



## MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Council Members

FROM: Rey Arellano, Assistant City Manager

*Rey*

DATE: May 29, 2018

SUBJECT: Asian American Quality of Life (AAQOL) in Austin Final Report

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The purpose of this memo is to announce the completion of the AAQOL Study, which was initiated by Council resolution 20131024-085 and directed the City Manager to:

...conduct facilitated discussions in collaboration with community partners such as the Asian American Resource Center nonprofit organization, the Network of Asian American Organizations and the Asian American Behavioral Health Network, about Asian American quality of life issues in Austin, to produce a Community Scorecard; to develop strategies to address the findings of the Asian-American Health Assessment, the facilitated discussions, and the Community Scorecard; and to report back to Council by December 2014 with recommendations for enhanced or new City programs and practices.

The AAQOL Study was a multi-phased effort that synthesized the recommendations of four efforts:

- *Asian American Health Assessment*, which was conducted by Asian American Resource Center, Inc., a community-based nonprofit organization formed in 2006 to support the construction and operation of the City of Austin Asian American Resource Center facility.
- *The Asian Community in Austin: a Demographic Snapshot*, which was submitted by Ryan Robinson, the City's Demographer.
- *Asian Americans in Austin: Final Report of the Asian American Quality of Life Survey*, which was conducted by Yuri Jang, PhD, from the University of Texas at Austin's School of Social Work.
- *Asian American Community Engagement*. This was a collaborative effort between the AAQOL Advisory Commission and the Community Engagement Division of the Communication and Public Information Office (CPIO). It comprised a series of community conversations at public locations and in private homes/special gatherings. It also included feedback utilizing a special kit called "Conversation Over Tea."

The recommendations can be found in the *Asian American Quality of Life in Austin Final Report*, which accompanies this memo. The *Final Report* along with the supporting reports can also be found at <http://www.austintexas.gov/department/documents-3>.

Staff will work with the Health and Human Services Committee to schedule a briefing at a future meeting.

The *Final Report* contains a section that recognizes the many individuals and groups who were involved in making the Study a success. Special recognition goes to the following people:

- Marion Sanchez, Community Engagement Division Manager with the Communication and Public Information Office, who served as the project manager for the study.
- The former and current Chairs of the AAQOL Advisory Commission, Richard Jung and Vince Cobalis, who led the collaborative involvement of the Advisory Commission in providing feedback to the study team and outreach into the Austin's Asian American community for their participation in the study.

cc: Spencer Cronk, City Manager  
Assistant City Managers  
Chief of Staff to the City Manager  
Doug Matthews, Director, Communication and Public Information Office





**Global Heritage.  
Locally Lived.**



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ASIAN AMERICAN QUALITY OF LIFE IN AUSTIN

FINAL REPORT | March 2018





# AWARDS & RECOGNITIONS

## BRIGHT IDEA

The Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation at the Harvard Kennedy School recognized the Asian American Quality of Life Initiative as a “Bright Idea” under its American Government Awards Program. The initiative was cited as part of an exemplary group of programs that represent the cutting edge in government policies, initiatives and best practices.

## AUSTIN CITY MANAGER’S IDEA ACCELERATOR PROJECT

Former City Manager Marc Ott challenged City employees to present ideas for projects that reflect a public sector bottom line and a key priority for the City of Austin, such as the best managed, most livable, service with Pride, and Open Government. #AsianLifeATX was not only one of the Open Government projects accepted as an Idea Accelerator Projects, but distinguished as one of only eight total projects executed.

## 2016 3CMA AWARD OF EXCELLENCE

#AsianLifeATX received an Award of Excellence for the Best Campaign Use of Social Media from 3CMA, a national communications and marketing association. The judges’ comments: “Great job taking photo contest to the next level. Nice job to use campaign over multiple platforms.”



*We are proud that all the photos in this report are of Austinites taken at community engagements, community events as well as submitted by the public to #AsianLifeATX, our social media platform on Facebook and Instagram.*



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Asians in Austin are the fastest growing demographic group in terms of percentage gain year-to-year. According to Ryan Robinson, the City of Austin Demographer, the City of Austin's Asian American population is now above seven percent, placing Austin in ninth position out of the nation's largest 30 cities in terms of their Asian shares – ahead of Houston and right behind Portland. With that growth comes an increasing impact on the fabric of this city, its economy and its culture. Propelled by this demographic reality and due to the lack of comprehensive data on the diverse Asian American population nationally and locally, the City of Austin launched the Asian American Quality of Life (AAQOL) Initiative in 2013. The AAQOL Initiative's intent was to help the Asian American population in Austin; determine its needs, its perceptions about living here; and how it could be better engaged in the decisions reached by its municipal government.

Established by Ordinance 20130124-084, the Asian American Quality of Life Advisory Commission ("Commission") conducted an extensive visioning process to evaluate challenges faced by Austin's Asian American population regarding access to services, housing, jobs, mobility, healthcare and translation/interpretation services. In collaboration with City staff, the Commission decided to rely upon quantitative and qualitative research from four published reports associated with this study and information gathered from a comprehensive community engagement process.

This report summarizes discussions and surveys with a diverse population that identified with more than 28 Asian ethnicities representing 25 different countries from throughout the Asiatic region. Asian American ethnicities are hugely varied and there is not a one-to-one relationship between countries and ethnicities. Participants in this initiative identified themselves with the following Asian American communities: Afghani, Bangladeshi, Asian Indian, Bhutanese, Burmese, Cambodian, Chinese, Filipino, Indonesian, Iranian, Iraqi, Japanese, Korean, Laotian, Lebanese, Malaysian, Myanmar, Nepalese, Palestinian, Pakistani, Punjabi, Sikh, Singaporean, Syrian, Taiwanese, Thai, Vietnamese and Zomi.

