeded standards on the Prairie State Achievement Exam in reading. Curie High School is committed to ensuring that all students graduate prepared to meet the challenges and civic responsibilities of participation in society.

There are marked differences in the use of banking services between immigrants and the U.S.-born population. While 76 percent of U.S.-born households nationally have checking accounts, only 63 percent of immigrant households have them. Twenty-seven percent of the U.S.-born own stock outside of retirement accounts, and only 13 percent of the foreign-born do.

This is evident in immigrant reliance on the remittance and check-cashing business. Immigrants without bank accounts use currency exchanges and money-wiring businesses to cash checks and send money home. In check-cashing fees alone, immigrants pay a total of about \$2 billion each year in the U.S. In 2004, Mexicans throughout the United States sent \$20 billion in remittances to their families in Mexico, with Chicago accounting for \$450 million of this amount. Estimates show that cutting fees for remittances and check cashing in half could result in a savings of \$155 per immigrant family per year.

Though banks have been hesitant in the past to open branches in low-income or minority communities, this has changed significantly in recent years. Task Force members report a surge in the number of bank branches, many staffed by bilingual personnel, opening in Latino neighborhoods in the city and suburbs. Banks are also creating new products for immigrants, especially in the area of

remittances, including debit cards and in-house wire transfers, making it easier and less expensive to send money to family back home. Despite these efforts, many immigrants remain “unbanked.”

An analysis by the Institute for Latino Studies found that undocumented status is one of the main barriers in the Chicago area to immigrant use of financial institutions, accessing credit, and purchasing a home or car.

Chicago banks are leaders nationally in reducing this barrier by accepting the *matricula consular*—an identification card issued by Mexican consulates—as an alternative form of identification, using individual taxpayer identification numbers (ITIN) instead of social security numbers, and in looking beyond traditional credit reports to assess financial responsibility. Some banks have begun to consider payment history for utilities, cell phones, cars, and local store credit purchases when reviewing loans and mortgages.

Unfortunately, these innovative strategies have been significantly limited by the USA PATRIOT (Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism) Act passed after September 11, 2001, and in effect since October 2003. It includes regulations that require financial institutions to keep clients’ identification information such as passport numbers, alien identification card numbers, and birth dates, and to report any suspicious transactions to the authorities. This demand for more forms of identification has resulted in new barriers to opening bank accounts, obtaining a mortgage, or securing small business loans for immigrants, especially for those who are undocumented.

Finally, even if they are permanent residents or citizens, Mexican immigrants cannot buy homes if affordable housing is not available. A report, “Homes for a Changing Region,” published by Chicago Metropolitan 2020 and the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus in 2005, indicates that there is a severe mismatch between the type of housing developers are building and the type of housing Mexican families need. This report indicates that the region will need about 185,000 new single-family, small-lot units, townhouses, and apartments. But current projections are that developers will only build about 24,000 such units, and will build excessive numbers of expensive large-lot homes.

ECONOMIC RECOMMENDATION 3:

Promote financial literacy and asset development, including banking and home ownership, among Mexican households.

Action Items:

- The Task Force urges financial institutions, employers, schools, and community-based organizations to expand existing efforts to increase financial literacy through bilingual programs targeted at youth.
- The Task Force urges Spanish-language media to partner with the Illinois Bankers Association to conduct a public education campaign targeted to increasing the use of financial institutions by immigrants.
- The Task Force urges financial institutions to continue accepting alternative forms of identification such as individual taxpayer identification numbers and the *matricula consular*, and to find other ways to overcome barriers posed by the USA PATRIOT Act.
- The Task Force urges banks, credit unions, and other mainstream financial institutions to lower the cost of sending remittances and check-cashing fees, and use these services to attract new account holders.
- The Task Force urges city and suburban governments to preserve and expand the number of affordable housing units to meet the needs of Mexican families, developers to build more small-lot, single-family homes, and federal and state legislators to increase the amount of low-income housing tax credits available for developers, especially in areas of rapid Mexican population growth.
- The Task Force urges community-based organizations serving the Mexican community to partner with banks and foundations to offer Individual Development Account programs that enable Mexicans to save for a home, car, business, education, retirement, and other investments.

III. Education of Tomorrow's Workforce

Like other immigrants before them, Mexicans come to Chicago in search of a better life for themselves and their families. They work hard so that their children can obtain a good education, pursue successful careers, and enjoy better lives than they did. Education has led the way out of poverty and tough, physical work for many first- and second-generation immigrants—it is an essential part of the American dream. For many children of Mexican descent, however, a solid education that prepares them for a successful future seems out of reach.

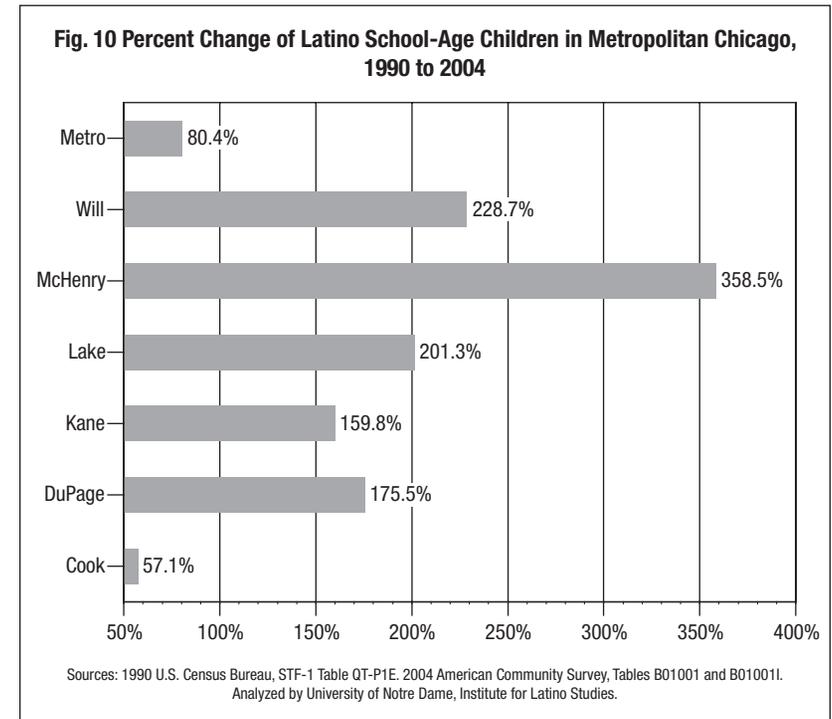
Yet as employment in the Chicago area continues shifting from manufacturing to service and technology, the increasing need for a highly trained, educated, multilingual workforce requires that the region offer high quality education from preschool through college for all its residents. Chicago needs to assure that the education of all its residents is sufficient to enable them to compete in the global marketplace. This long-term investment in human capital will pay off for everyone, but is of particular importance to greater Chicago's Mexican community.

Latino children under 18, primarily U.S.-born Mexicans, make up 35 percent of the total Latino population in the Chicago region. Between 1990 and 2004, their numbers grew by more than 80 percent, with every county except Cook experiencing more than 150 percent growth (see figure 10).

These children will soon be needed as the front-line workers, managers, inventors, problem-solvers, communicators, and decision makers who make our city work. Yet Mexicans and other Latinos are disproportionately unprepared for jobs that require higher education. In metropolitan Chicago, only about 30 percent of Latinos 25 and older have some college or a degree, compared to 68 percent of whites and 50 percent of blacks.

To Mexicans, like many other immigrants, the school is not only a place to which they entrust the education of their children, but a port of entry to life in their new community. Unfortunately, the majority of Mexicans in the Chicago area live in low-income communities with overcrowded, underfunded schools often staffed by less qualified teachers and principals. While they respect and value education, many Mexican immigrant families face language, cultural, and social challenges that some schools are unable to address.

Failure to repair this rocky road to academic success will be detrimental to the future of Chicago's Mexican communities, and will



hinder the economic health of the Chicago metropolitan region. The Task Force recognizes that improving the academic achievement and educational attainment of the Mexican community will require broad changes in Illinois' school programs, culture, and funding system, as well as interventions that specifically address Mexican students' needs. This chapter explores the educational challenges and opportunities faced by Mexican immigrants and their children, and proposes key recommendations to help improve their education and enable them to play a vital role in strengthening our regional economy.

Findings and Recommendations

Strengthening Programs

Improving academic achievement among greater Chicago's Mexican community will require more equitable funding of schools and investment in the people and programs to make them work.

Illinois' overreliance on local property taxes to fund education creates enormous funding disparities between local school districts, and state revenues are not keeping up with the cost of existing services that children and families need. Illinois' current guaranteed annual funding level per student falls \$1,000 short of the amount recommended by the A+ Illinois campaign, a statewide education reform group. The state also has the widest gap between the highest and lowest income districts of any state in the country in per-pupil spending, and pays less than the national average of schools' expenses, 36 percent compared to 50 percent nationwide. Although it is outside the particular focus of this report, clearly education funding reform is essential to the economic future of the region.

Since Mexican children tend to be concentrated in underresourced urban and suburban school districts, they are vulnerable to problems caused by inequitable school funding, such as overcrowding, lack of resources, and underqualified teachers. Figures for the 2005-2006 school year show that of 139 largely Latino traditional public elementary schools in the city of Chicago, 54 are overcrowded. And population shifts due to gentrification have resulted in a mismatch of schools with students, resulting in overcrowded schools in Mexican communities and underenrolled schools in gentrifying neighborhoods.

Mexican families are moving to the West and Southwest sides of the city and to nearby suburbs, and rapid population growth has outpaced school construction. For example, in suburban Cicero, Wilson Elementary School averages 36 students in a kindergarten class, well above the statewide average of 21.

Some relief is in sight. In June 2006, Chicago Public Schools announced a plan to invest \$1 billion to build nine new high schools and 15 new elementary schools, and to renovate three high schools, most in Latino communities. Funds will come from a combination of school bonds and revenue raised through the city's Tax Increment Finance Districts. Illinois enacted legislation for the 2007 fiscal year authorizing \$10 million toward teachers' salaries in an attempt to ensure that elementary schools throughout the state have class sizes of no more than 15 students. But more will be needed to achieve these ambitious goals.

Lack of coordination along the educational continuum can lead to Mexican children being left behind.

The way the education system functions means that students move from one institution to the next without continuity in their learning

experiences. Elementary schools operate without much interaction with high schools and colleges, yet students and parents are expected to move smoothly from one system to the next. For example, high schools design curricula without consulting with colleges and universities to learn what they expect incoming students to know. Research indicates that in these transition years many students fall through the cracks and drop out.

Institutions across the region need to work together to share data and best practices and hold one another accountable for student academic achievement. To ensure the alignment of curriculum standards from preschool through senior year of high school, a data collection and reporting system to track student progress is needed. Individual initiatives could address the students who fail to progress at various points in their education.

Although there is some coordination among the state's educational "governing boards"—the Illinois State Board of Education, Illinois Board of Higher Education, and the Illinois Community College Board—Task Force members believe that they lack a common mandate to address issues such as poor academic achievement, dropout rates, and inadequate preparation for college.

Oversight for the whole education continuum could be provided by a Preschool through College, or "P-16" Education Governance Council in Illinois, consisting of representatives from early childhood education, the Illinois State Board of Education, the Illinois Board of Higher Education, and the Illinois Community College Board. Several other states in the U.S. have P-16 efforts. With authority and funding from the state, the P-16 council would promote collaboration between preschools, K-12 schools, and colleges to help these institutions address the overlapping issues of preparing students for transition from one level of education to the next. It would hold educational institutions accountable for student achievement and could address issues concerning preparedness, retention, and graduation rates of Mexican students at all levels of education.

The Task Force supports other efforts under way in metropolitan Chicago that will improve the system as a whole and increase academic achievement among Mexican students. They include universal preschool and full-day kindergarten, new small schools, charter and community schools. They also address expanded opportunities for professional development of superintendents, principals, teachers, suburban school board and Chicago Local School Council (LSC) members, and reforming school funding in ways that alleviate funding disparities among school districts.

Educating Mexican children as early as possible pays big returns.

Every dollar invested in high-quality early learning saves \$17 in future public and private spending. University of Chicago Nobel Laureate in economics James Heckman and others have produced solid evidence that investing in early learning has high economic returns. Studies demonstrate that early learning saves the state millions of dollars in costs associated with school improvement, remedial education, social services, and criminal justice. Early childhood education helps school systems because children arrive with the social and academic skills that prepare them to be ready to learn in school.

Biggest gains in achievement are seen among Latino children completing prekindergarten and among all low-income children. A child's enrollment in preschool is an opportunity to promote a love of learning in the family that can encourage the child's and parents' engagement with the school and community and with lifelong learning.

In metropolitan Chicago, the need for preschool programs outstrips available resources. Slightly more than a third of eligible Latino children are in state prekindergarten programs, compared to more

than half of eligible children statewide, according to the Ounce of Prevention Fund. And many public schools charge tuition for prekindergarten, which low-income parents often cannot afford. According to parents, barriers to preschool include lack of affordable programs, long waiting lists, and lack of information about resources, such as the child care subsidy.

Effective bilingual education and more dual-language programs in area schools can help prepare students for the global economy.

While many Mexican children start school knowing how to speak Spanish, they often do not learn either English or Spanish well in school because the quality of bilingual education varies widely from school to school, between school districts and across the region. The inadequate number of properly trained and certified bilingual education teachers, insufficient funding for programs, and lack of systemwide consensus on implementing best practices contribute to the irregular results.

At their best, bilingual education programs, which ultimately transition students into English-only classes, teach English while maintaining fluency in the native language, thereby producing truly bilingual students. At their worst, they produce children who cannot read and write in either English or Spanish. The Illinois State Board of Education 2005 evaluation of Illinois bilingual education programs found that of the more than 13,617 Illinois students transitioned out of bilingual education into mainstream classes, only 25 percent demonstrated proficiency in reading, writing, and speaking in English. The report shows that 65 percent of transitioned students were proficient in one or more of these areas. Further, 10 percent of all transitioned students were not proficient in any area. These students were exited after being in a language support program for five years or longer. The report shows that 25 percent of students were transitioned without language proficiency data reported to support transition decisions.

