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Assignment 2: Latinx Enclave of Woodburn in Focus

Author's Note: *There is a debate about the usage of the terms "Hispanic" and "Latino." A 2011 Pew Research[1] poll found that a full 51% of residents who the US Census classifies under Hispanic/Latino identified more with their family's nation of origin, and 69% of these respondents believed that there is not one common Latino culture in the US. However, in order to make sense of the limited census data available while being respectful to the people of Woodburn, this paper uses the term "Latinx" to describe anyone of Iberian, Central American or South American culture or origin. This is a woefully broad brushstroke, but since the possibility of at least one person of Brazilian or Spanish descent living in Woodburn cannot be ruled out without meeting every resident, Latinx, which is also gender-neutral, is the most inclusive and accurate term. That being said, the term Latinx has its origins in American academia and activism, and might not be a popular or useful term for the residents of Woodburn, one-third of who were born in a different country. So an adjustment of terms (likely to "Latino/a") might be necessary if this analysis were to be used for actual outreach in Woodburn.*

The Community of Woodburn

While Portland has seen a staggering and nationally reported population boom over the last two decades, that boom is largely made up of white and wealthier migrants from cities like San Francisco, Los Angeles, Phoenix, and Seattle. What is often overlooked in this story is the similar boom of Latinx residents in smaller towns and counties across Oregon. While Portland and Oregon have a history of state-sanctioned exclusion (see: Article 18 from State Constitution) and are still referred to as "white bastions" by some, Latinx population growth in Oregon has outpaced the rest of the country as a result of immigration, migration, and native-births[2]. According to the Oregon Encyclopedia, "Between 2000 and 2010, the number of Latinos in the state increased by 63 percent, from 275,314 to 450,052- accounting for 43 percent of the population growth for Oregon during the decade." And the median age (24) of this population is much younger than the median age of the white population (41).[3] Considering this and the fact that many of the Oregon towns that are now majority Latinx are less than two-hours drive from Portland, I felt that it would be a good exercise to pick the enclave that is the town of Woodburn for this assignment. In this hypothetical situation, I would be conducting outreach in Woodburn's Latinx community prior to the development of a regional plan (possibly a transportation or land use plan).

The US Census Bureau estimates that the City of Woodburn had about 25,780 residents in 2017[4], and around 14,978 (or 58.1%) of those residents were Latinx. Even in an overwhelmingly white state (87.1%)[5], the percentage of Latinx in Woodburn is three times the national rate (18%).

About a third of Woodburn's residents (29.0%) were foreign born between 2012-2016, or triple the State of Oregon's rate (9.8%) in the same period. Only 12.9% of residents age 25 and over have a bachelor's degree or higher compared to Oregon's 31.4%, and 26.3% of Woodburn residents are living in poverty, which is twice the poverty rate of Oregon (13.2%). One of Woodburn's few figures that match statewide statistics is the rate of owner-occupied housing, which sits at 60.3%. Despite representing more than half the population,

minority residents only own 287 out of the town's 1,339 businesses (or 21%), which is less than half the statewide rate and less than half the number of women-owned firms in Woodburn.

Taking this information together, a picture of the Latinx community in Woodburn begins to emerge. But before going into that picture, it is important to understand the history of Woodburn and the history of these groups in Oregon.

Latinx History in the United States, Oregon and Woodburn

By the end of the 18th century, the Spanish empire controlled half of what is now continental United State's. While most of the empire's North American operations were concentrated in the southern regions, including Alta California and Florida, Spanish explorers and traders had reached as far as Alaska in the today's Pacific Northwest. After the Mexican War of Independence, the formerly Spanish trading operations and Missions in California and neighboring began to fade. The conclusion of the Mexican-American War in 1849 and the California Gold Rush led to a rapid increase of Anglo-Americans living in the newly won Southwest, and the border between the two nations hardened. While the anti-Chinese and anti-Japanese acts of the late 19th/early 20th centuries are well-known "nativist" policies, the 1902 Reclamation Act dispossessed many Latinx residents and citizens of the United States of their property. The creation of the Border Patrol in 1925 was followed by mass deportation of Mexican Americans across the country, although mainly in the Southwest.