The City Manager is directed to identify areas within the budget to conduct facilitated discussions in collaboration with community partners such as the Asian American Resource Center nonprofit organization, the Network of Asian American Organizations and the Asian American Behavioral Health Network, about Asian American quality of life issues in Austin, to produce a Community Scorecard; to develop strategies to address the findings of the Asian American Health Assessment, the facilitated discussions, and the Community Scorecard; and to report back to Council by December 2014 with recommendations for enhanced or new City programs and practices.

*(City of Austin Resolution No. 20131024-085)*

This executive report summarizes the recommendations of the following reports:

**The Asian Community in Austin: A Demographic Snapshot**  
(January 2016)

**Asian Americans in Austin: Final Report of the Asian American Quality of Life**  
(October 2016)

**Asian American Health Assessment**  
(July 2014)

**Asian American Community Engagement Data Indicators**  
(2017)

Although most participants were bilingual, 51 languages were represented. The top 10 languages used were Chinese, Hindi, Vietnamese, Chinese Mandarin, Arabic, Telugu, Chinese Cantonese, Japanese, Punjabi and Korean. Beyond those, others mentioned included Urdu to Nepali, Taiwanese to Tagalog.

The AAQOL Initiative successfully reached previously isolated or underrepresented communities. Through a three-year community engagement process, Commissioners, consultants and City staff worked with partner agencies and individual volunteers to meet Asian American community members where they live, work and play. More than 3,350 individuals took one of two surveys during the initiative either online or in-person at a variety of locations throughout the city, “Conversation Over Tea,” and other City of Austin hosted meetings to facilitate dialogue and share anecdotes about their lives. Additionally, “travel booths” were present at various events throughout the city engaging hundreds of Asian Americans. Participation included almost every ZIP code within the city and adjacent areas.

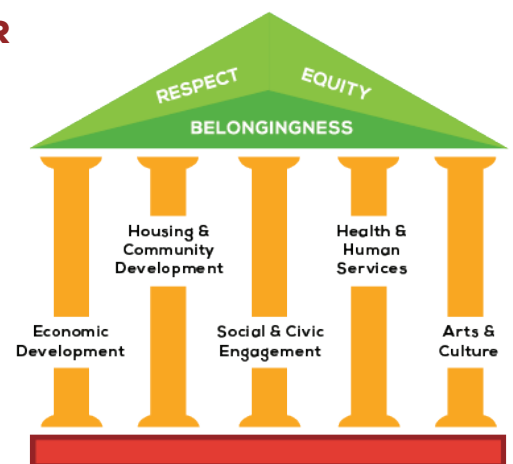
Based on findings from extensive review of the previously published reports, coupled with information gathered from the community engagement process, the recommendations in this report can be summarized under five pillars created by the Commission and City staff:

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PILLAR**

- Create and implement culturally relevant business programs and services that support and assist Asian American owned businesses to grow and expand in all areas of the city.

## **HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PILLAR**

- Improve public transit information, convenience and accessibility; prioritize neighborhoods with limited or no access to public transportation and provide shuttle door-to-door services for seniors to connect to mass transit.
- Create and implement strategies to make Austin more affordable, including policies and programs that educate about discriminatory practices, improve employment and job training opportunities, and decrease cost of living.





## **HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES PILLAR**

- Develop an “Austin 101” workshop to provide information about City services; other trainings could include information about Austin 311, discrimination protections, fair hiring practices and library services. Many of the needs addressed by the participants could be improved by creating easy avenues to find, inquire about or request services.
- Continue health education, assessments and counseling practices. Train service providers with culturally and linguistically accepted practices to engage with diverse communities. Hire diverse health navigators to service the community.
- Improve readability of documents taking into consideration appropriate graphics, font size, and reading proficiencies.

## **ARTS AND CULTURE PILLAR**

- Provide cultural awareness training to City staff, vendors and other service providers receiving any type of funding from the City.
- Create learning opportunities for Austinites to expand multicultural knowledge with a goal of developing appreciation for diverse cultural groups.
- Mentor art groups to successfully access City services and funding.

## **CIVIC ENGAGEMENT PILLAR**

- Create and execute an outreach strategy for the Human Resources Department to improve diversity of City staff at all levels.
- Increase trust in government by building meaningful relationships with diverse representatives in the community.
- Provide funding and resources to support the Language Access Program with an easy, one-stop location to request assistance. Ensure that the program includes local, commonly used Asian languages.
- Require City departments providing services or engaging with the community to draft multicultural outreach and engagement plans to improve access, participation and awareness of the services provided. Asian Americans in Austin are a diverse population and therefore, to maximize the success of any City initiative, culturally relevant strategies and data gathering should take into consideration such diversity.
- Require that any contract awarded for outreach includes a meaningful plan to engage with the diverse Asian American community in Austin.
- Increase participation in civic life by providing trainings that showcase a variety of tools and strategies to organize and share perspectives with the City and other organizations.

The result of this three-year engagement effort is a significant first step forward in understanding and serving Austin’s Asian American community. The City recognizes that continued education, outreach and engagement are essential to improving the Asian American community’s quality of life. With successful implementation of the recommendations over time, the Asian American community will be able to more effectively access City services. As a result, Austin’s Asian Americans will feel included and engaged and will actively contribute to and benefit from Austin’s prosperity.