With increasing numbers of immigrants who do not speak English arriving in schools, there is an urgent need for bilingual programs that at minimum enable students to transition successfully into mainstream classes.

Further, while enrollment by all ethnic groups in bilingual education programs in schools across the state rose by 60 percent between 1995 and 2004, program funding has not risen proportionately. This is occurring even as the projected need for bilingual teachers and

Erie Elementary Charter School Promotes a Culture of Literacy

At Erie Neighborhood House and the Erie Elementary Charter School, a "culture of literacy" is promoted daily through a focus on reading among children, parents, school staff and faculty, and the community.

This commitment is clear in the school's adoption of "Drop Everything and Read" (DEAR). Once every few weeks, a bell sounds and everyone at Erie Elementary Charter School in Chicago's Humboldt Park must "drop everything and read." During this time, students, teachers, and school staff, including maintenance workers, stop whatever they are doing, move to the hallway, and read a book of their choice. Because Erie Charter School is a bilingual learning environment, children read both English and Spanish-language books during DEAR time.

Kindergarteners and first-graders look forward to this treat, reading as many books as they can during the 10 to 12 minutes of quiet reading time.

"At our school, students get excited about DEAR day because they know that the whole school will be reading," said parent Sonia Rodriguez. "It also allows students who are not proficient in the English language to bring any book of their choice."

Erie Neighborhood House and Erie Elementary Charter School also provide thousands of free books to families, sponsor book fairs and book readings, and hire literacy specialists. Erie's Partners for Reading program for kids and its community literacy tutoring program for adults foster a lifelong culture of literacy.

teachers certified in teaching English as a second language (ESL) increases. School districts project needing 150 to 200 additional certified bilingual or ESL teachers every year from 2005 to 2009.

The growing number of Mexican students throughout metropolitan Chicago also presents an opportunity for elementary and high schools to offer second-language instruction to all their students, preparing a bilingual workforce ready to make Chicago a more friendly city for non-English speakers and a more effective participant in the world marketplace.

An attractive adjunct to current bilingual education programs is a dual-language model of instruction in which all students learn to read and write fluently in English and in a second language. This model builds upon a child's native language and is more effective when started at around age five or six. For Spanish-speaking children entering kindergarten, the dual-language model presents an opportunity to instill pride in their culture and strengthen their Spanish while adding English.

Chicago has a unique opportunity to capitalize on the language diversity of its immigrant population and the innovation of its

Dual-Language Programs Improve Academic Achievement

As the numbers of children who speak a second language grow, dual-language programs have become increasingly popular. Educators find that they can begin to close the academic achievement gap that exists between English-speaking and Spanish-only students and at the same time encourage monolingual, English-only students to become bilingual. The key to successful dual-language programs, however, is identifying an effective model to implement and maintaining it throughout the early education of the child.

The Inter-American Magnet School is a Chicago public school that has achieved success in its dual-language program. Inter-American offers kindergarten through eighth grade and served more than 650 students in 2005, more than 70 percent of them Latino. From preschool through the third grade, classes are taught in Spanish for 80 percent of the time and in English for 20 percent of the time. By the fourth and fifth grade, a 50-50 ratio of English to Spanish is introduced. The model is based on research that shows that the exposure to English outside of school combined with more intensive Spanish learning at an earlier age provides students with greater proficiency in both languages by the time they reach the fourth grade, and complete bilingual fluency and literacy by the time they start high school. The 2005 test averages for the school show that 71 percent of the students met or exceeded state standards in reading, mathematics, and science scores compared to only 45 percent in the district and 65 percent in the state.

schools. Students in the Chicago area are connected culturally and linguistically to other parts of the world and Chicago can build on that by ensuring that all students in the public schools speak, read, and write well in English and a second language.

There are already several schools in the area that offer second-language learning. For example, LaSalle Language Academy, a Chicago public magnet school, offers classes in four languages in addition to English, and Inter-American school, another magnet school, has offered a successful dual-language program in Spanish and English instruction for 30 years. A dual-language Spanish-English program in Evanston School District 65, begun as a pilot in 2000 with 48 students, now enrolls almost 700 students in kindergarten through fifth grade. Schaumburg School District 54, North Shore School District 112, Elgin U-46, and Woodstock School District 200 also have dual-language programs. These and other successful programs provide a variety of models that could be replicated by other schools in the city and suburbs.

EDUCATION RECOMMENDATION 1:

Understand the needs of the growing Mexican population in suburban and city schools and develop plans that increase the education assets available to support their academic achievement and educational attainment.

Action Items:

- The Task Force urges city and suburban school districts in the six-county area to review, improve, or replace their bilingual education programs to ensure that students achieve fluency in reading and writing in English, and to enhance them by expanding dual-language programs that develop second-language capability for all students from kindergarten through high school.
- The Task Force urges the governor of Illinois to strengthen collaboration across all levels of school by considering a Preschool through College (P-16) Council with responsibility and authority for funding and oversight of all school districts in the state; to hold the Council accountable for student achievement at all levels—preschool, elementary, and secondary—and promote collaboration with colleges and universities.

- The Task Force urges Chicago Public Schools, suburban school districts, and the Illinois State Board of Education to continue to fund efforts to build and staff schools in neighborhoods with growing populations.

Academic Achievement

Better teachers and principals foster higher academic achievement.

A 2006 study by the Education Trust, a national nonprofit dedicated to academic achievement, found that schools in states and districts with high percentages of low-income and minority students are more likely to have teachers who are inexperienced and have lower basic academic skills. Yet high-quality teachers improve students' ability to meet state standards and be ready for college regardless of their economic status, according to studies.

Research shows that the leadership of a good principal is essential to creating and sustaining effective schools. Good principals find and hire good teachers, develop them through training and on-the-job coaching, and create an atmosphere that leads to keeping good teachers in their schools. They identify good parent leaders for Local School Councils and train and encourage them. In turn the teachers and LSCs support good principals.

The need for well-qualified Latino bilingual and bicultural teachers and principals presents an opportunity for recruiting and training teachers from greater Chicago's Mexican communities and for fast-track certification for Mexican and other foreign-trained teachers. However, streamlining certification of Mexican and other foreign-trained teachers to reduce bureaucratic hurdles must be done without sacrificing rigorous quality standards.

There are several initiatives under way that involve alternative certification programs, recruiting teachers with special skills, and training teachers from local communities through programs such as "Grow Your Own." The Illinois Grow Your Own Teachers Initiative was begun in 2003 by the Association of Community Organizations for Reform (ACORN), a low- and moderate-income community group. Grow Your Own is a coalition of community, economic development, and school reform groups. With funding from the state, the initiative builds collaboration among universities, school groups, and teachers' unions to support parents, school employees, and other community members in obtaining the education to become teachers in their local schools.

In 2004, the United States Department of Education, Office of Innovation and Improvement awarded the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) a grant to fund bilingual teacher training. The Bilingual Transition to Teaching Project, administered by the ISBE in partnership with Northern Illinois University and the Chicago Public Schools, recruits and trains individuals who wish to change careers and become bilingual teachers. Participants who successfully complete the program earn a master of science in education degree and meet the requirements for Type 03 Elementary Certification with Bilingual and ESL Approvals.

EDUCATION RECOMMENDATION 2:

Expand the pool of trained and qualified bilingual and bicultural teachers and administrators for early childhood education, elementary, and high schools.

Action Items:

- The Task Force urges university departments of education to partner with community-based organizations to recruit and support local Mexican teacher and principal candidates from traditional and nontraditional backgrounds.
- The Task Force urges schools and departments of education in local colleges and universities and the Illinois State Board of Education to partner with Mexican educational institutions to implement a teacher training and certification program enabling teachers from Mexico to work in Chicago and suburban school districts.
- The Task Force urges foundations, businesses, and schools to create a Latino Future Educators Fund to encourage Latino men and women to become bilingual, bicultural teachers and principals through targeted scholarships and other financial and academic support.

Raising Expectations and Resources

According to the Consortium of Chicago School Research at the University of Chicago, almost half of Latino students drop out of public high schools in Chicago, and those who do finish are less likely than other high school graduates in Illinois and the U.S. to attend college.

Since economic growth in cities is directly linked to the proportion of their residents with college degrees, it is important to the region's future to address this deficiency. A 2000 Hispanic Scholarship Fund study found that the gap between the percentage of Latinos who complete college with a bachelor's degree and the percentage of other minority groups is expected to grow, putting Latinos at a greater disadvantage in the workplace.

Compared to students in other industrialized countries, American students spend less time in school and take less rigorous coursework. A shorter school day limits the academic and cultural enrichment opportunities that build the social and intellectual capital needed by Mexican and low-income students.

Mexican students, many the first in their families to attend a college or university, are also the least likely among their peers to graduate. Only 31 percent of Latino graduates of Chicago public schools will complete college within six years, compared to more than 45 percent of whites.

Mexican students drop out for a variety of reasons, including cost, cultural adjustment, and poor high school preparation.

Studies find that Mexican college students generally need better writing skills, stronger study skills, and competency in reading, science, and math. A study by the Tomas Rivera Policy Institute found that Latino students are least likely to take advanced placement and other more rigorous courses in high school—partly for lack of availability.

Metropolitan Chicago's community colleges can play a significant role in enabling Mexican students to attend college: They are low cost, located in the community, and have flexible course offerings. But many students are unprepared for post-secondary education. Those who do complete work for an associate's degree often get lost in the transfer to four-year colleges. Because many students applying to City Colleges of Chicago and other two-year institutions in the metropolitan region are not academically ready for college, these institutions often must provide extensive remedial coursework that should have been learned in high school. Ninety-five percent fail the City Colleges' college-ready exam; 72 percent fail English; 74.2 percent fail reading. Students pay college tuition and use state and federal financial aid for what is actually high school-level work.

Finances are among the most significant barriers to obtaining a four-year college degree for Mexican students, particularly for

undocumented immigrants who are not eligible for financial aid. Illinois is among a handful of states to pass legislation that charges its undocumented immigrant students in-state tuition rates at state institutions and there are some private scholarships available to them, but for the majority, college is not a viable option.

The National Hispanic Scholarship Fund has identified three strategies for promoting college completion among Latinos. The first focuses on improving the academic achievement and educational attainment of at-risk students in middle and high school by reducing class size, assessing students' achievement every year, opening alternative schools, and instituting dropout prevention programs. Many public schools in the Chicago region use private grants and state Chapter 1 monies to implement some of these strategies. They also partner with community-based organizations for additional programs.

A second strategy assists students with the college admission process to encourage students' transition from high school to college. Efforts include support services such as test-taking preparation, remedial courses, summer school classes, tutoring, counseling, college visits, and scholarships, and are provided primarily by nonprofit organizations with funding for after-school programming.

Helping Students Make the Transition from High School to College

In partnership with Chicago Public Schools (CPS), DePaul University offers a college bridge program for high-achieving Chicago public high school juniors and seniors, enabling them to experience college and prepare for the academic rigors of higher education. Students with a minimum 3.0 (B) grade point average and 90 percent attendance rate can take classes at DePaul and earn college credit while still in high school. Chicago Public Schools covers the costs of the classes and textbooks so they are free to students who qualify.

The students select from a wide array of liberal arts classes at DePaul, including mathematics, science, foreign languages, literature, social science, and art. Classes meet weekly in the late afternoon or evening, and are offered every quarter at either DePaul's Loop or Lincoln Park campus. Current DePaul students serve as college bridge mentors and are the students' primary point of contact while in the program.

Of the 12 colleges and universities in Chicago offering classes through the CPS Bridge Program, DePaul has one of the highest enrollments. Nearly 1,000 juniors and seniors from Chicago Public Schools have taken more than 1,600 classes at DePaul since the program began in 1998. About 28 percent of the students are Latino, 26 percent African American, 23 percent Caucasian, 18 percent Asian/Pacific Islander, and 5 percent other. As of 2006, more than 923 students from the program have been admitted to college, 233 of them at DePaul. DePaul has awarded degrees to 36 so far.

A third strategy focuses on college retention and successful transfer from two- to four-year colleges. A larger proportion of Mexicans attend two-year colleges than young people from other racial or ethnic groups. Virtually all colleges and universities in the area have implemented programs to help Mexicans and other students of color adapt to college life, and many offer remedial and study skill courses. But these programs are limited and most have not been evaluated to see if they work in improving retention.

Education experts in Chicago and across the country know what is needed to improve schools in urban and Mexican communities. The experience in a number of schools shows that the largest improvements in student achievement are possible with even modest increases in funding. These schools have focused on the professional development of teachers, engaging the parents in helping their children learn at home, and sharing leadership among the teachers, parent leaders—including Local School Council members—and administrators. Other solutions call for more equitable funding for schools in Illinois and school reform measures that will benefit all children, including Mexican children.

EDUCATION RECOMMENDATION 3:

Raise expectations for high academic achievement among Mexican students, their parents, teachers, guidance counselors, and principals, and provide resources to assist in meeting these expectations.

Action Items:

- The Task Force urges Latino leaders, foundations, business leaders, and educators to expand programs from middle school through high school that motivate and prepare Mexican students to complete college. Programs should focus on educating parents and students on the importance of a college education and provide assistance with navigating the college application process. Other efforts should include advanced placement classes and other academically rigorous programs; tutors and mentors to strengthen basic skills, such as writing and study skills; and scholarships.
- The Task Force urges Chicago Public Schools to partner with business, foundations, and other philanthropic organizations to implement a longer school day and longer school year allow-

ing for more academically rigorous curriculum and enrichment programs, including sports and the arts, with priority given to schools with high Mexican populations.

