



Santa Cruz County Latino Affairs Commission

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Santa Cruz County Latino Affairs Commission 2022 - 2023 Biennial Report

1. THE ROLE OF THE COMMISSION

The Latino Affairs Commission is an advisory body to the Board of Supervisors on issues affecting the Latino community in Santa Cruz County. The Commission was established to:

- a. Advise the Board of Supervisors on any significant problems currently encountered by the County's Latino residents;
- b. Review the needs of Latino citizens in the County, and recommend comprehensive goals and objectives for effectively meeting those needs;
- c. Monitor the various services made available to Latino citizens by public and private agencies in the County and make recommendations to the Board of Supervisors on how County government can help ensure effective and efficient delivery of those services;
- d. Develop a procedure to identify and set priorities regarding the areas of greatest need for County support and/or attention, and prepare biennial recommendations to the Board of Supervisors regarding specific courses of action in response to identified needs and priorities;
- e. Advise the Board of Supervisors how best to cooperate with local, State, Federal and private agencies serving Latino citizens, and assist in the preparation, implementation, and review of any regional plan or program designed to serve Latino citizens;
- f. Advise the Board of Supervisors how best to cooperate with local, State, Federal and private agencies in order to maximize the availability of funds to meet the specific economic needs of the Latino population, with the objective of leveraging such funds to the greatest degree possible.

2. MEETINGS DATES, TIME, AND LOCATION

Latino Affairs Commission meetings are scheduled for the first Wednesday of every other month (February, April, June, August, October, and December), from 6:00 until 7:30 PM at the United Way of Santa Cruz County office (4450 Capitola Rd, Suite 106, Capitola, CA 95010) or at a site in Watsonville when possible. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Commission met remotely in 2022, but they returned to meeting in person by the second meeting in 2023.

- In 2022, none of the six regularly scheduled meetings were canceled for lack of quorum.
- In 2023, one of the six regularly scheduled meetings was canceled for lack of quorum, and one was canceled and replaced with a Special Meeting within the same month to allow the Commission to complete some time-sensitive business.

3. COMMISSION STRUCTURE

The Latino Affairs Commission is composed of seven voting members; one Commissioner appointed by each of the five District Supervisors to represent their districts, and two at-large

Commissioners each, appointed by the cities of Santa Cruz and Watsonville to represent their cities. Commission leadership (Chair and Vice Chair) elections are held each year during the April regular meeting.

On December 31, 2023, the Latino Affairs Commission membership was as follows:

District	Commissioners
1 st District	Yadira Flores-Martinez
2 nd District	Oscar Sanchez (Chair)
3 rd District	Seat Vacant
4 th District	Cesar De Santos
5 th District	Leo Gomez
City of Santa Cruz	Rebecca Hernandez (Vice Chair) Seat Vacant
City of Watsonville	Kristal Salcido Micaela Lopez

During the reporting period, Commissioners Cesar De Santos, Gregory Peinado, Pablo Velasquez, Oscar Sanchez, Kristal Salcido and Micaela Lopez were appointed, and Commissioners Fe Silva-Robles, Cesar De Santos, and Kristal Salcido were re-appointed. Commissioners who completed their terms, resigned, or were replaced during the reporting period were Christina Granados, Gregory Peinado, Pablo Velasquez, Rebecca Garcia, Silvia Mendez and Fe Silva-Robles.

4. COMMISSION STAFF

Commissions Manager, Kaite McGrew staffed the Commission for the entirety of the reporting period.

Between Commissions meetings, County Staff was available by phone, email, or in person for information and referrals. The County EEO Commissions Office is located in the County Government Center (701 Ocean Street, Room 510, Santa Cruz, CA 95060).

5. ATTENDANCE

Please see attached *Latino Affairs Commission 2022-2023 Attendance Report* for specifics.

6. OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

The objectives and subsequent activities described in the Commission's Strategic Action Plan are determined by their mandate and emerging needs as expressed by the community and identified by the Commissioners.

Objective 1:

Monitor and assess issues impacting the Santa Cruz County Latino community and advocate for the eradication of barriers and inequities

During the reporting period, the Commission monitored the following matters:

- Storm damage and flooding impact on the Latinx community and relative disaster relief efforts (Community Action Board (CAB) resources, State and Federal financial support, County efforts, media coverage, etc.) in South County compared to other parts of the County.