## BACKGROUND

Asians represent the fastest growing racial group in Austin with Asian Indians, Chinese, Vietnamese, Koreans, Filipinos and Taiwanese making up the largest segments of the population. An estimated 110,000 to 115,000 self-identified Asians live in metropolitan Austin. Although the Asian American community has been doubling in size approximately every 12 years, not a lot is known about this vastly diverse population. To that end the City of Austin launched the Asian American Quality of Life Initiative to improve the quality of life of Asian American residents in Austin by assessing the overall experience of Austin's diverse Asian community, including its level of awareness of and access to City services.

In an effort to increase community engagement and understanding of Austin's Asian American community, the City Council adopted Resolution No 20131024-085 which launched the AAQOL Initiative. This initiative was deemed critical and necessary given the lack of local comprehensive data on Asian Americans needed to address findings of the "Asian American Health Assessment" already underway.



In June 2014, the City Council passed Resolution No. 20140612-059, to benchmark disparities, address findings and update the AAQOL initiative along with the City's other quality of life initiatives. The AAQOL Advisory Commission, created as part of the initiative, had a two-fold mission:



## Asian American INSIGHTS: ENGAGE

Asian Americans in Austin want to be part of the decision-making process. Most of the groups we

visited were excited and surprised that the City wanted to learn more about their

dreams, contributions and challenges.



- To advise City Council on issues related to the Asian American Resource Center;
- To provide on-going guidance and support for the City's AAQOL Initiative.

During the AAQOL Advisory Commission meetings, commissioners discovered an array of challenges related to conducting a comprehensive, all-inclusive, community-based needs assessment with the Asian American community. Challenges included:

- Seeking a consultant principal investigator with prior experience working with the Asian American community;
- Dealing with limited financial budget and time constraints;
- Creating culturally appropriate branding;
- Reaching diverse segments of the Asian American community; and
- Employing culturally and linguistically equivalent research methodologies.

The AAQOL Advisory Commission established a Visioning Committee of commission members and City of Austin staff who acknowledged that eradicating any marginalization felt by these various groups started by fully comprehending the Asian American population.

# VISIONING

The goal of the Visioning Committee was to:

- Develop pathways that connect Asian American community members to the City;
- Cultivate relationships with and among community partners, stakeholders and leaders to find common interests;
- Respect the needs of individual communities; and
- Alleviate mistrust in government.

The goal was to reach all Asian communities, with emphasis on the most vulnerable and isolated, through multiple outlets and portals such as language, religion and culture. This strategy was undertaken to foster a greater diversity of thought and to craft methods/strategies that effectively inform the entire community of this initiative.

Based on community priorities, the committee intended to craft strategies while effectively managing expectations and efficiently prioritizing levels of effort, time



and resources. During all stages of the study, language and communication were considered with the intent of overcoming these and other barriers, as well as to gain an understanding through research, outreach and engagement.

Using the three guiding principles of Equity, Respect and Sense of Belonging, the visioning effort defined “Asian



## Asian American INSIGHTS: FRAMEWORK

Listening to understand played a major role during the planning phase of the study. Asian American leaders guided the process

by recommending popular locations to engage the community, by introducing other leaders, and by providing cultural insight

and best practices for a successful engagement.



American” and the phrase “quality of life” congruent with national definitions. The U.S. Census defines Asian Americans as individuals who trace their origins to the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian Subcontinent. But for the purpose of this study, the committee selected individuals who trace their origins to any part of the Asian continent. The goal was to include people hailing from the entire Asian continent from Saudi Arabia and Turkey in the west to Japan in the East and Mongolia and Kazakhstan to the North.

This study’s classification of regions utilizes the U.S. State Department’s categorization for their bureaus of foreign affairs. For the purpose of this study, participants were classified in the following way based on their country of origin:

- **Near East:** Baharain\*, Iran, Iraq, Israel\*, Jordan\*, Kuwait\*, Lebanon, Oman\*, Palestine, Qatar\*, Saudi Arabia\*, Syria, United Arab Emirates\* and Yemen\*;

- **South and Central Asia:** Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Kazakhstan\*, Kyrgyzstan\*, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan\*, Turkmenistan\* and Uzbekistan;
- **East Asia:** China, Japan, Mongolia\*, North Korea, South Korea and Taiwan;
- **South East Asia:** Burma (Myanmar), Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, North Korea, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand.

*\* Every efforts were taken to engage with communities from every ethnic self-identification origin. The countries with an asterisk did not register any participation during the study.*

According to the Oxford Dictionary, the term *Quality of Life* is defined as “The standard of health, comfort and happiness experienced by an individual or group.” During the engagement phase, participants elevated the term by adding “respect and appreciation of diverse cultures and acknowledgement of the legacy of the Asian community in Austin.”

Participants came from a variety of backgrounds, levels of acculturation and assimilation, and diversity of languages. This diversity provided comprehensive information that helps us understand their concept of quality of life. What we found was that the term *Quality of Life* encompassed different meanings, including:

- Respect and appreciation for diverse culture.
- Sense of identity as defined by each ethnic group and individuals.
- Control over life in terms of work satisfaction, support networks and health status.
- Having an active and social life.
- Feeling independent so that they can decide and act according to their will.
- Taking advantage of opportunities including education, jobs and transportation.
- Understanding stages of life such as student, young parent, older parent or a senior, each of which has different priorities in life.
- Accessing economic opportunities including jobs, business growth, training, education, affordable housing and access to services.

To better understand the current state of the Asian Americans’ quality of life in Austin, the Visioning Committee crafted the following five “pillars”:

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Develop a sustainable plan emphasizing equity in opportunities and services while recognizing the additional economic pressure experienced by certain groups in the Asian American community.