- The Task Force urges the Illinois State Board of Education to require that all students who graduate from high school or pass tests for a general equivalency diploma (GED) are “college ready” as measured by ACT scores and standardized tests in reading, mathematics, and writing.

Leadership

Research demonstrates that schools with good leaders get better results.

Strong leadership in schools is critical, and involves principals, teachers, and parents. Parents who are informed and involved will raise the quality of education by holding administrators and teachers accountable and by being better prepared to help their children learn at home. Immigrant parents, in particular, are challenged to do so because of limited English skills and unfamiliarity with school systems and policies.

Giving their children a good education is important to Mexican immigrants, but their ability to fully participate in their children's education is limited because the majority of them arrive with little formal schooling and low English skills. Often, English classes, job training, and other adult education programs are not easily accessible for immigrants, especially working parents, and many programs do not take into account low literacy levels and cultural differences. Schools, especially in suburban communities where the Mexican community has grown rapidly in recent years, generally do not have the staff or experience to engage Mexican parents.

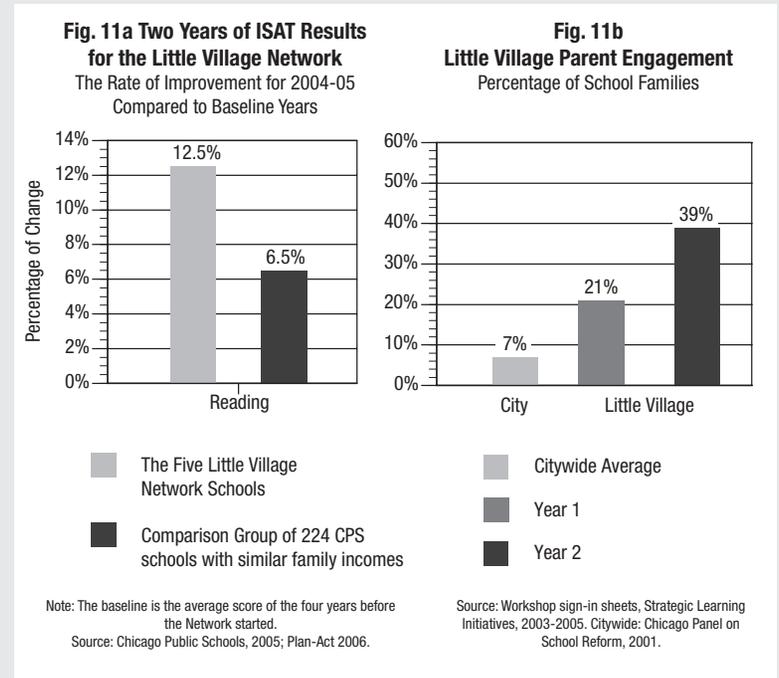
Consequently, schools with significant bilingual and bicultural student populations, such as those in greater Chicago's Mexican communities, must invest additional resources to develop parent leaders capable of bridging the divide between the neighborhood and the school. The Strategic Learning Initiatives network in Little Village is one program that has demonstrated the value of this investment in improved student learning.

Local School Councils and suburban school boards present opportunities for cultivating parent leadership. In 2002, 700 Latino parents served on Chicago's Local School Councils. Numbers of Latinos on suburban school boards are not known.

Little Village: Accelerate Student Learning

In 2003, five Chicago public elementary schools in the city's Little Village neighborhood agreed to work together to try to accelerate student learning. The reading scores for the average Chicago public elementary school in low-income neighborhoods had been improving at the rate of less than 2 percent per year since 1995. The schools thought that they could do better.

Two years later, the reading and math scores had improved twice as fast as a comparison group of 224 Chicago public schools with similar family incomes.



One of the reasons for these results was that the principals, with their Local School Councils, selected a nationally recognized model developed by Strategic Learning Initiatives, a nonprofit educational organization in Chicago. The model program focuses on improving the quality of professional development of teachers, sharing the leadership for improvement among the parent, teacher, and administrative leaders, and providing fun and effective activities for parents to help their children learn at home.

Not only have students' reading scores improved, the average number of students meeting or exceeding state standards improved from 34 to 47 percent, for the four schools that took the Illinois State Achievement Tests. More than 70 percent of the teachers in the program have volunteered for professional development workshops. Almost 40 percent of the families have participated in workshops, five times the 7 percent average for the city.

Local School Councils, which were established in Chicago in the late 1980s as part of school reform measures, consist of the principal, teachers, parents, and community members. They play a critical role in hiring a good principal, creating a thriving learning environment, and approving the school's budget.

But the councils need training, support, and resources to do their jobs effectively. According to a 2002 study by Designs for Change, a Chicago-based education reform group, elementary schools that showed major improvements in student achievement were administered at the school level by the principal, teachers, and the Local School Council, rather than by the central school administration.

Full-service community schools serve as anchors for Mexican parents and their children as they navigate their new communities.

Community schools—schools that are open into the evening for programs that benefit local residents as well as students—are another model from which Mexican students and their families can benefit. There are currently 102 community schools in Chicago Public Schools, which received an award for excellence in 2006 from the National Coalition for Community Schools for its community school initiative. The initiative aims to make schools “anchors of their communities, providing educational resources for the entire family.”

Community schools bring additional services and support by linking schools to community-based organizations with the expertise to provide services to local communities. They also strengthen neighborhood infrastructure by enabling nonprofit organizations to serve an expanding client base without investing in new facilities. In communities like the city's South Chicago neighborhood, for example, Sullivan elementary school, in partnership with Metropolitan Family Services, provides a safe space for youth and adults with programs ranging from drama workshops to basketball to English and citizenship classes.

Although there are individual community schools throughout Illinois, there is currently no systematic effort to create them throughout the state. In 2003, the state of Illinois provided funds through the Regional Office of Education to develop training for Full Service Community Schools throughout Illinois. Although funding was not renewed, the two-year grant resulted in the development of a training model and training materials. These resources could be tapped by suburban school districts that wish to replicate these models in their communities.

Corporate partners play a role, too. Across the Chicago region, the corporate community contributes significantly to schools through numerous adopt-a-school programs, “principal for a day,” special grants, scholarships, mentoring activities, and ambitious initiatives such as Chicago’s Renaissance 2010, an effort to open 100 new schools in Chicago by 2010.

EDUCATION RECOMMENDATION 4:

Strengthen parent and community participation and leadership in city and suburban schools to improve educational outcomes for Mexican students.

Action Items:

- The Task Force urges school districts to partner with Mexican and other Latino community organizations to develop a Latino leadership school action network, beginning with members of Local School Councils and suburban school boards, to help create leaders in schools by training parents, teachers, administrators, and guidance counselors.
- The Task Force urges foundations, the Illinois State Board of Education, and local school districts to provide funding for the community school model that keeps schools open into the evening with educational programs and activities for community members of all ages.
- The Task Force urges Mexican hometown associations, Spanish-language media, and Mexican-owned businesses and community-based organizations to encourage and strengthen the active participation of parents in the schools, and to support Mexican students from preschool through college. This support should include assistance for parents and other community members to elect candidates who will address the concerns of the Mexican community to Local School Councils and suburban school boards.
- The Task Force urges local business leaders, including retirees, to partner with schools to provide expertise in management and organizational development, mentorship and internship activities for students, and to fund innovative academic and after-school programs.

- The Task Force urges Mexican organizations, business leaders, and foundations to provide scholarships that include money for living and incidental expenses, and to support low- or no-interest loans at colleges and universities for Mexican students.

IV. Civic Engagement and Political Participation

It is the nature of our democracy that government is driven by community concerns, community voices, and votes. While Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans are involved in many aspects of civic and political life, more must become engaged in neighborhood institutions, civic organizations, and local and state government. They must play a role in decision making on budgets and policies that affect their ability to lead productive lives and contribute to the vitality of the Chicago metropolitan region. And more Mexican Americans must vote.

Unless greater numbers of Mexican immigrants become American citizens and voters, achieving and maintaining the full economic integration of the Mexican community will be difficult. The Task Force recognizes that perhaps the greatest impact on civic and political participation of the Mexican community will come from passage of comprehensive immigration reform with a clear path to U.S. citizenship for immigrants. Until such reform occurs, we urge state and local leaders to publicly support comprehensive immigration reform and to strengthen and expand current immigrant-friendly policies and initiatives locally and statewide.

Chicago and Illinois are leaders in establishing policies and passing legislation that support immigrant integration. The impact of these laws is felt every day by the Mexican worker with a *matricula consular* who can now deposit his check in a bank account; the undocumented college student brought to Chicago as a child, who can now pay resident tuition at the University of Illinois; and the elderly woman who after 20 years as a permanent resident applies for citizenship with help from the New Americans Initiative.

The city of Chicago and Mayor Richard M. Daley were early advocates for the rights of Chicago's immigrants. In April 1989, Mayor Daley issued an executive order providing that no city agency "shall condition the provision of city of Chicago benefits, opportunities or services on matters related to citizenship or residency status." The order further states:

"The policy is declared to encourage equal access by all persons residing in the City of Chicago, regardless of nation of birth or current citizenship to the full benefits, opportunities and services, including employment and the issuance of licenses, which are provided or administered by the City of Chicago."

In response to recent waves of anti-immigrant sentiment in the U.S., on March 29, 2006, the Chicago City Council passed an ordi-

nance that codified the executive order, making compliance mandatory and subject to sanctions.

With its Refugee and Immigrant Citizenship Initiative, begun in 1995 by Governor Jim Edgar, Illinois became the first state to fund a program to foster citizenship. This program inspired the New Americans Initiative, launched in January 2005, a public-private partnership sponsored by the State of Illinois and administered by the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (ICIRR). The New Americans Initiative, unique in the U.S., is designed to increase

Illinois Citizenship Initiatives Lead the Way

Illinois has been a leader among state governments in taking a thoughtful, active approach to immigrant integration.

The Refugee and Immigrant Citizenship Initiative (RICI) began in 1995 and was the first state-funded program of its kind in the nation. More than 130,000 people, 25 percent of them Mexican, from 106 nations have received English language, civics, and U.S. history instruction, as well as citizenship application assistance from a network of 36 community-based organizations. The network is supported by legal services and liaison to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, as well as by research conducted under the Illinois Immigrant Policy Project showing the political and economic importance of immigrant integration. Currently RICI receives \$2.5 million of the annual \$5.15 million Illinois Department of Human Services Immigrant Services appropriation, and serves an average of 13,000 people per year.

RICI was established upon the recommendation of the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago, which was also the main contractor for the Illinois State Legalization Impact Assistance Grant. The program resulted in about 160,000 immigrants in Illinois becoming legal permanent residents, of whom 85 percent were Mexican.

The New Americans Initiative (NAI), a partnership of the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights with the State of Illinois, is another coordinated multiyear campaign for citizenship. It links permanent residents directly to the information and services they need to pursue citizenship. The NAI works with a network of community agencies and uses an advertising and public relations campaign to encourage citizenship. A variety of methods are used to reach out to potential new citizens, including phone calls, mailings, and online assistance. Workshops are conducted at community events and classes are offered statewide. In the year following the NAI launch in February 2005, 12,041 naturalization applications were prepared and screened.

Since 1995, the number of people becoming citizens in the Chicago area has more than doubled, from an average of 17,000 per year to more than 35,000. Today, there are more than 600,000 foreign-born voters in Illinois.

Illinois Legislative Initiatives Protect Immigrants' Rights and Foster Integration

HB0060/PA93-0007 Higher Education In-State Tuition—Effective May 20, 2003

For tuition purposes, requires an individual who is not a citizen or permanent resident of the United States to be classified as an Illinois resident if the individual graduated from a high school in the state and has lived in the state for at least three years. The law provides that certain aliens must be given the same privilege of qualifying for resident status for tuition and fee purposes as a citizen of the United States.

SB0680/PA93-0464 Attorney General-Immigrant Assistance—Effective August 8, 2003

Creates the Office of Immigrant Assistance within the Office of the Attorney General to provide education and outreach services to the resident immigrant community of the state.

SB0679/PA93-0217 Human Rights-Language Workplace—Effective January 1, 2004

Makes it a civil rights violation for any employer to adopt or enforce a policy that limits or prohibits the use of any foreign language in any workplace, unless the language restriction is justified by a business necessity.

SB0600/PA93-0581 Minimum Wage \$6.50—Effective January 1, 2004

After January 1, 2005 every employer shall pay to each of his or her employees who are 18 years of age or older in every occupation wages of not less than \$6.50 per hour. The law provides that, beginning in 2005, the minimum wage shall be annually adjusted by the Illinois Department of Labor. This is higher than the federal minimum wage of \$5.15 an hour.

SB1623/PA94-0389 Consular Identification Document Act—Effective January 1, 2006

Each state agency and officer and unit of local government shall accept a consular identification document as a valid identification of a person. A consular identification document does not convey an independent right to receive benefits of any type and may not be accepted as identification for obtaining a driver's license or registering to vote.

the number of people who become citizens from 30,000 a year to 60,000 a year by 2008.

In the spring of 2006, Illinois Governor Rod Blagojevich established a New Immigrants Policy Council to work with the New Americans Initiative and present recommendations to the state for immigrant integration. The governor also instituted an internal review of state agencies to respond to concerns voiced by ICIRR.

At the federal levels, Senator Dick Durbin and Congressman Luis Gutierrez have been strong voices in the recent fight for comprehensive immigration reform, and for years have advocated for passage of the DREAM (Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors) Act. This legislation creates a path toward citizenship

for undocumented youth who have spent most of their lives in the United States, who graduated from high school, who demonstrate good moral character, and who either pursue higher education or join the armed forces.

Despite these laws, the Mexican community in the Chicago region still faces discrimination in housing, in the workplace, and in everyday life. And because many are not citizens, they cannot vote, limiting their ability to elect leaders and policymakers who understand and champion their specific needs as workers, students, parents, homeowners, and taxpayers.

What keeps the Mexican community from greater civic engagement and political participation?