- Office of Recovery, Response and Resilience efforts in all areas
- Measure R impact (one-half cent sales tax increase in Watsonville City to provide \$5M in locally controlled funding for Watsonville's essential services).
- Proposed Watsonville ordinance to electrify the city and retrofit residential housing pending availability of funding to prevent moderate and low-income families from experiencing increased natural gas prices as other households begin using less natural gas.
- Watsonville Hospital bankruptcy and transition to become a district hospital.
- Walking for Wellness Project to establish safe pedestrian routes in Live Oak
- Pure Water Soquel Project recycling water to replenish the Live Oak groundwater base
- Santa Cruz County Housing Authority efforts
- Regional Transportation Commission's survey to improve transportation safety in the Hwy 9 corridor near school sites
- Voter registration and civic engagement
- Latino representation in local law enforcement agencies
- Debris flow recovery in the Hwy 9 corridor
- County Park Friend's grant funding to sponsor recreational events
- Rio Del Mar coastal access walkway restrictions impacting Latinx community members at one of the only County beaches with free parking
- Official name change of the Research Center for the Americas to "The Dolores Huerta Research Center for the Americas"
- Park Rx Program - County Park Friends partnering with Salud Para La Gente in South County to prescribe outdoor activities in nature for their patients and efforts to establish a similar program in Live Oak.
- Backup Generator Transfer Meter Program to provide free transfer switches to qualifying residents which will allow them to switch between grid power and their own backup generators during power outages.
- Expansion of Si Se Puede (the only Spanish-speaking drug and alcohol treatment program in Santa Cruz County)
- County Park Friends' efforts to solicit feedback from the Latinx community on South County recreational activities
- Vandalism and restoration of the Black Lives Matter mural
- Pump Track project at the Covered Bridge in North County

Objective #2:

Promote the interests of the Santa Cruz County Latino community through outreach and the provision of resources

During the reporting period, members of the Commission participated in and/or promoted the following community activities:

- Screening of the documentary "Dolores" a portrait of labor and feminist activist Dolores Huerta at the Del Mar Theatre
- Corazon de Mujer event at LEO's Haven Adaptive Park
- Community Action Board's National Night Out event
- Trunk or Treat safer alternative to trick-or-treating event
- Dia de los Muertos (Day of the Dead) event at Santa Cruz City's Evergreen Cemetery

- Corralitos and Watsonville Open Studios Events featuring 16 artists representing South County, three of whom are Latino
- Grand opening of the Community Health Center and Dientes in Live Oak
- Holiday celebration for families on the Santa Cruz City Wharf
- Grand Reopening of Ramsey Park in Watsonville
- Strawberry Festival
- Live Oak bicycling event
- Museum of Art and History (MAH) - Watsonville is in the Heart Project
- Watsonville Film Festival
- County and City Pride events
- Cultural events hosted by Mi Gente for the BIPOC community
- District Supervisors' community meetings
- UCSC activities

Objective #3:

Monitor and promote diversity, equity and inclusion in Santa Cruz County organizations and agencies

During the reporting period, the Commission:

- Reviewed the County's *Equal Employment Opportunity and Cultural Competence Plan* and heard a report from the County's Equal Employment Opportunity Officer.
- Participated in the development of questions for the County's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Employee Survey and heard a report from the County's Equal Employment Opportunity Officer on key findings from the survey results
- Served on the *A Santa Cruz County Like Me* (ASCCLM) task force and received regular reports on project activities. Promoted ASCCLM community workshops.
- Initiated a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in County Law Enforcement Leadership Roles Study to determine Latinx representation in leadership roles, identify any potential barriers and develop recommendations to further advance equitable representation if appropriate.
- Heard reports from two Commissioners who participated in the County's Equity Statement Development Committee.

Objective #4:

Monitor and Promote Key Areas of Well-Being Impacting the Santa Cruz County Latinx Community, including Affordable Housing, Affordable Accessible Health Care, Criminal Justice Inequities, and Cultural Preservation and Inclusion for the Santa Cruz County Indigenous Latinx Community

During the reporting period, the Commission heard reports on:

- County efforts to address the County's housing crisis and subsequent prevalence of unhoused residents (*Dr. Robert Ratner, County Housing Director*)
- Overview of the new County Public Defender's Office's whole-person approach to defending justice-involved citizens (*Heather Rogers, County Public Defender*)
- County Operational Plan updates (*CAO Analysts*)

- County Sustainability Planning update on sustainability policy, regulatory updates, and amendments to the General Plan/Local Coastal Program (*Stephanie Hansen, Assistant Director of Planning*)
- County Public Health Equity Office Overview and the Role of the Health Equity Officer (*Jen Herrera, Assistant HSA Director*)
- County Public Health Vaccine Hesitancy via Rapid Community Assessment (RCA) Project outcomes (*Adilene Hernandez, HSA Program Specialist*)