## **HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

Ensure that basic community needs are met through the creation and enhancement of City programs and services for all subgroups through “one stop location.” The



## Asian American INSIGHTS: ENVISION

Community leaders and City staff partnered during presentations to the community. This partnership demonstrated

solidarity, sincerity and commitment, not only to the study, but also to the community. This allowed participants to trust our

efforts, even though, in some cases, this was the first time participants engaged with the City.



Visioning Committee wanted to emphasize the establishment and maintenance of communication lines between the City of Austin and a variety of community partners and stakeholders and promote inter-organizational collaboration.

### **HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**

Meet the physical, mental and spiritual needs of the Asian American community with an emphasis on the elderly and children. Strategies to connect the community with preexisting services should be explored. Various assessment tools based on previous health studies should be used.

### **ARTS AND CULTURE**

Help marginalized populations move toward a better cultural identification, defined by acceptance and inclusion by the larger public via an improved understanding of the Asian American culture and traditions. Models for such understanding will also help educate City of Austin staff.

## **CIVIC ENGAGEMENT**

Build a series of models that will empower the community to seek services as needed and to create a natural avenue to engage with City staff.

To gain further understanding about the local Asian Americans' quality of life, the AAQOL Advisory Commission decided to gather quantitative and qualitative information to aid in developing its recommendations.

For the quantitative analysis, the Commission relied upon:

### **The Asian Community in Austin: A Demographic Snapshot (January 2016).**

Prepared by City Demographer Ryan Robinson, the study provides an analysis to benchmark quantitative indicators that measure the quality of life of Asian households in Austin. Data indicators included family income, educational attainment, poverty thresholds, unemployment levels and home ownership rates. These measures were compared to other cities, the state and the nation.

### **Asian Americans in Austin: Final Report of the Asian American Quality of Life (October 2016).**

Led by Dr. Yuri Jang, a research team in the School of Social Work at the University of Texas at Austin conducted a large-scale survey of Asian American residents in the Austin area. The survey was designed to explore the unique experiences and challenges of Austin diverse groups of Asian Americans and identify their health and social needs. For the study's purpose, five Asian American ethnic/cultural groups were identified based on federal and local demographic sources. These target population groups included Asian Indian, Chinese, Filipino, Korean, Taiwanese and Vietnamese. More than 2,600 surveys were collected and analyzed that produced statistically significant results. This study sheds light on the importance of using culturally and linguistically sensitive approaches to reach out to the Asian American population and it provides an insight into the myth of Asian Americans as a model minority.

For the qualitative analysis, the Commission relied upon:

**Asian American Health Assessment (July 2014).** Conducted by the Asian American Resource Center, Inc., the project conducted research into specific health issues in subpopulations based on national studies and studies from other communities they followed by gathering qualitative data (small focus group-based) concerning participants' perceptions of their community's general health and health care access, including both health care utilization and health care barriers. Focus groups represented the subpopulations of South Asia, Vietnamese, Koreans, Chinese, Taiwanese, Asian refugees and Asian American seniors. The project was funded by the City of Austin/Travis County Health and Human Services Department (now Austin Public Health) to raise awareness and provide recommendations regarding the health concerns and disparities within the diverse Asian American community.

## Asian American INSIGHTS: COMMIT

Trust and relationship building is a process that takes time. As in any relationship building, we are in the early stages.

This study is an important step for the city to open lines of communication, to improve information sharing, to identifying

workable engagement activities and enhance the community's capacity to engage.



### **Asian American Community Engagement Data Indicators (2017).**

A collaborative effort between the AAQOL Advisory Commission and the City's Community Engagement Division of the Communication and Public Information Office (CPIO), this complementary, community-based needs assessment research project over-sampled Asian American groups outside of the target group populations identified in the previous quantitative reports. This project engaged 28 different ethnicities from the Asian American community through community conversations at public locations and at private homes/special gatherings. In numerous cases, feedback evolved while utilizing a special kit called "Conversation Over Tea." Target groups reached included, but were not limited to, Burmese, Nepalese, Laotian, Thai, Malaysian, Japanese, Iranian, Iraqi and Syrian. The total number of interactions included approximately 850 survey participants, 76 Conversations over Tea returns, 11 community conversations and numerous Travel Booth engagements. Gathering and evaluating all of this information provided the City of Austin with tools to more effectively conduct community engagement and determine what services are important to the Asian American community.



## FINDINGS

The Asian American community has a desire to engage and participate in the local civic process. Many participants were surprised with the idea that the City of Austin wanted to hear about their dreams, challenges and contributions. The team found pockets of diverse Asian Americans throughout the city with similar thoughts. The most important finding is that the City needs to invest in building a better relationship

with the Asian American community. The following findings can help contribute to building this relationship.



### LANGUAGE

Being able to communicate is the first step to building a trusted relationship. Participants declared over 51 languages as their primary or secondary language. Refugees, recent immigrants and senior citizens have the highest need for language services to assist with daily life requirements, including medical services, job applications and leisure activities. Additionally, Asian Americans in Austin demonstrated a mixture of reading proficiencies in both English and a variety of native languages.



## What Asian Americans in Austin said about **LANGUAGE**

We don't speak English well, so it is hard to impress our ideas on the City.

More youth language classes that is not faith-based. You have to go to church or temple now.

Lot of City of Austin Activity are advertised in English, Spanish, but not Asian language.

chúng tôi. để nghỉ những ngày từ liên quan đến hành chính, điều  
bản tiếng việt. vì công đồng kể họ có, thì tại sao công đồng,  
nam & nữ.

(Senior living is expensive and there are no Vietnamese translators: legal and government documents are in Spanish and English but are not in Vietnamese.)