There are differences in civic engagement and political participation between Mexican immigrants—who have stronger ties to Mexico and limited English skills—and Mexicans who were born here or have lived here since they were young children. For new immigrants, research suggests that basic economic needs, such as work, supporting a family, and sending money back to Mexico, come before civic and political participation. Once their economic needs are met, many first become involved in groups such as Mexican hometown associations (HTAs), church groups and block clubs, and community-based leadership development training programs.

For U.S.-born Mexicans, economic security is also a priority, and their civic efforts are focused on civil rights issues such as voter registration, affordable housing, access to better jobs, political power, and equitable schools—issues that are increasingly bringing foreign- and native-born Mexicans, as well as Mexicans and non-Mexicans, together.

The Task Force has identified several barriers to civic engagement and political participation:

- high percentages of non-U.S. citizens among adults, and of population under age 18 among the U.S.-born
- a distrust of politics and of formal institutions in their home country
- lack of knowledge about U.S. government institutions

- limited English skills and low levels of education
- racial discrimination and anti-immigrant sentiment
- political networks and coalitions that often do not extend beyond their ethnic group

Reducing these barriers will depend on both the actions of the Mexican community and of leaders and all residents of the Chicago region. As previously discussed, Chicago and Illinois are already leaders nationally and internationally in creating policies and programs that enable immigrants from all over the world to work and lead stable lives here by safeguarding their human and civil rights, and supporting their integration. This chapter makes recommendations for building upon these accomplishments.

Findings and Recommendations

Civic Engagement

Immigrants participate in important civic activities that affect community life even if they cannot vote.

Mexican immigrants participate in a variety of civic activities as volunteers, leaders, and activists in schools, churches, neighborhood institutions, and other community groups. They are heavily involved in Mexican hometown associations (HTAs) and Mexican state federations, which have a long history in the United States and in Chicago. They are similar to the mutual aid societies and self-help groups of the 1920s, which helped immigrants to adjust to their new environment, combat discrimination, and find comfort and friendship with people from their homelands. The HTAs, often called civic clubs, social clubs, and committees, are one of the most common forms of voluntary-sector activity among first-generation Mexican immigrants in the United States. In Chicago, the number of HTAs for only five of the 31 Mexican states jumped from 20 to 100 between 1994 and 2000 while across the United States more than 600 HTAs are registered in 30 cities.

These organizations have been a powerful force for social support for their members in the United States, as well as an important mechanism for philanthropic work in Mexico, but in the last 10 years, the activities of Mexican HTAs and federations in Chicago

Hometown Associations Turn Toward Their New Home

In the last decade, the activities of Mexican hometown associations (HTAs) and state federations in the Chicago area have diversified. While they continue to address development in Mexico, they are also increasingly participating in domestic issues. Their leaders have played key roles in local institutions such as labor unions, block clubs, PTAs, and the Illinois Office of New Americans Policy and Advocacy. Probably the most significant factor in this change is new leadership more attuned to interests in the United States, which has promoted more active binational civic engagement.

In Chicago, there are approximately 275 hometown associations and federations representing Mexicans from a particular hometown or state. In 2003, several HTAs formed the Confederation of Mexican Federations in the Midwest (CONFEMEX), an umbrella organization representing nine federations and dozens of hometown associations. During the 2006 campaign to register Mexican voters to exercise their newly acquired right to participate in Mexican elections through absentee ballots, CONFEMEX registered 1,400 people in three days with support from the Massachusetts-based Solidago Foundation.

In May 2006, CONFEMEX began providing leadership to the Chicago Immigrant Leadership Empowerment Project, an initiative launched with the support of the Chicago Community Trust. During the spring 2006 protests against the Sensenbrenner immigration bill, Mexican HTAs displayed their newly acquired strength in mobilizing their constituents for domestic issues. For the first time, they flexed their political organizational skills and were key organizers of the March 10 Committee along with labor unions, radio personalities, the Illinois Coalition of Immigrant and Refugee Rights, Catholic Campaign for Social Justice, religious congregations, and traditional Latino organizations. More than 100,000 people attended the historic march in Chicago, which was the first and largest demonstration during the wave of protests.

have become more diverse. Today, these groups are increasingly addressing domestic issues such as civil rights, housing, health care, workers' rights, and U.S. citizenship. An increasing number have begun to register as nonprofit, 501(c)3 organizations, which enables them to receive grants and other funds for their local development projects. The Chicago region's HTAs have also made alliances with the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund to establish leadership programs for their members, and with the Catholic Church to defend migrant rights.

Community-based leadership programs cultivate civic engagement.

A study by the Institute for Latino Studies at the University of Notre Dame measured the effectiveness of grants by the Chicago Community Trust to community-based organizations, the majority of which were Latino, to develop the capacity of ordinary residents to

become leaders in their communities and bring about positive change.

Findings show that participation in leadership development had a significant benefit to leaders' lives including an increase in self-confidence, development of social and professional skills, and increased knowledge of U.S. culture and systems. More than 750 leaders were developed through the organizations studied and 90 percent of leaders interviewed had contacted legislators or policymakers. These efforts contributed to policy and community changes including passage of several state bills that affect education, environment, health care, housing, safety, and transportation.

Local School Councils in Chicago and school boards in the suburbs represent avenues for Mexicans to become involved in the civic life of the community.

Elgin Students Walk in for Civics Education

On May 1, 2006, Latino immigrants and their supporters walked out of work and schools around the country in support of immigration reform legislation.

In Elgin, Illinois, where more than a third of the population is Latino, student leaders said they wanted to show their support for immigration reform in another way. Although many of the school's students had attended a rally in Chicago on March 10, they chose to stay in school on May 1. Instead of demonstrating by walking out of classes, the students "walked in" to attend classes, calling it a "Walk-in for Education."

The Students for Immigration Justice Committee was organized so Elgin students could make their voices heard and to ensure that students participating in immigration reform demonstrations understood the issues. Organizers say the committee believes in peaceful resolution of the immigration reform debate, based on the principle "justice for all" from the Pledge of Allegiance, which students recite every day.

The school invited 11 panelists for a discussion on immigration reform on May 1, including city council members, a representative from the lieutenant governor's office, immigration attorneys, and three recent immigrants. Regional Director Joe Galvan of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development also spoke.

Organizers expected 300 students, but 1,200 attended. "The kids were so polite to the panelists, even if they did not agree with their statements. The students who organized the event demonstrated their resolve during the panel discussion and in front of the press that covered the event. They were clear, direct, honest, and knowledgeable," said teacher Deb Perryman, who helped to organize the event.

Excerpted from Lideres, a National Council of La Raza online newsletter. Full article can be found at <http://lideres.nclr.org>.

In 2002, 700 Latinos, most of them Mexican, served on Local School Councils for the Chicago Public Schools, accounting for the majority of elected Latino officials in Illinois and half of all Latinos on school boards nationwide. According to the Consortium on Chicago School Research, serving on the LSCs has helped the members acquire skills in organization, budgeting, and working in groups, valuable civics skills that can be translated into other civic and political activities. In communities where the number of Mexican children has increased, participation by their parents on school boards is critical to ensuring that the needs of their children and other immigrant children are addressed.

Mexican representation on corporate, cultural, and civic boards is limited.

The Task Force found that while there is a strong interest on the part of corporate, cultural, and civic institutions to increase representation from the Mexican community on their boards, they have difficulty identifying Mexican and other Latino leaders. Some suburban mayors interested in filling zoning and planning board positions report a similar problem. For their part, Latino leaders report not knowing about board openings or having the relationships necessary to solicit appointments.

CIVIC AND POLITICAL RECOMMENDATION 1:

Foster participation of Mexicans and other Latinos in civic leadership through collaboration among business and philanthropic communities, state and local governments, and Latino leaders.

Action Items:

- The Task Force urges the Mexican community to partner with Chicago's business and professional communities and philanthropic institutions to build the capacity of organizations that work with immigrants, such as hometown associations, immigrants' rights groups, social service agencies, and other intermediary organizations through mentoring, relationship-building, funding, and leadership development.
- The Task Force urges Mexican and Latino organizations to establish relationships with corporate, civic, cultural, and community organizations to encourage the participation of Mexican leaders on their boards.

- The Task Force urges Chicago’s business and professional leaders to examine the makeup of boards of cultural institutions, universities, newspapers, and corporations, and to make an active effort to identify Mexican leaders to join them.
- The Task Force urges Mexican and other leaders to identify and support Mexican candidates for Local School Councils, suburban school boards, and appointments to zoning and planning boards.

Political Participation

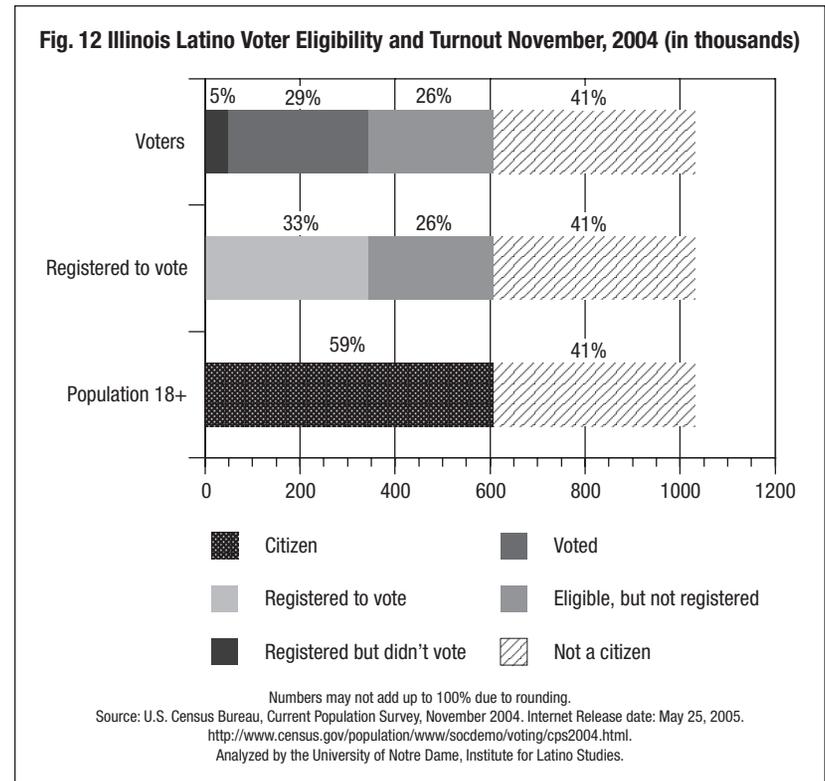
Latino political power is hampered by a low number of voters and low voter registration rates among eligible voters.

Slightly more than a quarter of the total Latino population voted in Illinois in 2004. This is due in part to the large number of Latinos who are not U.S. citizens as well as the number of citizens who are not registered to vote. In 2004, almost 60 percent of Latinos 18 years and older were U.S. citizens, but only a third were registered to vote and more than a quarter were eligible but not registered. Voter registration efforts are needed to increase the number of registered Latino voters.

However, those who voted represent almost 86 percent of all Latino registered voters, up from 83 percent in the November 2000 election. These voter turnout rates are promising, as they are close to the 87 percent voter turnout rates for registered whites in Illinois, though lower than the 93 percent of registered African Americans who vote (see figure 12).

The U.S.-born children of Mexicans present a unique opportunity to teach young people at an early age about the political process and create a culture of voting. Because many of their parents cannot model voting habits, community leaders and institutions must step in. Younger Mexican Americans have thus far been the group least likely to vote of all Mexicans.

The immigration rallies and marches launched in Chicago in March 2006, however, have inspired Mexican and other youth, and set the stage for other types of civic and political participation. Mexican and other community leaders must take advantage of the enthusiasm and interest in this issue and use it to develop Mexican teens and young adults into community leaders and voters.



Legal permanent residents represent massive voting potential among Mexicans.

Across the country, Mexicans and other immigrants are working hard to increase the number of new citizens since the anti-immigrant legislation passed in the U.S. House of Representatives in December 2005. According to the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (ICIRR), the U.S. Department of Homeland Security received more than 185,000 applications for naturalization between January and March 2006, a 19 percent increase over the same period a year earlier.

In a new analysis from ICIRR, approximately 60 percent of the 1.6 million immigrants in Illinois are not U.S. citizens. About 350,000 immigrants are currently eligible to become citizens. Of those, about 177,000 are Mexican, most of whom live in Chicago and its suburbs.

New Americans Democracy Project

Yesenia Sanchez didn't expect to be a political activist. The 23-year-old is an active volunteer in her Melrose Park Catholic parish and recently graduated from the University of Illinois.

Sanchez has joined the New Americans Democracy Project of the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights for summer and fall training as one of 21 young "Democracy Fellows." These full-time political organizers will work to help legal immigrants become citizens, register, and turn out to vote.

The project has ambitious goals: recruiting 1,000 election volunteers, assisting 10,000 legal permanent residents to begin the citizenship process, registering 15,000 new voters, and turning 50,000 immigrant voters out to vote. Activists are working in the city as well as suburbs such as Bolingbrook, Elgin, Melrose Park, Waukegan, and others.

Organizers of the Democracy Project understand that all politicians can count. While many Mexican immigrants in Illinois are undocumented, almost 350,000 legal immigrants live in the state who are currently eligible to become U.S. citizens. And 186,000 U.S.-born children of immigrants between the ages of 16 and 24 will be eligible to vote in the 2008 elections.

This spring Sanchez was not in the mega-marches in Chicago, but she organized a march of 1,000 Latinos and their supporters in Champaign-Urbana. And they chanted, "Today We March, Tomorrow We Vote," down there just as marchers in Chicago did. Now Sanchez is one of thousands across the United States making that chant a political reality.

They represent a tremendous opportunity for increasing the numbers of new voters but must become citizens first.

U.S. citizenship has become much more difficult to obtain for legal immigrants with lower incomes and less education.