In a speech for Oregon's Commission of Hispanic Affairs titled *150 Years of Latino Contributions in Oregon*[6], Commissioner and anthropologist Marcela Mendoza described Oregon at the dawn of the 20th century as a sparsely populated place of opportunity. The fertile Willamette Valley was just beginning its career as the breadbasket of the Pacific Northwest and new agricultural technology was making the arid eastern two-thirds of the state a promising place for specialty crops. The still-young railroads that spanned the continent were bringing in both new opportunities for trade and people. By the 1920s, Mexican immigrants were beginning to move up from the southwestern states in pursuit of opportunity and frequently found seasonal work on sugar beet farms in the Willamette Valley.

In the 1940s, with much of the white farm labor having enlisted or moved into industrial manufacturing, the Mexican Farm Labor Program (or *Bracero* program) was created to fill vacant positions. This program lasted from 1942 until 1947 and approximately 15,000 Braceros found contract work in the state by the time it ended. After the war, the farms found new sources of Mexican-American migratory laborers in states like New Mexico and Texas. Even with the new competition, many Braceros stayed and settled in communities in the Willamette Valley and along the Columbia River, including Hood River, Independence, and Woodburn. According to Mendoza, "many of these families came originally as farm workers, but began to settle and worked in local canneries, on the railroad, in construction and continued to carry out seasonal harvesting work."

In the 1960s, home purchases were not uncommon and the children of the Braceros began to attend Oregon public schools and spoke English as a first language. By the 1970s and 1980s, Oregonians of Mexican descent began filling important government roles, including Marion County Sheriff, and starting more ambitious enterprises, like Juan Ceja's reforestation company in Salem. A turning point was reached when the Immigration and Reform Act (IRCA) and the Special Agricultural Workers Program (SAW, which allowed those in the program to move their families to Oregon) were passed in 1986. The Braceros and their families were made permanent legal residents.

Today, Mexico is far and away the top most common country of origin for foreign-born residents (37%[7]) and in 2015 births to self-reporting “Hispanic” mothers represented 18.6% of the total births in Oregon.[8]

Despite their growing political presence in Oregon and the rest of the US, all members of the Latinx community are at risk of oppression and violence as a result of President Trump’s policies and the political climate he has created. Woodburn’s Latinx community is all too familiar with white-nationalism and racism: in 2008, two white men detonated a bomb at a Downtown bank, killing two people. Fortunately, for the majority of the residents of Woodburn, they are living in a community that has been organizing protections for Latinx residents for decades and have allies across the state. However, outreach in a community with such a large percentage of foreign-born residents needs to be approached with extra care, as fear of ICE or other law-enforcement agencies could silence the voices of important stakeholders.

Language considerations:

As noted above, a full 29% of residents living in Woodburn are foreign born, compared to the state rate of 10%. This suggests that an interpreter will be required for both public meetings and all written distributional material for effective outreach.

While Spanish-speakers represent a large majority of non-English speakers, it is worth noting the presence of Russian-speakers in this community, who are the result of post-Cold War immigration. Some estimates suggest that there are around 100,000 or more residents from the former Soviet Union in the Portland area, with a large percentage of the living in Woodburn.[9] As shown below, many of Woodburn’s schools offer core content courses in both Spanish and Russian. It is possible that the time spent in shared spaces and going through similar experiences has created a bond between these two groups, and that any effective outreach to the Spanish-speaking Latinx communities might also require outreach to Russian-speakers, who will also need interpreters.

The nearest, well-reviewed interpreter company is Professional Interpreters Inc. in Salem, who have worked in Woodburn before. Depending on the assignment, an interpreter will cost between \$50-150 per hour.

Sources for history and understanding life in Woodburn today:

PC= Useful tool for policy considerations. OE= Outreach and engagement. PC/OE= both.