## What Asian Americans in Austin said about **CULTURAL AWARENESS**

ਸਾਡਿਆ ਈ ਸੱਚੀ ਮਾਣਾ ਕੀ  
ਭੈਣੀ ਚਾਹੀਦੀ ਹੈ।

*(All Asian cultures need a true and positive voice in the community.)*

You must  
understand the  
different  
cultures within  
Asian umbrella.

feel like an  
"outsider" in  
school because you  
look different —  
wants son to  
embrace who he is

### **CULTURAL AWARENESS**

Opening lines of communication provides the ability to explore and learn from diverse Asian cultures in Austin, including the various faiths espoused, diversity of cuisines, range of celebrations and more.

Recognizing that the diversity of Austin's Asian American community enriches the city's culture is a logical step to creating a meaningful relationship with the Asian American community. With an understanding of these different ethnic and economic groups within the Asian American community, the City can offer culturally relevant



programs and services such as a comprehensive language services program, support to non-profits that service the Asian American community and an array of job opportunities and trainings.

## TRUST

As City opportunities and access to services increase, communication about those opportunities must be tailored to build trust within the Asian American community. Many Asian American Austinites have a residual, shared belief system based on previous experience in their home countries. They may have experienced a lack of public representation in decision making or apathetic/corrupt governments. Thus, outreach and engagement will need to take place in established environments where people congregate such as at places of faith (temples, mosques, and churches), cultural events, schools, neighborhood events and popular businesses.



### What Asian Americans in Austin said about **TRUST**

Encourage community  
to have dialogue in  
a safe environment

I like that you are  
coming and ask us  
what we need, what  
we like.

Most Asians are kept to  
themselves and not use  
to voice their concerns.



## What Asian Americans in Austin said about **SAFETY**

Generally, I feel  
more safe ~~at~~ in  
Cedar Park than  
Downtown  
Austin

I feel extremely  
unsafe on  
shuttle buses

More cops  
on Rundberg  
—too much  
drug trafficking

Effective communication increases if messengers have similar backgrounds/ethnicity as the group to which they are conveying information and the message is conveyed in a familiar, culturally appropriate language. Adapting the communication platforms to the needs of the community provides an environment for blossoming two-way communication and increases the trust level between the community and the City of Austin.

### **SAFETY**

As the City of Austin practices meaningful conversations by engaging, listening and taking action, the community becomes a partner by openly sharing their thoughts and ideas on how to make Austin a better place. During the engagement phase of



this initiative, participants expressed concerns about their feeling of safety in specific parts of the city. They spoke of a need for more diversity among law enforcement representatives and concerns regarding the current open carry law in Texas. They were also concerned about the current immigration rhetoric, safety at places of faith and unlawful neighborhood activities.

## MYTH OF THE MODEL MINORITY

In large part because of stereotyping and a lack of comprehensive data, there is a general belief that the Asian American community is flourishing in all aspects of



## What Asian Americans in Austin said about **MODEL MINORITY MYTH**

3rd foodstamp 22:  
4th: 4th: 6th: 6th:

(No food stamps this month, I need more.)

希望建低价  
老年公寓

(Hope to build low cost  
senior apartments.)

Better job to  
provide for  
my family  
back in Iraq.



## What Asian Americans in Austin said about **ISOLATED COMMUNITIES**

someone to  
talk to, when  
all children  
go to school

Immigrants  
Feel Isolated  
lonely

Elderly  
are isolated  
People stay  
home

life and is therefore completely self-sufficient. The reality is much different. Various groups of the Asian American community may have no awareness of services, have varying levels of education, distrust sharing personal information, be culturally distant, have a communication challenge due to limited English proficiency or lack mobility means. This environment creates different levels of isolation and disconnection.

### **ISOLATED COMMUNITIES**

Within Austin's Asian American community, there are groups that feel further isolated from the community at large. These groups want to be engaged and contribute to the decision-making at a local level. But, either due to limited English proficiency,



lack of knowledge of municipal services, geographical segregation or the belief that government does not care about them, many participants do not feel empowered to engage or a basic understanding on how to access such services.

## ACCESSING SERVICES

A two-way partnership is essential to improve the quality of life for Asian Americans in Austin. The City of Austin and other organizations providing services to the community should improve access to services in a culturally and linguistically relevant