7. COMMISSION MEMBERSHIPS & AFFILIATIONS

During the reporting period, Commissioners served as members of or were affiliated with the following commissions or organizations:

- A Santa Cruz County Like Me Task Force
- American Association of Museums
- American College Personnel Association
- American Studies Association
- Associations of Tribal Archives, Libraries and Museums
- California Council of Cultural Centers
- Community Organized for Relational Power in Action (COPA)
- County District Attorney's Office
- Cradle to Career Program
- Emerging Leaders Circle
- Encompass Community Service
- NASPA Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education
- Native American Advisory Council, Western Michigan
- Police Activity Leagues Board
- Rise Together
- Santa Cruz City Council
- Santa Cruz Community Foundation
- Santa Cruz Community Health
- Santa Cruz County Equity Statement Development Committee
- Santa Cruz County Park Friends
- Santa Cruz Museum of Art and History
- Santa Cruz Museum of Natural History
- Santa Cruz Museum of Natural History Board
- Santa Cruz YIMBY (Yes, In My Back Yard)
- United Way of Santa Cruz County
- University of California at Santa Cruz
- Watsonville City Council
- Watsonville Film Festival

8. COMMISSION SUBCOMMITTEES

During the reporting period, the Commission activated and authorized the following ad hoc subcommittees to conduct business within their subject matter jurisdiction as needed:

Ad Hoc Strategic Action Plan Subcommittee:

The Strategic Action Plan Subcommittee was an ad hoc subcommittee established to review and revise the Commission's Strategic Action Plan and return to the Commission with recommended objectives and action steps. Subcommittee members included Hernandez, De Santos, and Flores-Martinez. As of December 31, 2023, the subcommittee had completed their task and was dissolved.

Ad Hoc National Hispanic Heritage Month Subcommittee

The National Hispanic Heritage Month Subcommittee was established to organize and implement a community art wall exhibit including an in-person reception to celebrate the event. Subcommittee members included Flores-Martinez, Hernandez, Sanchez and De Santos. As of December 31, 2023, the project was completed and the subcommittee dissolved.

9. COMMISSION ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND SPECIAL PROJECTS**During the reporting period, the Commission addressed the following issues:**

- Initiated a project to study Latinx representation in leadership roles in County law enforcement agencies
- Initiated a project to study public health equity for the Latinx community

During the reporting period, the Commission participated in the following special projects:

- Designed a Commission logo and created signage to expand public awareness of the Commission's existence as a resource.
- Revised their Strategic Action Plan to allow for broader impact and more consistent reporting during meetings.
- Designed and installed a Community Art Wall Exhibit to celebrate National Hispanic Heritage Month. The exhibit featured photographs of local youth artists creating culturally significant artwork and celebrating their own Hispanic heritage. The event was co-sponsored by the Youth Outdoor Leader Program and Santa Cruz County Park Friends. During the extremely well-attended kick-off reception, Supervisor Koenig presented certificates recognizing the hard work of the Commission, the Youth Outdoor Leader Program, and his appointee, Commissioner Yadira Flores-Martinez, who was instrumental in conceiving of the exhibit and making it the success that it was.

During the reporting period, the Commission addressed the following goals:

- Promoted diversity, equity and inclusion for the Latinx community in Santa Cruz County, including County employees – Successful and ongoing.
- Implemented English-to-Spanish translation of Latino Affairs Commission meeting materials and concurrent Spanish-language interpretation during Commission meetings. - Successful
- Attempted to monitor the County's *CARES Justice Advisory Group* activities and engage where appropriate. Although the Commission anticipated being able to provide representation in the group and effectively support their efforts, all attempts to be included or receive any information about the group's activities were unsuccessful. - Unsuccessful
- Monitored ongoing efforts to support economic recovery from the pandemic in the Latinx community – Successful and ongoing

- Monitored ongoing efforts to promote COVID-19 vaccine distribution in the Latinx community – Successful and folded into the large goal of monitoring equity in public health overall as an ongoing priority.
- Monitored the County’s response to the housing crisis, services and programs for unhoused residents and the availability of affordable housing for the South County Latinx community – Successful and established as an ongoing priority.
- Monitor and support efforts to expand broadband access to underserved areas of the County, particularly those where a technology gap may be disproportionately impacting the Latinx community – No activity in this area - Unsuccessful
- Continue to pursue Commission funding opportunities - Unsuccessful
- Promote awareness of the Commission by attending and supporting local events aligned with the Commission’s scope and purpose – Successful and ongoing