The cost of applying for naturalization has risen from \$95 in 1998 to the current cost of \$400, with automatic fee increases scheduled each year. The Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (ICIRR) reports that the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services has proposed several policy initiatives that could create other obstacles to citizenship for many immigrants, including changes that could make the citizenship test harder for less-educated immigrants, and a new "electronic filing" system that would add further costs and paperwork burdens on applicants.

In a 2005 survey conducted for the ICIRR, almost 80 percent of those interviewed said that applying for citizenship was difficult and one of the major barriers cited was their low English skills. Cost

and difficulty of the test, lack of information about the process, and its length were also cited. Many immigrants said they had difficulty attending both English and citizenship classes while working.

Expanded access to community-based English language classes and citizenship instruction are central to enhancing civic and political participation.

The Task Force found that community-based groups, churches, settlement houses, immigrants' rights groups, hometown associations, and a host of other organizations provide English and citizenship services in ways that are accessible and convenient to immigrants, that instill trust and pride, and serve as a bridge to the comprehensive range of human services that immigrants need to sustain their families. Community colleges are also an important provider of English classes.

Nevertheless, demand far outstrips the available services, with long waiting lists the norm. Other problems reported include the times the classes are offered, taking into account that many people work two jobs, as well as a lack of child care.

Coalition building and increases in Latino voter turnout have resulted in a steady increase in Latino elected officials in Illinois, but not in numbers representative of the population.

In 1985, only 26 Latinos served in a public office at any level in Illinois, only two Latinos served in the Illinois State House of Representatives, and none served in the Illinois State Senate or U.S. House of Representatives. Today, 103 Latinos hold public office in Illinois, a significant increase (see figure 13). However, while Latinos are 14 percent of all residents in the state, the 11 state Latino legislators in Illinois represent only 5 to 6 percent of state legislators, and Illinois has only one Latino in the U.S. Congress.

Coalition politics is not new to Mexicans in Chicago, but it has evolved over the last 30 years.

In the 1970s, Mexicans came together with Puerto Ricans under the "Latino" umbrella to form one of the first pan-Latino organizations. In the 1980s they were able to elect candidates who addressed their needs. They built coalitions with African Americans to help elect Harold Washington and several Latino candidates. Since that time,

Fig. 13 Latinos in Elected Office: Illinois, 1996, 2000, 2006

	1996	2000	2006
Members of Congress	1	1	1
Statewide Officials	0	0	0
State Legislators	6	6	11
Local Officials	34	37	91
TOTAL	41	44	103

*Local School Councils from Chicago are not included in this table.
Source: NALEO Educational Fund, National Directory of Latino Elected Officials 1996–2003 and National Directory of Latino Elected Officials 2006. Analyzed by the University of Notre Dame, Institute for Latino Studies.

Latinos have organized several formal and informal coalitions and have successfully elected their chosen candidates for city and state office. Today, Latinos have formed political action committees to fund candidates of choice, and Latino professional organizations often invite elected officials to speak at conferences and other networking events.

In 2003, Latino legislators organized the first Latino Caucus in Springfield, Illinois. By 2006 it was strong enough to influence approval of the budget and pass critical education legislation important to Latinos. The caucus has held three annual statewide conferences, drawing more than 2,000 participants in 2005.

As the Mexican political scene matures in the city and suburbs, politicians and their supporters are not just concerned with electing another Latino, but about electing candidates who represent their needs and interests.

CIVIC AND POLITICAL RECOMMENDATION 2:

Increase political participation of the Mexican community by promoting citizenship, voter registration, and voting, as well as by building coalitions.

Action Items:

- The Task Force urges Mexican leaders and community organizations to train and certify deputy registrars and conduct registration campaigns by partnering with African American organizations, unions, and other groups successful in this area.

- The Task Force urges civic Chicago to partner with the Mexican community to promote youth participation in the political process by educating young people in schools, through government agencies, community programs, internships and mentorship opportunities, and involvement in political campaigns.
- The Task Force urges the Mexican community to partner with corporations, foundations, and government agencies, and other immigrant community-based organizations to increase programs teaching English as a second language, citizenship classes, and naturalization and voter registration campaigns.

Cultural Exchange

Cultural exchange helps to break down barriers and reduce discrimination.

Mexican culture has steadily become a vibrant and integral part of the character and economy of the United States and the Chicago region. Across the country salsa has outpaced ketchup as the number one condiment consumed, English songs peppered with Spanish lyrics top the music charts, and Univision is the number one Spanish-language television station in several markets, including Chicago. Mexican-owned restaurants from taquerias to high-end restaurants, travel agencies, music stores, and dress shops have become familiar sights in many Chicago neighborhoods and suburbs. These businesses, and arts institutions such as the Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum, contribute to the cultural exchange taking place here between Mexicans and Americans of all ethnic backgrounds. The media, both Spanish and English, play an important role in this exchange as well.

As Mexicans in the region participate in their communities through work, church, school, and other neighborhood institutions, they share their customs, values, language, and culture with broader Chicago at the same time that they are adapting them to get along in American society. At its best, this cultural exchange leads to appreciation and understanding. But cultural differences can result in racism and discrimination that keep Mexicans and other immigrants from full civic engagement and successful integration.

In spite of Illinois' progressive immigrant policies and programs, Mexicans and other immigrants still face racial and cultural discrimination, and challenges that limit their ability to participate fully in civic life.

The Chicago Area Survey by the Institute for Latinos Studies at the University of Notre Dame reported that 25 percent of Mexicans in the region said they had been victims of racial or ethnic discrimination in relation to jobs, education, housing, or other areas of life.

Since the Chicago Hate Crime Ordinance was passed in 1990, the Chicago Commission on Human Relations assists victims of hate crimes, and tabulates hate crime incidents reported to the Chicago Police Department. Given the size of the city, the numbers of hate crimes reported by the Commission on Human Relations in Chicago are small: 682 reported over the past five years. This may be accounted for by the reluctance of some individuals to report or to interact with the police department, and a lack of community awareness of the ordinance. The categories of hate crime include racial, religious, sexual orientation, gender, disability, and national origin. One-fifth of hate crimes in the past five years were based on national origin. Thirty-five cases were assaults against Latinos. Although there is no evidence that this is due to the current immigration debate, hate crimes against Latinos in Chicago have increased from 13 percent of all hate crimes in 2001 to 60 percent of all hate crimes in 2005.

Two new studies by the Anti-Defamation League and the Southern Poverty Law Center reveal that hate crimes against Latinos are on the rise, and the number of hate groups has risen 30 percent since 2000. They report that white supremacists, skinheads, and other extremist groups are using the immigration debate to provoke violence against Latinos, regardless of immigration status, around the country.

Cultural institutions and the media play important roles in promoting cross-cultural understanding.

The Chicago area boasts a number of Mexican arts and cultural organizations, from the well-established Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum in Pilsen, to nightclubs and concert venues, to Mexican folkloric music and dance schools. While their audiences are mostly Latino, they draw people from all backgrounds and enhance tourists' experience of Chicago.

For their part, cultural institutions such as Chicago's Field Museum of Natural History, the Ravinia Festival, and the Chicago Children's Museum have reached out to Mexicans and other Latinos, offering exhibits and programs that incorporate Latino culture, and using targeted media and marketing materials and strategies. Ravinia, in north suburban Highland Park, established a Latino advisory board that has provided insights and relationships for the organization to launch a comprehensive Latino marketing effort.

Providing Exposure to Mexican Arts and Culture

In 1982 with a \$900 budget, Carlos Tortolero, a former Chicago Public School bilingual history teacher, convened five teachers and founded the Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum. In 1987, the museum opened its doors in the working class neighborhood of Pilsen, located just southwest of downtown Chicago. The teachers, determined to provide Chicago with a community-based institution that offered Mexican education, cultural celebration, and preservation of history and culture, created the museum as a model for others. The museum's mission is to make the arts accessible to everyone. One of the main ways it succeeds in doing so is by offering free admission to the public.

As the largest Latino arts organization in the United States and the only Latino museum accredited by the American Association of Museums, the museum provides all of Chicago with exposure to Mexican arts and culture. Through the museum's creative programming, people of all backgrounds come together to celebrate Mexican art. The museum's exhibits and performances attract nearly 200,000 visitors a year, of whom 50 percent are Mexican. The museum boasts a collection of approximately 10,000 pieces. Its annual *Día de los Muertos* (Day of the Dead) exhibition is the nation's largest celebration of the tradition and has become one of Chicago's best-known arts events. With 25 percent of its budget devoted to educational and youth programs, the museum is a national leader. More than 1,600 school tours are conducted each year by youth docents in English and Spanish.

A study by Williams College and another by the University of Chicago, completed in 2005, determined that the museum has a \$9 to \$10 million economic impact on the Pilsen neighborhood. Representatives from 61 countries around the world have visited the Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum to learn firsthand how a major cultural institution can thrive in a neighborhood setting and how a museum can showcase a culture that is not the dominant culture of that society.

Through several marketing studies, *Hoy*, the Spanish-language newspaper published by Tribune Company, found that Latinos spend more time on the weekend engaged in family activities and outings than the general population, with about a third of Latino respondents having attended area museums, zoos, festivals, and other family entertainment in the past year. Because Latino households are large, they look for more affordable and convenient activities and are willing to drive out of the city to find them.

Univision, Chicago's top Spanish-language television station, is currently the number one local five o'clock evening television newscast in any language in Chicago. In recognition of its responsibility to the Latino community, Univision produces programming that informs the Latino community about education, voting, immi-

“Avanzando con La Educacion” or “Advancing Through Education”

In January 2006, in partnership with the Illinois State Board of Education, Chicago Public Schools, and the U.S. Hispanic Leadership Institute, Univision Chicago, the number one Spanish-language television station in the area, introduced a segment in the Sunday 5 p.m. newscast to affirm to every Latino family that every Latino youth can go to college. Called “*Avanzando con La Educacion*” or “Advancing Through Education,” the program features educators and child development experts who offer tips on how parents and their children can partner with the school system to help their children achieve academic success. Subjects include a variety of topics, such as proper nutrition, prenatal care, and reading to children. The yearlong program is divided into four quarters, each focusing on different issues.

In addition to the weekly segments, the station incorporated station-produced public service announcement campaigns, and launched a series of Education Town Halls hosted by on-air hosts and held in Chicago and the suburbs, from Aurora to Waukegan. The programs provided a forum for Latino families to speak directly with education experts, including the president of the Illinois State Board of Education and the CEO of Chicago Public Schools. Topics included Chicago Public Schools funding, Summer Learning Opportunities, Preparing for the New School Year, and Preparing to Apply for College. Recaps of the Town Hall meetings are aired on Univision’s public affairs program, “Advancing with the Community.”

gration, and other relevant issues through an “*Avanzando Contigo*” (Advancing with You) campaign. One of the major components of the campaign is “*Avanzando con La Educacion*,” or “Advancing through Education.”

CIVIC AND POLITICAL RECOMMENDATION 3:

Promote knowledge and understanding of the Mexican community through cultural institutions, media, community initiatives, and adoption of policies that protect human and civil rights.

Action Items:

- The Task Force urges Mayor Richard M. Daley to consider issuing a memorandum to all city departments reaffirming Chicago’s commitment to being a multicultural city and to underline the importance of the new ordinance, identified in Title II of the City Code as Chapter 2-173 (010-070), which provides equal access to city services for all Chicago residents.

- The Task Force urges the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus to prepare a similar proclamation to be passed by local municipalities and to partner with Mexican and other immigrant leaders to implement an education campaign for mayors on immigrants’ rights and issues.
- The Task Force urges local chambers of commerce to adopt the U.S. Chamber of Commerce statement, issued in October 2005, that urged Congress “to pass a comprehensive immigration reform package that allows current undocumented workers to earn legal status and that will address potential worker shortfalls by providing a structured mechanism for employers to fill jobs when American workers are unavailable.” The Chamber also urged lawmakers “to adopt measures that work seamlessly to ensure U.S. national and economic security.”
- The Task Force urges Spanish and English radio, television, and print media to expand programming that educates and informs the Mexican community about issues such as financial literacy, voting, education, and jobs, and to produce programming that demonstrates ways in which Mexicans and other immigrants contribute to life in metropolitan Chicago.
- The Task Force urges Mexican and other arts and cultural institutions to partner in reaching out to different audiences and promoting cross-cultural learning.

V. Health and Social Services

The full economic and social integration of the Mexican community will require that their basic health and human service needs are met, enabling parents to work and provide for their families, their children to succeed in school, and families to participate in all aspects of community life.

Because they are a young population, Mexican immigrants and their children are generally a healthy population. The U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration reports, however, that compared to whites, people of color have higher incidence of chronic diseases, higher mortality, and poorer health outcomes. In its 2005 annual *National Healthcare Quality and Healthcare Disparities* reports, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services found that the overall quality of U.S. health care had improved over previous years and that disparities affecting people of color had been reduced. But this was not true for Latinos. Disparities in quality and access to care grew wider in a majority of areas for Latinos, including declines in the quality of diabetes care, a major health problem in the Latino community.

Poverty, language, cultural norms, racism, and immigration status have been found to influence the quality and effectiveness of health care that Mexicans and other immigrants receive. Providers often do not speak the patient's language or understand the cultural and socioeconomic factors that can affect a patient's health. Even when they are employed, many Mexicans simply cannot afford health care. They are the group most likely to be uninsured or underinsured, leading to health problems that go untreated and high medical bills that put a financial burden on the entire family.

Rising rates of obesity and diabetes among adults and children are of concern because of the long-term health problems they bring, especially when they begin in childhood. Increased access to health education, screenings, and other preventive care is critical for the Mexican community, particularly since it is a young community.

Social services provide necessary support for Mexican individuals and families. Yet, obtaining social services, especially in suburbs unprepared for the influx of Mexicans and other immigrants, is often difficult due to language and cultural barriers, and a lack of adequate resources.