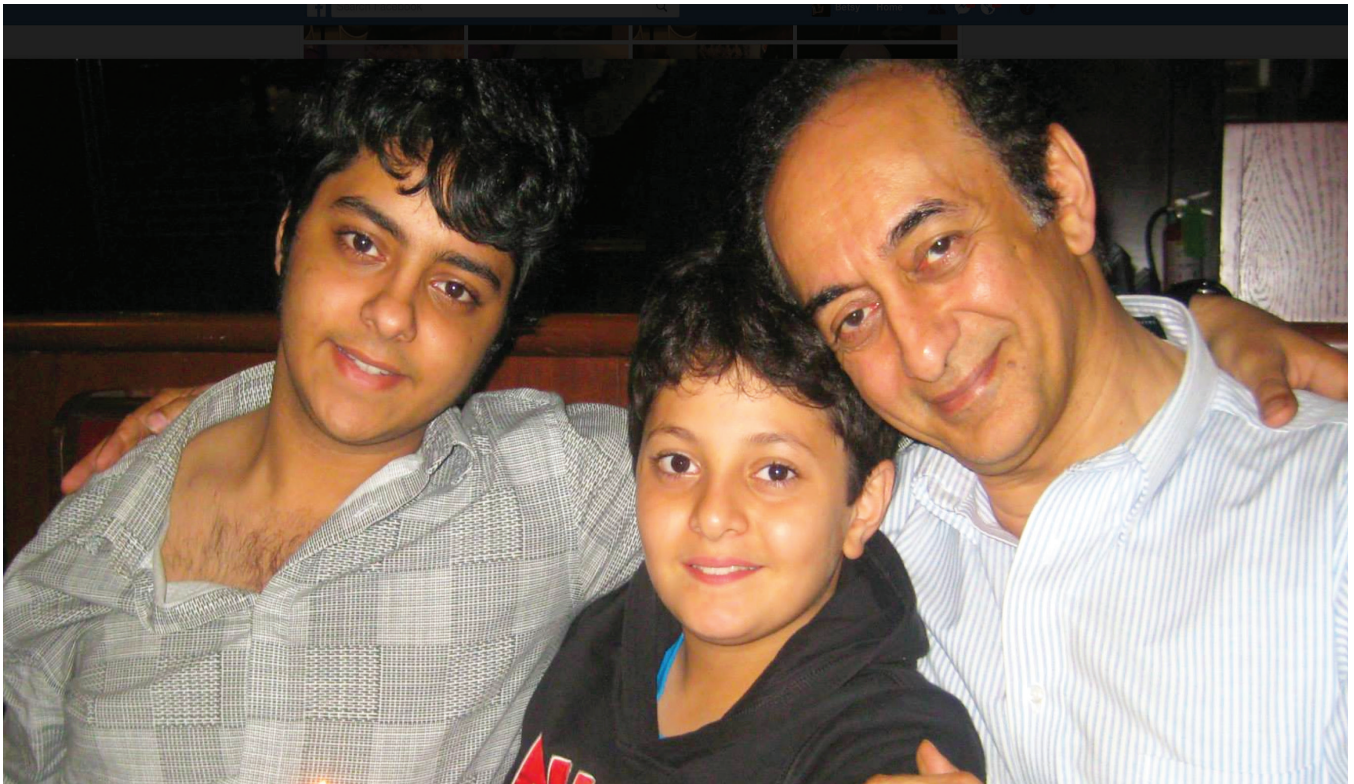


### What Asian Americans in Austin said about **ACCESSING SERVICES**

Improve our  
images in the  
community  
let's find out misunderstand-  
ing of our culture in other's eyes.

Improve medical accessibility &  
services  
to catch up w/ San Antonio,  
Houston & Dallas

City services are  
accessible by all and  
are promoted to  
all.



## What Asian Americans in Austin said about **MOBILITY**

Prohibitive  
transportation  
increases  
segregation

1. 各小区设老年活动中心。每天有活动。  
步行可达。

(Set up senior activity centers  
near small communities for daily  
activities within walking distance.)

I have no car & I  
speak no English

manner. At the same time, the Asian American community could improve efforts to proactively share its needs and recommendations so culturally respectful services can be provided.

### **MOBILITY**

Many Asian Americans of all ages consider Austin's public transportation system lacking in terms of accessibility and convenience. In particular, seniors want to retain their independence by having access to public transportation that connects them to their preferred businesses, services and activities all over the city.



## HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Participants expressed concern about the lack of accessible, affordable and culturally aligned social and health services for the Asian American community. Specific areas of need include mental health services, health and social services, senior services and preventive care through physical activities. Existing services lack visibility and accessibility by the most vulnerable communities.



What Asian Americans in Austin said about

## HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Blutinese community have high suicide  
want to have some orientation classes  
improving mental health issue.

Asian Community Liason

စစ်တော့ကော. အားနည်းရတာ (I need help because I don't have education.)



What Asian Americans in Austin said about

## ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY & AFFORDABILITY

More  
Minority Business  
grants for  
International/  
Food vendors/  
producers

Need help in education  
More classes in language  
and to work  
learning computers  
help in early childhood

أنا أبحث عن عمل في مجال الاتصالات  
والمسألة السكن (ارتفاع الأسعار)

(To find a job in my area of media communications and solve the problem of housing where the rent increases for the refugees.)

### ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY AND AFFORDABILITY

Members of the Asian American community are concerned with affordability and access to a wide range of job opportunities. Senior services and disability services were also of concern, especially among seniors and care-takers. Asian American business owners want more accessibility to City services and incentives that could help them to grow their businesses. They have particular concerns about access to workers, training, infrastructure and enforcement of anti-discrimination laws.



# RECOMMENDATIONS

The City of Austin Team based its recommendations on:

- Findings from the community engagement process;
- Extensive review of the four published reports associated with this study; and
- Guidance of the AAQOL Advisory Commission.

The following recommendations are provided to help guide the City of Austin in its delivery of services and its efforts to engage all Austin residents in the decisions that affect their daily lives:

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PILLAR**

- Create and implement culturally relevant business programs and services that support and assist Asian American owned businesses to grow and expand to all areas of the city.

## **HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PILLAR**

- Improve public transit information, convenience and accessibility; prioritize neighborhoods with limited or no access to public transportation and provide shuttle/door-to-door services for seniors to connect to mass transit.
- Create and implement strategies to make Austin more affordable, including policies and programs that educate about discriminatory practices, improve employment and job training opportunities, and decrease cost of living expenses.

## **HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES PILLAR**

- Develop an “Austin 101” workshop to provide information about City services; training could include information about Austin 311, discrimination protections, fair hiring practices and library services. Many of the needs addressed by the participants could be improved by creating easy avenues to find, inquire about or request services.

- Continue health education, assessments and counseling practices. Train service providers in culturally and linguistically accepted practices to engage with diverse communities. Hire diverse health navigators to service the community.
- Improve readability of documents taking into consideration appropriate graphics, font size, and addressing a variety of reading proficiencies.

