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ACTA Newsletter

SMBR Acting Director Veronica Lara Lays Out Future Plans for Minority Subcontractors

Austin, TX — SMBR (Small & Minority Business Resources Department) Acting Director Veronica Lara (seen in the picture above) in an interview with Asian Contractor Association shared her vision and plans for Minority and Women subcontractors in the coming years.

The interview was taped and broadcast by CTA Austin-TV (<http://www.austin-tv.net/>). CTA is an internet-based webTV, the only broadcasting station of any kind in Austin for the Chinese community.

Despite the country's overall economic slowdown, City of Austin's purchasing department is still brimming with activities. City projects worth millions of dollars are issued and ready for contractors to bid on daily. Large projects, such as the Water Treatment Plant No 4, estimated at half a billion dollars, and the Central Library projects are also swiftly underway, according to Ms. Lara. "I always take pride when women and minority subcontractors work on these important projects. Because they are landmarks for the city and it is so important for their participation and mark on these projects," commented the director.

The department is working hard to find opportunities for minority and women contractors such as the recent weatherization program with the Austin Utilities Department, she continued. "The City provided free training and certification for minority and women subcontractors in that particular commodity code and had an impact on the project goals," added Ms. Lara.

"I'd would like to continue doing that by partnering up with other departments and see where the opportunities are, see the direction where the purchasing department is going and provide the opportunities for women and minority subcontractors and get them ready to work." said Ms. Lara.

Last year in 2009, SMBR received the Regional Minority Business Advocate of the Year award from the US Department of Commerce and two other awards from the Greater Chamber of Commerce and Travis County HUB program respectively. Ms. Lara contributed the success of her department to a decision two years ago to hire a full time outreach coordinator. The department had previously contracted the service out to an outside vendor.

She also lauded the ongoing partnerships the city has formed with several community organizations such as Asian Contractor Association to help minority and women subcontractors participate in many City projects.



The main difference between Austin and other cities in terms of their minority vendor programs, according to Ms. Lara, lies mostly in the steadfast support from the City's management team including the City Council, the City Manager, and the Mayor. "With that support, that really gives us the ground work to have as many opportunities as possible for our women and minority subcontractors," said Ms. Lara.

Ms. Lara also pointed out that her department has two-pronged goal this year. The first one is to encourage as many minority and women businesses as possible to get certified with the City and secondly to help those who are already in the program stay in and mature into the role of a prime contractor.

To assist minority subcontractors for that purpose, SMBR has decided to hire a full time personnel to help subcontractors with bonding issues, disclosed Ms. Lara. One of the key components to become a general contractors to bid on a project is to have surety bond, which can cost tens of thousands of dollars depending on the scope of the project.

Ms. Lara also urged all minority subcontractors to make sure their information with the City is accurate and updated, so they can receive the latest procurement opportunities.

For more information about SMBR or how to get certified, please contact Aletta at ACTA at 926-5400 (office) or 300-7644 (cell).

A Word from ACTA Acting Chairman Chang

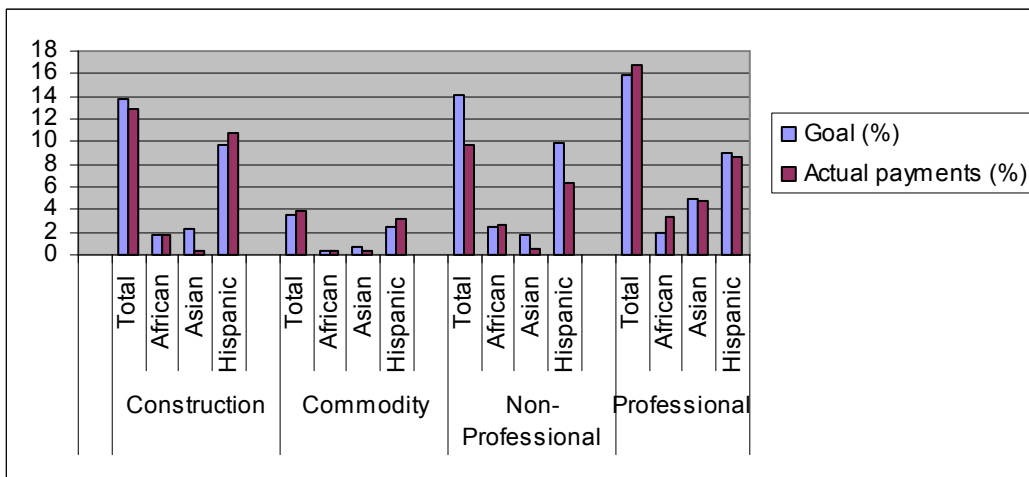
Austin, TX — Asian Contractor Association (ACTA) Acting Chairman George Chang recently in an interview with the World Journal, a Taiwan-based Chinese Daily with worldwide distribution, discussed the ample business opportunities for Asian contractors here in Austin.

Austin is a booming city as the capitol of Texas, said Chang, teeming with purchasing opportunities large and small from local, state and federal governments. Take the State of Texas for instance, last year in 2009, Texas awarded more than 1.9 billion in contracts, including more than \$838 million in subcontracts, to HUB businesses. That is an very impressive number, Chang beamed.

It is to our great advantages to not only get certified as a MBE but also a HUB in order to participate in State projects. To be eligible for HUB certification, there are four criteria. 1) At least 51% ownership, including active participation and control by an Asian Pacific American, African American, Hispanic American, Native American or American Woman 2) Eligible Applicant must be a U.S. Citizen 3) Applicant Principal place of business must be located in the State of Texas 4) Must be actively participating in the day to day operations of the business at a level to commensurate to owner-



ACTA Acting Chairman
George Chang



FY 2009 thru June

Comparison between project goals and actual payments to minority vendors by the City of Austin (See left for the chart and below for the actual amounts)

FY 2009 thru June			
Category	Minority Groups	Total Spending	Total Payments to Minority Vendors
Construction	Total Spending	\$ 127,243,058	
	African American		\$ 2,238,110
	Native		\$ 182
	Asian American		\$ 348,890
	Hispanic		\$ 13,713,703
Commodity	Total Spending	\$ 26,253,242	
	African American		\$ 107,584
	Native		\$ 677
	Asian American		\$ 75,480
	Hispanic		\$ 855,956
Non-Professional	Total Spending	\$ 75,112,128	
	African American		\$ 2,006,694
	Native		\$ 78,629
	Asian American		\$ 351,510
	Hispanic		\$ 4,839,161
Professional	Total Spending	\$ 50,096,776	
	African American		\$ 1,643,917
	Native		\$ 8,240
	Asian American		\$ 2,415,645
	Hispanic		\$ 4,356,553
Asian American Subtotal			\$ 3,191,525
Total		\$ 278,705,204	\$ 33,040,931