This chapter explores some of the key health disparities and social service needs that affect the economic stability and prosperity of the Mexican immigrants and their children in greater Chicago.

Findings and Recommendations

Health Care

Despite high rates of employment, Latinos are the demographic group most likely to be uninsured.

In 2002, Latinos comprised 14 percent of the total U.S. population but were 29 percent of the uninsured. The Kaiser Family Foundation reports that in Illinois a third of Latinos under age 65 were uninsured, almost twice as many as in the general population. Not surprisingly, Latinos are more likely to use public health centers and emergency rooms for health care.

Uninsured Latinos are less likely to use preventive health services. For example, less than 40 percent of uninsured Latino adults with diabetes had annual foot exams, compared to almost 70 percent of Latinos with insurance. And only about 16 percent of uninsured

Alivio Medical Center: A Model Community Health Center

Since 1989, Alivio Medical Center has been providing bilingual, bicultural primary healthcare services to the largely Mexican neighborhoods of Pilsen, Little Village, Back of the Yards, and Heart of Chicago. Created to serve the health needs of the uninsured and underinsured residents of these communities, Alivio partners with its patients, community groups, hospitals, and universities to create effective methods of engaging the Mexican community in prevention and wellness. Staff at the center are advocates for resources and programs such as expanded public health insurance and health care for the undocumented, and conduct innovative health outreach initiatives such as those targeting children and men. With a commitment to respectful, compassionate, culturally competent quality care, Alivio has become a leader in serving the Mexican community.

Today, Alivio serves more than 17,000 patients each year through two health centers in Pilsen and a school-based health center at Gladstone Elementary School, a Chicago public school. Alivio's patients are mostly Spanish-speaking, "working poor" families and individuals, predominantly Mexican and undocumented, many without insurance. Alivio offers a comprehensive array of services, including nutrition classes, individual and family counseling, a nutrition program for women and children, pediatrics, family and adult medicine, obstetrics, gynecology and midwifery, and an on-site laboratory. The center enrolls families in the All Kids Program, Illinois' state health insurance program.

Alivio is a national model for successful community health centers and has received numerous local and national awards. It has been recognized both for its overall success as a community health center and for individual projects such as the Alivio Midwifery Service.

Latino men aged 40 to 64 received prostate exams, compared with 40 percent of insured Latino men in that same age group, according to analysis by the Commonwealth Fund.

Lack of insurance and unstable coverage are most likely to affect Latino children in low-income families. Nearly half of Latino children were uninsured during all or part of the year, compared with one-third of U.S. children in low-income families.

While state health insurance programs in Illinois like All Kids and Family Care have expanded access to public health insurance for Mexican children and families, undocumented adults are still excluded from public health insurance and must rely on public health centers or private doctors for care.

There are a number of community healthcare providers in Chicago, including Chicago Department of Public Health clinics, the Cook County Bureau of Health Services clinics and hospitals, and numerous community health centers. But the demand still exceeds the resources. Healthcare providers and patients share stories of hours spent in overcrowded emergency rooms and public clinics and hospitals, patients sometimes having to wait weeks for an appointment or test when they are sick. Further, many face language barriers with their providers. A handful of hospitals offer on-site interpreter services staffed with trained medical interpreters, but most hospitals and clinics rely on Spanish-speaking staff and on the friends or relatives of their Spanish-speaking patients to help with communication. While this strategy helps with immediate language barriers, patients are better served by bilingual and bicultural medical staff.

There is a dearth of bilingual and bicultural healthcare professionals, creating multiple obstacles to providing quality care for Mexicans and other Spanish-speakers.

The shortage of nurses continues as a major problem in the delivery of quality health care to Latino patients in Illinois and other regions of the United States. Illinois is currently suffering from a nursing shortage, with projections of about 8,000 additional registered nurses and 1,200 licensed practical nurses needed every year through 2010. According to the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, the number of potential caregivers, including nurses, is projected to decrease by more than 4 percent while the number of those who need care is projected to increase by 31 percent between 2000 and 2020. Several local initiatives are under way to address this issue.

The Illinois Hispanic Nurses Association indicates that less than 2 percent of the nursing workforce in Illinois consists of Latinos, and a much smaller number are bilingual. In fact, the shortage of bilingual health professionals in Cook County is so severe that recently a Cook County commissioner proposed establishing a pilot program to increase the number of healthcare professionals in the county. If approved, the program will sponsor 20 bilingual Latino immigrants in identified areas of shortages, including nursing, pharmacy, and X-ray technology.

The Chicago Bilingual Nurse Consortium, a nonprofit organization dedicated to increasing the pool of bilingual and bicultural nurses in the Chicago metropolitan area, has been successful in making the Illinois Nurse Practice Act more immigrant-friendly. Legislation was signed last year to amend the Nurse Practice Act allowing it to add a nurse externship program that would assist nurses from Puerto Rico in becoming licensed as registered nurses in Illinois.

MacNeal Hospital in Berwyn has implemented several initiatives to better serve the Mexican community and is a lead sponsor of the Spanish Coalition for Jobs, Inc.'s Bilingual Medical Assisting program. This ten-month program provides individuals with the clinical and administrative skills to work in a physician office or a hospital setting.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL RECOMMENDATION 1:

Increase access to affordable, accessible, culturally competent care for the Mexican population in the Chicago metropolitan region.

Action Items:

- The Task Force urges state legislators to make public health insurance available to all Illinois residents regardless of immigration status through programs such as All Kids, Family Care, and universal healthcare initiatives.
- The Task Force urges local and state policymakers and healthcare providers to ensure access to safety-net healthcare providers for the undocumented population by opposing federal legislation that criminalizes immigrants and the health and social service providers who assist them.

- The Task Force urges corporate, private, and hospital foundations to partner with high schools, local community colleges, four-year colleges, and healthcare institutions to develop programs that recruit and train bicultural and bilingual health professionals.

Encouraging Latino Students in Healthcare Careers

Internships at Children's Memorial Hospital

Spanish-speaking Chicago public high school students considering healthcare careers can participate in a six-week paid summer internship that provides on-site educational hospital experience, including the opportunity to:

- rotate through several hospital departments;
- observe surgeries and help medical imaging staff examine X-rays; and
- hear presentations from pediatric care specialists from a broad range of medical specialties.

As one of the nation's top pediatric hospitals, Children's Memorial is able to expose students to Chicago's leaders in the healthcare field and to provide opportunities for long-term mentoring relationships with hospital staff.

The program has graduated 47 students since its inception in 2002, and 16 more are enrolled for the summer 2006. As an early indicator of the program's success, 32 former participants are currently working toward college degrees in health care, and four have also found part-time employment at Children's Memorial while enrolled in school.

Arthur Foundation and Loyola University Partner to Train Bilingual Nurses

In 2000, the Berwyn-Cicero Hispanic Registered Nurse Initiative was formed as a collaborative effort between the Arthur Foundation, a Berwyn-based philanthropic organization, and Loyola University's Marcella Niehoff School of Nursing. The program provides major scholarships to Latino students interested in the program leading to a bachelor of science in nursing degree at the nursing school. For two years after graduation, nurses are required to work in suburban Cicero, Berwyn, Riverside, North Riverside, Lyons, Forest View, or Stickney. They can also choose to work in Chicago's Little Village and Pilsen neighborhoods.

The partnership will continue under the present grant to the year 2013. During that time, more than 90 bilingual and bicultural nurses are expected to graduate from Loyola's nursing school and contribute to the health and welfare of the communities in which they work.

Prevention

Research indicates that cultivating a culture of prevention and wellness in Mexican communities can be difficult because of socioeconomic and cultural issues. Among Latino groups, Mexicans are the least likely to seek preventive care such as dental exams, mammograms, and Pap tests. Having insurance makes a difference, but it does not eliminate the gap.

In a 2005 article in the *American Journal of Health Promotion*, researchers report that the degree to which city people walk or ride bicycles depends largely on how much green space is available. Since moderate exercise can improve health outcomes, green space is important, especially in other areas. In general, Mexican communities and other low-income neighborhoods have less green space, limiting opportunities for outdoor recreational activity and exercise. For example, Chicago's mainly Latino Logan Square and Little Village are the two neighborhoods with the least amount of green space in the entire city.

Because the Mexican community is young, establishing healthy habits at an early age needs to be encouraged through a variety of health promotion initiatives at the school and community level.

The Mexican community has disproportionately high rates of heart disease, diabetes, and obesity.

The American Heart Association reports that heart disease and stroke account for almost 30 percent of deaths among Latino males and 35 percent of deaths among Latinas in the U.S. Risk factors of coronary heart disease include high blood pressure, elevated blood cholesterol, tobacco use, and insufficient physical activity, much of which may be prevented through behavioral changes. However, low literacy skills, limited English, and lack of access to health promotion and prevention materials keep many Latinos unaware of these factors.

Cancer ranks third as a cause of death in the United States, but it is the leading cause of death for Latinas ages 25 to 64 and among Latino men over age 45. While Latinos have a lower overall cancer rate than non-Latinos, they have disproportionately high mortality rates, largely due to late diagnosis. The Intercultural Cancer Council reports that uninsured Latinos are two to three times more likely to have cancer diagnosed at a later stage, resulting in poorer health outcomes and higher rates of mortality.

A 2002 report from the Centers for Disease Control said almost three-fourths of people in the Mexican community were overweight and more than a third were obese. The Mexican community has the highest rates of overweight and obesity of all ethnic and racial groups. Obesity increases the risk of developing coronary heart disease, high blood pressure, osteoarthritis, and type 2 diabetes.

Diabetes is one of the most serious health issues affecting Latinos in the United States. It is the fifth-leading cause of death among Latinos. According to the National Diabetes Education Program, the prevalence of type 2 diabetes is twice as high among Latinos than among non-Latino whites. Approximately a quarter of Mexicans in the United States have type 2 diabetes. People with diabetes are at high risk for heart disease, kidney failure, and circulatory problems that can lead to amputations, serious complications that have high medical costs, and can lead to major disability and early death.

In 2001, the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases reported that one-third of diabetes cases among Latinos go unreported and untreated, making diagnosis and treatment an urgent matter for Latinos.

Most health problems encountered by Mexican youth are preventable.

Studies show that as Mexican American youth become more acculturated to life in the United States, they lose their extended family network and become engaged in more high-risk behaviors that affect their current health and future productivity.

According to the 2005 Youth Risk Behavioral Survey of nearly 14,000 high school students, Latino and black students are more likely than whites to say they are overweight, and engage in physical fighting and risky sexual behaviors. Latino students are more likely than black or white students to report attempted suicide and the use of drugs like cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamines.

Latino teens have the highest teen birth rates, reducing their opportunities for a successful future.

Giving birth as a teen greatly reduces the education and career options for young people, and affects the health and well-being of the child as well. About a third of teen mothers in the United States will complete high school, but only 1.5 percent will complete college by the time they are 30 years old. Of all Latina teen mothers aged 15 to 19 in 2002, only 4 percent completed high school and went on to college.

A *Chicago Reporter* analysis of Chicago Department of Public Health data from 2002 shows that in Chicago neighborhoods where the majority of residents are Latino, an average of 153 babies were born to teen mothers, compared to 109 in mostly black areas and 28 in areas that are mostly white.

Obesity is a serious health problem for Mexican children.

Childhood obesity has tripled in the United States in the last 30 years. Nearly one-third of all children and adolescents aged 6 to 19 years are overweight or at the high end of normal weight. For children of Mexican descent the numbers are much higher—37 percent of girls and 43 percent of boys.

According to the Consortium to Lower Obesity in Chicago's Children, in Chicago's overwhelmingly Mexican South Lawndale neighborhood, more than 40 percent of children are obese. This compares to just over 20 percent in Chicago and 10 percent in the United States. Obesity can lead to problems such as type 2 diabetes, previously a disease of middle age, in children and young adults.

Research demonstrates that childhood obesity is more common in children who are poor and whose mothers have low education, pointing to the need for prevention and intervention in low-income Mexican communities.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL RECOMMENDATION 2:

Expand programs and resources that encourage disease prevention and wellness in Mexican communities in the city and suburbs.

Action Items:

- The Task Force urges local and state departments of public health, research universities, and foundations to provide resources for programs that promote preventive care and prevention education in the Mexican community through schools, churches, community-based organizations, community health promotion programs, and other grassroots initiatives.
- The Task Force urges city and suburban governments to assess and address the need for parks and other green space in predominantly Mexican communities.

- The Task Force urges local and state departments of public health and human services to partner with schools, community-based organizations, media, and Mexican youth to implement programs promoting nutrition, exercise, and other prevention efforts.

Social Services

A broad range of social services is needed to support immigrants as they strive for economic security and social integration. For immigrants, social service agencies, such as Chicago's settlement houses, state agencies, and churches are often a connection into broader community life, especially in suburban areas where the Mexican population has expanded and where most other residents do not speak Spanish. They provide services such as childcare, mental health services, youth programs, senior services, and emergency food and shelter.

Due to lack of bilingual staff and inadequate resources, some suburban communities are unable to help their new residents to become integrated into their community. In addition, Mexicans are often unfamiliar with these organizations.

Latinos tend to live in extended families with care responsibilities among different generations.

Lake County Community Foundation

The Lake County Community Foundation was created in collaboration with The Chicago Community Trust in June 2003 as a response to the growth in Lake County's population and an increased demand for social and health services, education, and affordable housing. Lake County is diverse with a multiethnic population and households at various economic levels. In particular, Lake County towns such as Highwood, Mundelein, Round Lake, and Waukegan have witnessed a significant population growth in recent years, mostly due to immigrants. Waukegan, for example, was 44.8 percent Latino in 2000, and increased to 54.2 percent Latino according to 2004 data. Overall, the Latino population in Lake County increased by 140 percent from 1990 to 2000, and continues to grow.