## **ARTS AND CULTURE PILLAR**

- Provide cultural awareness training to City staff, vendors and other service providers receiving any type of funding from the City.
- Create learning opportunities for Austinites to expand multicultural knowledge with a goal of developing appreciation for diverse cultural groups.
- Mentor arts groups to successfully access City services and funding.

## **CIVIC ENGAGEMENT PILLAR**

- Create and execute an outreach strategy for the Human Resources Department to improve diversity of City staff at all levels.
- Increase trust in government by building meaningful relationships with diverse representatives in the community.
- Provide funding and resources to support the Language Access Program with an easy one-stop location to request assistance. Ensure that the program includes local, commonly used Asian languages.
- Require City departments providing services or engaging with the community to draft multicultural outreach and engagement plans to improve access, participation and awareness of the services provided. Asian Americans in Austin are a diverse population and therefore, to maximize the success of any City initiative, culturally relevant strategies and data gathering should take into consideration such diversity.
- Require that any contract awarded for outreach includes a meaningful plan to engage with the diverse Asian American community in Austin.
- Increase participation in civic life by providing trainings that showcase a variety of tools and strategies to organize and share perspectives with the City and other organizations.

The result of this three-year engagement effort is a significant first step forward in understanding and serving Austin's Asian American community. The City recognizes that continued education, outreach and engagement are essential to improving the Asian American community's quality of life. With successful implementation of the recommendations over time, the Asian American community will be able to more effectively access services, and feel included and engaged in the community. As a result, Austin Asian Americans will be able to actively contribute to and be recipients of Austin's prosperity.

# SUPPORTING REPORTS

**Asian American Health Assessment:** [http://austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Communications/Asian\\_American\\_Health\\_Assessment\\_document\\_2014A-.pdf](http://austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Communications/Asian_American_Health_Assessment_document_2014A-.pdf)

**The Asian Community in Austin: a Demographic Snapshot:**  
[http://austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Communications/Community\\_Engagement/AAQOL\\_Asian\\_Community\\_in\\_Austin\\_Snapshot\\_04182018.pdf](http://austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Communications/Community_Engagement/AAQOL_Asian_Community_in_Austin_Snapshot_04182018.pdf)

**Asian Americans in Austin: Final Report of the Asian American Quality of Life Survey:**

[http://austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Communications/4.2\\_FINAL\\_AA\\_in\\_Austin\\_report\\_from\\_UT.pdf](http://austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/Communications/4.2_FINAL_AA_in_Austin_report_from_UT.pdf)

**Data from the Asian American Community Engagement Data Indicators:**

AAQOL Survey Monkey Answers:

<https://data.austintexas.gov/Government/AAQOL-Survey-Monkey-Answers-Nov7-Update/i3d7-gc2g>

**AAQOL Community Comments:**

<https://data.austintexas.gov/Government/AAQOL-Community-Comments-Oct-27-2016/75gm-hb4x>

## MORE INFORMATION

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**Asian American Quality of Life Advisory Commission**

<http://www.austintexas.gov/content/asian-american-quality-life-advisory-commission>

**Asian American Quality of Life Website**

<http://austintexas.gov/department/about-asian-american-quality-life>

**Continue the conversation and share:**

<https://asianlifeatx.bloomfire.com/>

<https://www.facebook.com/AsianLifeATX/>

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The success of this initiative is due to the hard work and input from a large number of individuals and organizations. The Asian American Quality of Life Advisory commissioners set a vision for this effort and committed time to see it through. The volunteers and ambassadors devoted over 500 selfless hours to inform the community of this initiative and get public input. The far-sighted partner organizations lent not only their collective ears and arms in outreach efforts, but also their venues as meeting places for this project. This combined, arm-in-arm effort is yielding and will continue to yield many benefits for the Asian American community and the City of Austin.

Those involved in this effort also want to thank the current and former Austin City Councils for understanding the need to gain knowledge and an understanding of this important, fast-growing population within the Austin community.

**Special thanks to the City of Austin Asian American Employee Network for its help and support.**

## **Austin City Council 2017**

Mayor Steve Adler  
Mayor Pro Tem Kathie Tovo, District 9  
Council Member Ora Houston, District 1  
Council Member Delia Garza, District 2  
Council Member Sabino “PIO” Renteria, District 3  
Council Member Gregorio “Greg” Casar, District 4  
Council Member Ann Kitchen, District 5  
Council Member Jimmy Flannigan, District 6  
Council Member Leslie Pool, District 7

Council Member Ellen Troxclair, District 8  
Council Member Alison Alter, District 10

## **Austin City Council 2013**

Approved AAQOL Initiative  
Mayor Lee Leffingwell  
Mayor Pro Tem Sheryl Cole, Place 6  
Council Member Chris Riley, Place 1  
Council Member Mike Martinez, Place 2  
Council Member Kathie Tovo, Place 3  
Council Member Laura Morrison, Place 4  
Council Member William Spelman, Place 5



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

### Asian American Quality of Life

#### Advisory Commission

Vincent Cobalis, Chair

Shubhada Saxena, Vice Chair, Visioning Committee

Catherina Conte

Debashree DasGupta

Janki DePalma

Richard Jung, Former Chair, Visioning Committee

Pramod Patil

Sonemaly Phrasavath

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Aletta Banks, Former member

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Kara Takasaki, Former member

Lesley Varghese, Former member

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### City Manager's Office

Elaine Hart, Interim City Manager

Marc A. Ott, former City Manager

Rey Arellano, Assistant City Manager, AAQOL Initiative Sponsor, Visioning Committee