10. FUTURE GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In 2024-2025, the Latino Affairs Commission will endeavor to:

- Promote diversity, equity and inclusion for the Latinx community in Santa Cruz County, including County employees
- Study Latinx representation in leadership roles in County law enforcement agencies
- Monitor the efforts of the County Public Health Equity Office and promote equitable health access and outcomes as appropriate
- Monitor ongoing efforts to support economic recovery from all recent disasters including wildfires, debris flow events, flooding and storm damage, and pandemic-related impacts.
- Monitor County efforts to address the housing crisis, provide housing and services to unhoused residents, and increase the availability of affordable housing particularly for the Latinx community
- Monitor and support efforts to expand broadband access to underserved areas of the County, particularly those where a technology gap may be disproportionately impacting the Latinx community
- Revise Commission bylaws
- Promote awareness of the Commission by attending and supporting local events aligned with the Commission’s scope and purpose

In 2022-2023, the Latino Affairs Commission recommends that the Board of Supervisors take the following actions:

- Continue to provide policy leadership and funding support to County efforts designed to ensure diversity, equity and inclusion in County programs, services and workforce
- Provide policy leadership and funding support to study Latinx representation in County law enforcement leadership roles and address inequities if any.
- Direct the *CARES Justice Advisory Group* to provide the Latino Affairs Commission with quarterly summaries of CARES Justice activities and efforts and invite their engagement where appropriate
- Provide policy leadership and funding support to programs tasked with supporting the economic recovery of the Latinx community in the aftermath of recent disasters

- Provide policy leadership and funding support to programs supporting health equity in the Latinx community
- Continue to provide policy leadership and funding support to agencies and programs designed to address the housing crisis, unhoused residents, and the availability of affordable housing, particularly in the Latinx community.
- Provide policy leadership and funding support to programs tasked with expanding broadband access to underserved areas of the County, particularly those where a technology gap may be disproportionately impacting the Latinx community

Approved by the Latino Affairs Commission at the December 6, 2023 regular meeting.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Santa Cruz County Latino Affairs Commission,

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Oscar Sanchez

Commission Chair, Latino Affairs Commission

December 6, 2023

Date

DocuSigned by:



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Rebecca Hernandez

Commission Vice Chair, Latino Affairs Commission

December 6, 2023

Date

LATINO AFFAIRS COMMISSION 2022 ATTENDANCE REPORT							
District/ Supervisor	Commissioner	Feb 2022	April 2022	June 2022	Aug 2022	Oct 2022	Dec 2022
1 st District Supervisor Manu Koenig	Yadira Flores-Martinez	P	P	P	A	P	P
2 nd District Supervisor Zach Friend	Gregory Peinado	-	-	P	P	P	P
3 rd District Supervisor Ryan Coonerty	Fe Silva-Robles	P	P	A	P	P	A
4 th District Supervisor Greg Caput	Christina Granados	P	-	-	-	-	-
4 th District Supervisor Greg Caput	Cesar De Santos	-	-	P	P	P	P
5 th District Supervisor Bruce McPherson	Leo Gomez	P	P	P	P	P	P
City of Santa Cruz	Rebecca Hernandez	E	P	P	P	P	P
	Pablo Velasquez	-	-	-	P	E	P
City of Watsonville	Rebecca Garcia	P	P	E	P	P	-
	Sylvia Mendez	P	P	P	P	A	A
Attendance: P=Present A=Absent E=Excused (-) = Not Seated							
LATINO AFFAIRS COMMISSION 2023 ATTENDANCE REPORT							
District/ Supervisor	Commissioner	Feb 2023	April 2023	June 2023	Aug 2023	Oct 2023	Dec 2023
1 st District Supervisor Manu Koenig	Yadira Flores-Martinez	MEETING CANCELED FOR LACK OF QUORUM	P	P	P	P	P
2 nd District Supervisor Zach Friend	Oscar Sanchez		P	P	P	P	E
3 rd District Supervisor Justin Cummings	Fe Silva-Robles		A	A	E	A	-
4 th District Supervisor Felipe Hernandez	Cesar De Santos		P	P	P	P	P
5 th District Supervisor Bruce McPherson	Leo Gomez		P	P	P	P	P
City of Santa Cruz	Rebecca Hernandez		P	P	P	P	P
	Seat Vacant		-	-	-	-	-
City of Watsonville	Kristal Salcido		P	P	E	E	A
	Sylvia Mendez		A	A	-	-	-
	Micela Lopez		-	-	-	-	P

Submitted:



 Kaite McGrew
 Commissions Manager

12/6/2023

Date