The Lake County Community Foundation operates through partnerships with charitable donors, professional advisors, The Chicago Community Trust, the Chicago area's largest community foundation, and other nonprofit organizations. It was established by a group of key business and government officials who wanted to help their community meet its growing needs, particularly for human services. In May 2006, the foundation awarded over \$80,000 in grants to support after-school programs, expand outpatient medical services, and support mentoring and wellness programs.

Corazon Community Services

Corazon Community Services is a start-up social service organization in Cicero, Illinois, a community with the largest Mexican population of any suburb. Corazon focuses on serving youth in a town that has more than 30,000 children under age 18 and a dearth of organized venues for positive social engagement for young people. When Corazon was established, there were no other Latino-led bilingual and bicultural organizations in Cicero.

"Clearly the need exists, and we are attempting to respond comprehensively to the needs of the community. It feels as if we are building brick by brick," said Adam Alonso, founder of Corazon. "We started out by recruiting volunteers to provide youth services."

Now, three years after Alonso launched Corazon, the agency has two full- and two part-time staff and an intern. It began serving 80 young people from 14 to 21 years old and this year expects to reach 200 through programs that run after school and all day during the summer. Services include tutoring and homework help, sports, games, life skills workshops, arts and drop-in, and an after-school program begun in late spring of 2006.

The agency has recently added a computer technology center offering computer training to children, adults, and seniors during the day, evenings, and weekends, and is in discussions with the Chicago Police Department to do gang intervention and outreach.

Corazon receives state and private funding and recently was awarded its first foundation grant, from Hispanics in Philanthropy. Alonso credits his success so far to building on the relationships of his previous experience in youth services to get the door open. But he still holds another full-time job, because as yet he is unable to pay himself a salary. Alonso's experience in getting his agency off the ground is an example of emerging nonprofits trying to meet the needs of immigrant communities.

The American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) found that Latinos were twice as likely as the general population to have had an aunt or uncle living in their household when they were children. Latinos are also more likely to care for other people's children. Nineteen percent of Latino parents aged 45 to 55 also care for other people's children, compared to 11 percent of the overall population, and Latinos are more involved in directly caring for elders. Some 21 percent of Latinos surveyed help their elder family members with personal care such as bathing and dressing, compared to 12 percent of the general population.

These findings have implications for the types of support that Latino families may need in addressing issues pertaining to the caregiver's burden, especially as it affects his or her ability to maintain a job.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL RECOMMENDATION 3:

Provide financial and professional expertise to create a stronger social services infrastructure in the suburbs able to meet the needs of the growing Mexican community.

Action Items:

- The Task Force urges regional organizations, such as the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus and the Suburban United Way, to work with city and suburban social services organizations to increase availability of services in suburban communities with large or growing Mexican populations.
- The Task Force urges corporations, foundations, and state and local governments to provide resources for the expansion of existing suburban social services organizations and the development of new organizations in communities where they are needed.
- The Task Force urges suburban and city social service agencies to partner with Mexican community organizations to identify and address the needs of people caring for their young and elderly relatives.
- The Task Force urges suburban mayors to partner with immigrant and other community leaders to establish Community Welcoming Centers in suburbs that have growing Mexican and other immigrant populations.

Community Welcoming Centers

The Task Force proposes opening Community Welcoming Centers modeled in part after the successful Chicago settlement houses that served immigrants in Chicago. Centers would partner with Mexican hometown associations and other immigrant organizations, and local information centers and visitors' bureaus. They would offer information on navigating local government offices, understanding new immigration laws, and registering for English and citizenship classes. The Community Welcoming Centers would provide services to Mexicans and other immigrants to foster their integration into their new communities as well as provide information of use to other local residents. In addition, the centers would promote understanding between new immigrants and their established neighbors through workshops and social activities. The range of resources available would be based on the needs of each local community.

VI. A Call to Action

The Mexican American Task Force was convened to address the economic and social integration of the Chicago metropolitan region's largest immigrant community, to help ensure Chicago's future prosperity, and to offer a model for cities around the nation and the world. As Chicago continues to take its place as a first-tier global city, it must invest in the human capital of its residents, especially its immigrants and their children.

As we have demonstrated throughout this report, the Mexican community plays a vital role in Chicago today and will do so even more in the future. While there has been a Mexican presence in the area since the late 19th century, the latest wave of Mexican immigrants has brought new challenges and rich opportunities to city neighborhoods and suburban communities. Building on their talents, skills, and economic potential will require vision and commitment from our leaders, investment of resources, cross-cultural dialogue, collaboration across sectoral and political lines, and creativity from Chicagoans of all backgrounds.

City dwellers and suburbanites, lifelong residents and recent immigrants, Mexicans and non-Mexicans alike, ours is a shared future.

As members of the Mexican American Task Force, we call upon:

Civic, business, and philanthropic leaders to reach out to Mexican entrepreneurs, professionals, and community leaders, for expanded access to professional development and leadership opportunities, and to invest in programs that develop the talents and skills that enable Mexicans to contribute more fully to the region's economic growth.

Mexican community leaders to hold out a vision for their community of full engagement in every aspect of Chicago's future, to build relationships and collaborate with non-Mexican civic, business, educational, governmental, and other leaders in the region, and to increase Mexican participation in economic activity, schools, civic organizations, and political life.

Educators to improve the design of our education system, raise the expectations and abilities of our teachers, principals, and parents,

and to address the specific needs of Mexican students to better prepare them to compete in the global economy.

State and local government officials and other policymakers to institute policies that support improvements in workplace and entrepreneurial opportunity, education, citizenship programs, and social and health services for all, particularly the Mexican community.

Mexican business leaders to expand their businesses, promote entrepreneurship and job development, and reach out to city and suburban chambers of commerce and other business networks.

All of greater Chicago to embrace Mexican immigrants and their children as fellow stakeholders in Chicago's future, to understand one another's cultures and values, and to work together so that our communities can better serve us all.

We, the Task Force, offer this report of findings and recommendations for the economic engagement of greater Chicago and its Mexican community, in the spirit of a mutual responsibility for a global city providing opportunities for all.

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Task Force Co-chairs

Douglas Doetsch

Partner

Mayer Brown Rowe & Maw LLP

Douglas Doetsch is a partner based in Chicago at the multinational law firm of Mayer Brown Rowe & Maw LLP. He specializes in international finance, corporate and securities matters, focusing on transactions in Mexico and elsewhere in Latin America. He regularly represents banks and companies in the emerging markets on securities offerings, mergers and acquisitions, and restructurings. He speaks and writes frequently on topics such as securitizations by emerging market issuers, international joint ventures, issuances of debt securities in the Euro-markets, and issuances of American Depositary Receipts by foreign issuers. He obtained his juris doctor from Columbia University in 1986, where he was editor-in-chief of the *Columbia Journal of Transnational Law*. He is a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Kalamazoo College, and did postgraduate study at the Université de Dakar in Senegal. He is also a member of the board of directors of The Chicago Council on Global Affairs and a trustee of the Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum.

Clare Muñana

President

Ancora Associates, Inc.

Clare Muñana is a public sector, nonprofit, and international management consultant operating her own firm. She has experience in domestic and international business and strategic planning, having performed numerous engagements for public and private sector clients in the U.S., Europe, Africa, and Latin America. Recent projects include the strategic plan for a Chicago start-up museum; development of a cultural institution for an economically and culturally underserved region; coproject manager of a mayoral economic development initiative for business attraction, retention, and expansion, City of Chicago; and a strategic plan for a major Chicago cultural institution. Her previous experience includes serving as a marketing consultant for U.S. companies establishing or expanding their ventures in Europe and working on projects for the United Nations and other international development agencies. She is a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Boston College, where she obtained a bachelor of arts in political science and Spanish literature. She also has a

master of arts in international economics and politics from the Johns Hopkins University and a master of business administration degree from Northwestern University. She serves as vice president of the Chicago Board of Education and sits on several other civic boards, including The Chicago Council on Global Affairs.

Alejandro Silva

Chairman

Evans Food Group

Alejandro Silva is a Mexican national who became a U.S. citizen in 1997. He is chairman of the board of Evans Food Group Ltd., Chicago, Illinois—the largest Hispanic company in the Chicago area. He entered the food business in Mexico in 1972 as operations manager and assistant plant manager of KIR Alimentos S.A. In 1979, he began a joint venture in Monterrey, Mexico, called Distribudora Mezquital Del Oro, S.A. He received his bachelor of science degree in food technology from Instituto Tecnológico y De Estudios Superiores de Monterrey in Mexico and his master of science in food engineering from the National College of Food Technology in Weybridge, Surrey, England. He has also received diplomas from the London School of Foreign Trade and from the College of Distribution Trades in Advanced Meat Technology. He has served as a guest lecturer at Dartmouth College. He is a board member of The Chicago Council on Global Affairs and of the New America Alliance, a trustee of the Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum and of the Institute of International Education, a director of the Private Bank, and the chairman of the finance and budgeting committee of the Chicago Transit Authority. He has received many awards, including the 1998 Latino Globalist Award and the U.S. Department of Commerce Minority Enterprises Development Agency's 1999 Award.

Task Force Members

Gonzalo Arroyo

Director

Family Focus

Gonzalo Arroyo is the director of Family Focus in Aurora, Illinois, a nonprofit organization that offers support programs to families in the surrounding area. Family Focus targets its services toward immigration issues, adult education, child development, after-school programming, and information to access public benefits. He is also the co-founder and first president of the Federacion de Clubes Michoacanos en Illinois.

Jose M. Aybar

Associate Vice Chancellor for Arts & Sciences

City Colleges of Chicago

Jose M. Aybar has more than six years of teaching experience in post-secondary education specializing in international studies and educational policy issues. He has developed and directed programs in Latin American Studies, particularly on Latin American immigration to the U.S.

Alberto M. Azpe

Community Bank President

Harris Bank

Alberto M. Azpe is one of the heads of the Hispanic Banking Initiative, a major business commitment to address the distinctive needs of Chicagoland's Hispanic marketplace. Azpe has 15 years of experience, previously with Grupo Financiero Bancomer, one of Mexico's largest retail banks.

James D. Bindenagel

Vice President for Community, Government, and International

Affairs

DePaul University

J.D. Bindenagel is responsible for deepening connections between DePaul University's Chicago and overseas campuses and communities. A former U.S. ambassador and 28-year veteran of the U.S. diplomatic corps, he most recently served as the vice president for program at The Chicago Council on Foreign Relations (now The Chicago Council on Global Affairs).

Margaret Blackshere

President

Illinois AFL-CIO

Margaret Blackshere was elected president of the Illinois AFL-CIO in 2000 after serving as secretary-treasurer from 1993 to 2000. She serves on a variety of boards and councils, including The Chicago Council on Global Affairs, the United Way of Illinois, American Red Cross in Illinois, Worker's Compensation Advisory Board, the Industrial Commission's Self Insurer's Advisory Board, and the Chicago Metropolitan 2020 Board.

Allert Brown-Gort

Associate Director, Institute for Latino Studies

University of Notre Dame

Allert Brown-Gort is responsible for day-to-day operations of the Institute and oversees grant proposals and research projects. A citizen of both the United States and Mexico, he has worked at the Autonomous Technological Institute of Mexico (ITAM) in Mexico City and at Columbia University.

Gerardo Cardenas

Chicago Press Secretary & Hispanic Community Liaison

Office of the Governor

Gerardo Cardenas, a journalist for over 20 years, has been at the Office of the Governor since 2004. Previously, he was assignment editor for *Hoy*, the Spanish-language daily newspaper published by Tribune Company.

Joel M. Carp

Senior Vice President

Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago

Joel M. Carp has been engaged in efforts to create public policies and sustain quality, comprehensive health and human services for people, including refugees and immigrants. He has also served on a number of governmental task forces for both the mayor and the governor.

José Cerda III

Chief of Policy

Office of the Mayor

José Cerda III advises Mayor Richard M. Daley on federal, state, and local policy issues, and works to develop and implement innovative

policies that will benefit the city of Chicago and its residents. He previously served as special assistant for domestic policy to former President Bill Clinton, contributing to policy development in the areas of crime and drug policy, urban redevelopment, race relations, and immigration.

Julie Chavez

*Senior Vice President, Chicago Market Development
Bank of America*

Julie Chavez is responsible for managing a variety of programs in the areas of philanthropy, community and civic engagement, volunteerism, sponsorships, communications, and business development for the Chicago area. She sits on the board of Metropolitan Family Services and served as board chair for six years (1999-2005) for the Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum.

John Cruickshank

*Publisher
Chicago Sun-Times*

John Cruickshank, publisher of the *Chicago Sun-Times*, previously served as vice president, editorial, and coeditor. He was also editor-in-chief of *The Vancouver Sun*, and is a winner of the National Newspaper Award and the Lisagor Award for Ethics in Journalism.

Leticia Peralta Davis

*Chief Executive Officer
Metropolitan Pier and Exposition Authority (MPEA)*

Leticia Peralta Davis was appointed CEO of MPEA by Governor Blagojevich in 2003 to oversee the operations of Navy Pier and McCormick Place, including the West Building Expansion Project. She brings to the position over 25 years' experience in public finance and has implemented a variety of sound fiscal and business practices at the authority.

Ricardo Estrada

*Executive Director
Erie Neighborhood House*

Ricardo Estrada has led efforts that resulted in the creation of the Erie Elementary Charter School and in the offering of adult education classes and technology services to Little Village residents for the first time. Prior to joining Erie, he worked for several local organizations to strengthen Chicago's Latino communities.

Sarah Nava Garvey

*Vice President - State & Local Government Relations
The Boeing Company*

Sarah Nava Garvey serves as the company liaison with government and community leaders as well as the international political and business community in the Midwest region. She is currently the president of the board of the U.S.-Mexico Chamber of Commerce, and sits on the boards of the Hispanic Civic Committee of Chicago and Scholarship Chicago.