CMO staff:

• Alta Ochiltree

• Robin Otto, Visioning Committee

• Joe Silva

*\* Also assisted as a Community Volunteer*

Former CMO staff:

• Roxanne Evans, Austin Code, Visioning Committee

• Jennifer Heatly, Austin Fire Department

### Partners and Community Leaders

Amerigroup Real Solutions (Rogelio DeLeon\*)

Applied Materials (Sandhya Venkatesh\*)

Arabic Bazar (Zein Al-Jundi\*)

Asian American Cultural Center (Amy Wong Mok\*)

Asian American Resource Center Nonprofit Inc. (Peteria Chan, Vince Cobalis, Esther Martin, Lesley Varghese)

Asian Family Support Services of Austin

Asian Real Estate Association of America (Rela Manigsaca)

Association of Iranian American Women (Mithra Sharghi\*)

Austin Dance India (Anu Naimpally\*)

Austin Gurdwara Sahib

Austin Hindu Temple (Sri Hari Pingali\*)

Austin Independent School District International School (Thuy Tu)

Chinatown Center (Luis Barraza\*)

Fo Guang Shan Xiang Yun Temple (Jui Ji Shih\*, Beatrice Ho\*, Yung Chang Liao\* and Tai-Ing Chang\*)

Greater Austin Asian American Chamber of Commerce (Marina Ong Bhargava\*, Kimberly Moore\*)

Hindu Charities 4 America (Harish Kotecha\*)

Interfaith Action of Central Texas (Lu Zeidan\*, Qahtan Mustafa\*)

IBM (Nancy Li\*, Gita Nallapati\*, Kumar Nallapati\*)

Japanese American Society (Kako Ito\*)

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*\* Also assisted as a Community Volunteer*

Kumon Math and Learning Center (Arathi Kumar\*, Shubha Parolkar\*)  
Network of Asian American Organizations (Gopal Guthikonda, Madeline Hsu\*, Nahid Khataw\*, Schiller Liao\*)  
Radha Madhav Dham (Braj Rani)  
Red Velvet Events (Sarah Lo\*)  
Refugee Services of Texas (Erica Schmitt\*)  
Satay Restaurant (Foo Swasdee)  
Shiksha (Pramod Patil\*)  
South Asians' International Volunteer Association (Shubhada Saxena\*, Kelsey McLean\*)  
Sri Shirdi Sai Baba Temple of Austin (Jill Edwards\*)  
St. Edward's University (Aman Attieh\*)  
Telugu Cultural Association (Giri Mekala\*)  
Texas Bengali Cultural Association (Ahsan Choudhary\*)  
Vietnamese American Cultural Association of Austin, Texas (Huy Ngyuen\*, Cymmy Nguyen\*)  
Wat Buddhinchat (Chami McPherson\*)

### **Community Volunteers and**

#### **Ambassadors**

Lana Abduldaem  
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Mai Barazi  
Wendy Chan  
Jin Chiu  
Ritu Chug  
Mimi Dao  
Yingna Gao  
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Mouna Hashem  
Megan Heynen  
Parminder K. Jassal

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Huimin Meng  
Nikhila Nallapati  
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Lily Par  
JK Patel  
Janny Phung  
Patricia Reeh  
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Murali Sithuraj  
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Mary Lee Tran  
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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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- Sara Katona
- Madeline Krebs
- Kyunghee Lee
- Lizzette Marrero
- Xavier Wan, Visioning Committee

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Communications Director

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Abraham Gonzalez, Circle of Success Team Member

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### City Department Support

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Edmond Su

Nancy Chan\*, Formerly with Austin Code, Circle of Success Team Member

#### Austin Convention Center Department

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Julia Joseph

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

### **Austin Energy**

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Shirley Matthew\*  
Angela Misir\*

### **Austin Fire Department**

Rhoda Mae Kerr, Fire Chief  
Joe Limon  
Theresa Sifuentes  
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### **Austin Police Department**

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### **Austin Public Health**

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### **Austin Public Library**

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Brenda Branch, Former Director  
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### **Austin Resource Recovery**

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Gena McKinley

### **Austin/Travis County Emergency**

#### **Medical Services**

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Michael Benavides

### **Austin Water Utility**

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Selvi Mohamed\*

### **Development Services Department**

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Surbhi Bakshi\*

### **Economic Development**

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Nicole Klepadlo  
Michael Knox

### **Innovation Office**

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Daniel Honker  
Sabine Romero



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

### Neighborhood Housing & Community Development

Rosie Truelove, Interim Director  
Hilary Andersen  
Esteban Garza, Jr.  
Erica Leak

### Office of Sustainability

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### Parks & Recreation Department

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John Nixon

### Planning & Zoning Department

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### Small & Minority Business Resources Department

Veronica Briseno, Director  
Blender Hill

### Transportation Department

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Cari Buetow  
Cheyenne Krause  
Marissa Monroy

### Watershed Protection Department

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Yinghong Li\*  
Hanh Thai\*  
Reem Zoun\*

*\* Also assisted as a Community Volunteer*

### University of Texas-Austin

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Dr. Patricia A. Wilson, Professor, School  
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Changwhan Kim  
Seunghee Kim  
Chia-Hsuan Kuo  
Minh Tu Huynh Lam  
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Ying Li  
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Hyunwoo Yoon

*PLEASE NOTE: All names and titles are listed as of 2017.*

## NOTES

## NOTES

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我們的意見已被重視、接受及採納，所以肯定並期盼著未來的日子將會更好！

We feel being heard and taken care of and look forward for a better quality of life.