- **Radio PCUN (PC/OE):** “The Northwest Digital Archives’ PCUN Digital Collection contains correspondence, newsletters, publications, photographs, newspaper clippings, audio recordings, and other documents that provide a window into the history of the largest labor union and Latino organization in the State of Oregon.” <https://pcun.org/about-pcun/history-of-pcun/>
- **Oregon Encyclopedia (PC):** *Latinos in Oregon* by Dr. Jerry Garcia, “former Director of Chicano Studies and the College Assistance Migrant Program at Eastern Washington University.” https://oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/hispanics_in_oregon/#.W-pI33pKi9Z
- **Oregon Public Broadcasting (PC/OE):** *Woodburn’s Latino community may finally find its voice* by Dmae Roberts: <https://www.opb.org/news/article/woodburns-latino-community-may-finally-find-its-voice/>
- **Books:**

- *Nosotros: The Hispanic People of Oregon* by Erasmo Gamboa and Carolyn M. Baum (1995). **(PC)**
- *Sonny Montes and Mexican American Activism in Oregon* by Glenn Anthony May (2011). **(PC/OE)**
- *Mexicanos in Oregon: Their stories, Their lives* by Erlinda Gonzales-Berry and Marcela Mendoza (2010). **(PC/OE)**
- *And the shadows took him: A Novel* by Daniel Chacon (2005). **(OE)**

Representatives of this Latinx community:

The quotes are from each organization's/business' website and state, in their words, why I believe they should be included in this process. If there is no point of contact next to a name/organization, then it means I could not find one.

Organizations: Due largely to the length of time the Latinx community has been in Woodburn, there is no shortage of groups and organizations that represent the interests of Latinx members in the town and across the state. This has its advantages and disadvantages. Any regional plan will undoubtedly have to conduct thorough outreach to many if not all of the groups listed below- anything 2nd-rate will likely be met with harsh criticism. That being said, any outreach accomplishments in Woodburn will almost certainly reach the ears of other Latinx communities across the Willamette Valley, creating a huge incentive to get this right. It also is important to not that the top three organizations below were built with the interests of laborers, particularly farmworkers, in mind.

- **Farmworker Housing Development Corporation (FHDC):** "FHDC is a community-based non-profit organization dedicated to serving mid-Willamette Valley families." <http://fhdc.org/about-us/>. *Contact:* General contact: <http://fhdc.org/contact-us/>
- **CAPACES Leadership Institute:** "The CLI is a non-profit organization based in Woodburn, Oregon that was founded to prepare leaders with the political consciousness and capacity needed to lead and support social justice work." <https://www.capacesleadership.org/about/>
- **Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste (PCUN):** "Oregon's union of farmworkers and nursery and reforestation workers, and Oregon's largest Latino organization." <https://pcun.org/>. *Contact:* Reyna Lopez, Executive Director. reynalopez@pcun.org
- **Woodburn Downtown Business Association:** "The Woodburn Downtown Association's mission is to create a world-class rural downtown that promotes a prosperous and vibrant economy where equity is at the center of our vitality and investment." *Contact:* <https://www.facebook.com/WoodburnDowntownAssociation>
- **Woodburn Area Chamber of Commerce:** "Celebrating a rich history in entrepreneurship and agriculture, we welcome you to join us in expanding business through the Woodburn Chamber community of dedicated, driven individuals." *Contact:* <https://woodburnchamber.org/contact-us/>
- **Fiesta Mexicana:** "Fiesta history dates back to its first annual festivities, which began in 1964 in the heart of downtown Woodburn in appreciation of farmworkers workers and to celebrate the end of the harvest season." <http://www.ci.woodburn.or.us/?q=node/392> *Contact:* Jim Row, Assistant City Administrator. (503) 982-5265

Local Businesses: I have decided to split the commercial centers for non-nationally syndicated businesses in Woodburn into two geographic locations: Downtown and Route 99E. The reason for this split is to reflect that, based on this research, the businesses in Downtown appear to get more attention from media outlets (and therefore might be overrepresented in previous outreach attempts). There are two individuals who would be a good start to conducting outreach in the Latinx community of Woodburn: Gustavo Gutierrez-Gomez, a business owner and community relations' manager for the city of Woodburn,[10] and Martin Ochoa, owner of Lupita's Mexican Restaurant and former president of Woodburn's Downtown Business Association. Both of these men have been interviewed several times by the media and so are probably more used to being asked questions about Woodburn.