Rey Gonzalez

*Vice President of Diversity
Exelon Corporation*

Rey Gonzalez is responsible for strengthening the diversity programs for Exelon Corporation. Prior to joining Exelon in 2002, he was vice president of diversity for McDonald's Corporation. He also serves on a number of community boards, including as chairperson of both the U.S. Hispanic Leadership Institute and El Valor.

Susan Hayes Gordon

*Chief Government and Community Relations Officer
Children's Memorial Hospital*

Susan Hayes Gordon has worked for 19 years to develop positive relationships for the hospital with community leaders and policy-makers at all levels of government, and to shape public policy to enhance the health and well-being of children. She has also chaired the State of Illinois' Medicaid Advisory Committee from 2000 to 2003 and the Illinois Hospital Association's Medicaid Disproportionate Share Hospital Committee from 2002 to 2004.

Juanita Irizarry

*Former Executive Director
Latinos United*

Juanita Irizarry served as the executive director of Illinois' only regional, Latino-focused public policy and advocacy group regarding housing issues, where she led the organization through its 2005 launch of the Latino Action Research Network as the organization expanded its work into immigration, education, and other issues affecting the Latino community. She is a bilingual, Illinois-born Puerto Rican with more than 15 years of experience in the nonprofit sector, with an emphasis on housing and community development work in Chicago's Latino community.

Ernest Mahaffey*Principal**Diversity Initiatives*

Ernest Mahaffey founded DI Group, an export sales and marketing company. Prior to leading DI Group, he was vice president with Chase Manhattan Bank. He has pursued leadership and philanthropic activities with the theme of embracing the world in urban communities.

Terry Mazany*President and CEO**The Chicago Community Trust*

Terry Mazany became just the fifth president in The Chicago Community Trust's 90-year history in 2004. Prior to that position, he headed the Trust's Education Initiative. He has a distinguished career in public school administration with a demonstrated commitment to equity and opportunity for all students.

Milena K. Novy-Marx*Program Officer**The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation*

Milena K. Novy-Marx is a program officer in the Initiative on Global Migration and Human Mobility in the foundation's Program on Global Security & Sustainability. Prior to joining the foundation, she spent several years as an economic and management consultant working on issues of business strategy, antitrust, and competition policy.

Paul O'Connor*Executive Director**World Business Chicago*

Paul O'Connor began his career as a journalist in Chicago and Seattle, served as press secretary to the governor of Washington, then as Illinois' assistant director of public health, and later chief operating officer of its Department of Commerce in charge of international and economic development. At Mayor Richard M. Daley's request, he left a career in national and international corporate marketing to organize and head World Business Chicago.

William A. O'Connor*Former Chief of Staff and Legal Counsel**Illinois House Republican Leader Tom Cross*

William A. O'Connor was the chief of staff and legal counsel in the Office of the Illinois House Republican Leader from 2003 to 2006. From 1998 until 2002, he was a State Representative for the 43rd District, serving Western suburban Cook County.

Salvador Pedroza*President**The Little Village Chamber of Commerce*

Salvador Pedroza emigrated from Ocampo, Guanajuato, Mexico, in 1974 to the United States and is the owner and president of Economy Roofing & Siding, Inc. He is serving his second term as president of the Little Village Chamber of Commerce. He is also a founder of the Social Club Ocampo and the Guanajuatense Association.

Donald E. Peloquin*Mayor**City of Blue Island*

Donald E. Peloquin has been the mayor of Blue Island since 1985. Previously, he served as alderman of Blue Island's 4th Ward. He sees the future of Blue Island revolving around the redevelopment of the town's transportation, industrial center, and civic and recreational centers to stimulate new businesses and job growth.

Lance Pressl*President**Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce Foundation*

Lance Pressl began his professional career in state government before working as director of issues management for Philip Morris Companies, Inc. In 1996, he was named president of the Civic Federation and in 2003 was appointed senior associate for government and public policy for the American Council on Education.

Guadalupe Preston*Division Manager for Early Childhood and Self-Sufficiency Services**The Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Chicago*

Guadalupe Preston is a native of Chicago, of Mexican and Polish descent. She is currently employed at Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Chicago. She has also worked for the Illinois Department of Human Services in the employment and training contract section.

Sylvia Puente

*Director, Metropolitan Chicago Initiative
Institute for Latino Studies
University of Notre Dame*

Sylvia Puente is a leading public policy analyst on issues impacting Latinos. In October of 2005, she was recognized as one of the “100 Most Influential Hispanics in the U.S.” by *Hispanic Business* magazine. Since 2001, she directs community research, promotes community capacity-building, and speaks on issues that affect Latinos as the director of the Metropolitan Chicago Initiative for the Institute for Latino Studies at the University of Notre Dame.

Gerald Roper

*President and Chief Executive Officer
Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce*

Jerry Roper is president and CEO of the Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce and represents the voice of the Chicagoland business community. Before joining the Chamber in 1993, he served as president and CEO of the Chicago Convention and Tourism Bureau.

Jesse H. Ruiz

*Partner
Gardner Carton & Douglas LLP*

Jesse H. Ruiz is vice chairman of Gardner Carton & Douglas LLP's Corporate and Securities Department. In September 2004, he was appointed chairman of the Illinois State Board of Education by Governor Blagojevich. He is also legal counsel to the 13 Illinois state senators and representatives who have come together for the first time in Illinois history to form the Illinois Legislative Latino Caucus and the Illinois Legislative Latino Caucus Foundation.

Juan Salgado

*Executive Director
Instituto del Progreso Latino*

Juan Salgado leads Instituto, a successful organization that contributes to the fullest development of Latino immigrants and their families through education, training, and employment that fosters full participation in the changing U.S. society while preserving cultural identity and dignity. He is also president of the board of directors of the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights.

Manuel Sanchez

*Partner
Sanchez & Daniels*

Manuel “Manny” Sanchez is the managing partner of Sanchez & Daniels, the largest minority-owned law firm in the United States. He was a founder of the Mexican American Lawyers Association and the Latin American Bar Association. He has been honored by numerous organizations and magazines as one of the nation's most influential Hispanics.

Martin A. Sandoval

*Illinois State Senator
12th District*

Martin A. Sandoval is a public servant representing the Southwest Side neighborhoods in the Illinois State Senate. He began his career working for the Environmental Protection Agency, and in 1999 was appointed to the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago, making him the first Latino commissioner of the district. During his tenure, he was the only countywide Latino elected official. He is also the co-chairman of the Joint Legislative Task Force of Immigrants and Refugees.

Rick Segal

*Managing Director
Park Hyatt North America*

Rick Segal, a seasoned hotel executive specializing in luxury properties, oversees the management of Park Hyatt Hotels North America, as well as Park Hyatt Chicago. Before joining Park Hyatt, he most recently served as vice president and director of operations for Sheraton's Luxury Collection, as well as managing director of New York's St. Regis hotel.

Edwin B. Silverman

*Chief, Bureau of Refugee & Immigrant Services
Illinois Department of Human Services*

Edwin Silverman has worked for the State of Illinois since 1973. From 1976 until 1997, he administered the Illinois Refugee Resettlement Program which became a part of the Illinois Department of Human Services in 1997. He continues to administer it as the chief of the Bureau of Refugee & Immigrant Services.

Adele S. Simmons

*Vice Chair and Senior Executive
Chicago Metropolis 2020*

Adele S. Simmons is currently vice chair of Chicago Metropolis 2020, a senior research associate at the University of Chicago, president of the Global Philanthropy Partnership, and a senior advisor to the World Economic Forum. She was previously the president of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation for a decade. She is currently on the board of Marsh and McLennan Companies, and a number of nonprofit organizations, including The Chicago Council on Global Affairs.

John M. Sirek

*Citizenship Program Director
McCormick Tribune Foundation*

John M. Sirek funds initiatives that engage young people in civic affairs, honor patriotism, and facilitate dialogue on important national issues. He is board president of PACE: Philanthropy for Active Civic Engagement, a board member of the TimeLine Theatre Company and City Year Chicago, and a member of the advisory committee of the Alfred Friendly Press Fellowships.

Peter Skosey

*Vice President of External Relations
Metropolitan Planning Council*

Peter Skosey started at the MPC as urban development director in 1996, joining the leadership team to restructure the institution into a strong advocate for policy change. He has worked on growth and development policies that improve communities across Northeastern Illinois.

William Testa

*Vice President and Director of Regional Programs
Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago*

William Testa has written widely in the area of economic development programs, the Midwest economy, and state/local public finance. He directed a comprehensive long-term study and forecast of the Midwest economy, *Assessing the Midwest Economy: Looking Back for the Future*, and has fashioned a series of conferences on school reform.

Carlos Tortolero

*Founder and President
Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum*

Carlos Tortolero is the founder and president of the largest Latino arts institution in the nation. From 1975 to 1987, he worked as a teacher, counselor, and administrator in the Chicago Public School system. He is the coauthor of *Mexican Chicago*, a photo history book of the Mexican community of Chicago.

Javier Ubarri

*Regional President, Illinois Region
Banco Popular North America*

Javier Ubarri is responsible for the branch network, commercial lending effort, and all banking operations in the Illinois region. Under his leadership, Banco Popular has become one of the top small business lenders and one of the leading community banks. He is currently a member of the board of directors of Accion.

Arthur R. Velasquez

*President and Chief Executive Officer
Azteca Foods, Inc.*

Arthur R. Velasquez is a founder of Azteca Corn Products Corporation, Chicago. Azteca, founded in 1970, is one of the largest Mexican food manufacturing companies in the Midwest. He also served as a trustee of the University of Illinois from 1974 through 1980, making him the first Hispanic elected to a statewide office in Illinois. He currently sits on the board of trustees of the University of Notre Dame.

Eric E. Whitaker, M.D.

*Director
Illinois Department of Public Health*

Eric E. Whitaker oversees an agency with responsibility for improving the health of the 12.4 million citizens of Illinois. He previously served as senior attending physician at Cook County Hospital in Chicago. His research interests included HIV/AIDS prevention and minority health, particularly for black males. He is also an assistant professor at the University of Illinois-Chicago School of Public Health and at Rush Medical College's Department of Medicine and Preventive Medicine.

Task Force Observers

Karla Avila

*Director, New Americans Initiative
Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights*

Jose Luis Alvarez

Town of Cicero

Magda Banda

*Research Assistant
Institute for Latino Studies
University of Notre Dame*

Selene Barcelo

Consulate General of Mexico

Alberto A. Carrero, Jr.

*Senior Vice President, Public Banking Division Manager
Banco Popular*

Maria Choca Urban

*Program Director
Chicago Metropolis 2020*

Esther Corpuz

*Director, Business Development
MacNeal Hospital*

Peter Creticos

*Executive Director
Institute for Work and the Economy
Northern Illinois University*

Mary Kate Daly

Children's Memorial Hospital

Frank de Avila

*President
Coalition of Mexican Organizations in the Midwest*

Marissa Graciosa

Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights

Sandra Morgenthaler

DePaul University

Cris Pope

*Director
Interfaith Leadership Project*

Juan Francisco Orozco

Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum

Cesar Romero

Consulate General of Mexico

Carlos Sada

*Consul General
Consulate General of Mexico*

John Simmons

Strategic Learning Initiatives

Blanca Vargas

*State Director and Regional Vice President
League of United Latin American Citizens*

Angel Ysaguirre

The Boeing Company

Task Force Session Speakers

* Task Force member

Session I: Opening Session/Comprehensive Outline of Issues

Frank Beal

*Executive Director
Chicago Metropolis 2020*

Carlos Sada

*Consul General of Mexico
Consulate General of Mexico*

Session II: The Economic Context of the Mexican Community in Chicago

Allert Brown-Gort*

*Associate Director, Institute for Latino Studies
University of Notre Dame*

John Koval

*Associate Professor of Sociology
DePaul University*

Robert Paral

*Research Fellow, American Law Foundation, Washington, D.C.
Institute for Metropolitan Affairs, Roosevelt University*

Sylvia Puente*

*Director, Metropolitan Chicago Initiative
Institute for Latino Studies
University of Notre Dame*

William Testa*

*Vice President and Director of Regional Programs
Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago*

Session III: Economic Development: Where Is the Mexican Community?

Michael Frias

*National Coordinator, New Alliance Task Force
Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation*

Salvador Pedroza*

*President
Little Village Chamber of Commerce*

Session IV: Social and Cultural Integration Issues

Xochitl Bada

*Doctoral Candidate
University of Notre Dame*

Amparo Castillo

*Director, Diabetes Research, Midwest Latino Health Research, Training
and Policy Center
University of Illinois at Chicago*

Christina Gomez

*Assistant Professor of Sociology and Latino and Latin American
Studies
Northeastern Illinois University*

Juanita Irizarry*

*Former Executive Director
Latinos United*

Eric E. Whitaker, M.D.*

*Director
Illinois Department of Public Health*

Session V: Education

Armando Almendarez

*Deputy Chief Education Officer for Curriculum Development
Chicago Public Schools*

Jose M. Aybar*

*Associate Vice Chancellor for Arts & Sciences
City Colleges of Chicago*

Jesse H. Ruiz*

*Partner
Gardner Carton & Douglas LLP*

Juan Salgado*

*Executive Director
Instituto Del Progreso Latino*

Session VI: Civic and Political Participation

Joshua Hoyt

*Executive Director
Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights*

Maria de los Angeles Torres

*Director, Latin American and Latino Studies
University of Illinois at Chicago*

Martha Zurita

*Senior Research Analyst
Institute for Latino Studies, University of Notre Dame*

Resources

List of Readings, Handouts, and Briefing Materials

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Centers for Disease Control: www.cdc.gov

Chicago Public Schools: <http://www.cps.k12.il.us/>

International Migration Review, Center for Migration Studies: <http://204.153.51.29/journals/01979183.html>

The Kaiser Family Foundation: www.kff.org

Workforce Board of Metropolitan Chicago: www.workforceboardsmetrochicago.org

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics: www.bls.gov

U.S. Census Bureau: www.census.gov

U.S. Chamber of Commerce: www.uschamber.com

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