Downtown Restaurants/Businesses: The media imbalance mentioned is likely due to three factors: it is the densest cluster of Latinx residents; it is the home of the Woodburn Downtown Business Association; and it is the historic home of the Fiesta Mexicana. These factors mean that Latinx heritage is highly visible in the storefronts, in the parades, and in the items for sale. Any attempt to include Woodburn residents in a planning process should begin with a visit to Downtown, where the individuals listed above.

- **Luis's Taqueria:** 23 N Front St, Woodburn, OR 97071. (503) 981-8437
- **Lupita's Restaurant:** 311 N Front St, Woodburn, OR 97071. (503) 982-0483
- **Espandienda Luceros (grocery):** 297 N Front St, Woodburn, OR 97071. (503) 981-1684
- **Zapateria El Jaliciencia:** 253 N Front St, Woodburn, OR 97071. (503) 981-3939
- **Ani's Party Supplies:** 235 N Front St, Woodburn, OR 97071. (503) 371-3558
- **Paeteria y neveria El Paisanito:** 429 N Front St, Woodburn, OR 97071. (503) 981-9087

Route 99E Restaurants/Businesses: This commercial corridor is larger and has more businesses than downtown, but it is also spread out along 1.3 miles of a state highway. This means it is oriented more towards cars and pit stops compared to Downtown, and may offer fewer big opportunities (e.g., festivals) for interactions between residents. That being said, the sheer number and diversity of the stores on 99E suggests that shopping in this corridor is an essential part of life in Woodburn. While Downtown caters more to the tourists, 99E has the supply shops and services that everyone has to visit at least once a month (e.g., mechanics).

- **Salud de la Familia Medical Clinic:** "Salud Medical Center prides itself on making a difference for families living in Oregon's mid-Willamette Valley." <http://www.yvfwc.com/locations/salud-medical-center>. Contact: Julia Romanelli, Clinic Director. (503) 982-2000
- **Princess Salon and Day Spa:** 526 N Pacific Hwy, Woodburn, OR 97071. (503) 981-3331
- **Direct Labor Inc. (Temp Agency):** 845 N Pacific Hwy, Woodburn, OR 97071. (503) 982-5511
- **El Rodeo Night Club:** 1032 N Pacific Hwy, Woodburn, OR 97071. (971) 271-0088
- **Los Paniaguaitas Produce:** 3613, 1141 N Pacific Hwy, Woodburn, OR 97071. (503) 982-4754

- **Carniceria y Taqueria Las Palmas:** 954 N Pacific Hwy, Woodburn, OR 97071. (503) 982-0465

Religious Groups: The religious groups in Woodburn are diverse and plentiful. There are at least 18 religious institutions in central Woodburn alone, some with associated schools. Unfortunately there does not seem to be a single channel through which the religious groups as a whole could be addressed, so outreach will have to be accomplished through personal visits to each institution. It is important to note that many of these institutions serve Spanish-speaking, Russian-speaking, and English-speaking congregations and could be a useful source for learning the shared ideas and values in all three groups.

- **St. Luke Catholic Church:** “St. Luke’s Parish and School have been providing services to the Woodburn community since the early 1900s.” <https://www.stlukewoodburn.org/>. Contact: Gloria Reyes, Parish Secretary. (503) 981-5011
- **Hope Lutheran Church/Iglesia Luterana Hope:** http://hopewoodburn.org/latino_ministry. Contact: Pam Bridgehouse, Secretary/Parish Assistant.
- **Woodburn Foursquare Church:** “Our congregation represents the Hispanic, Russian, and Anglo communities we live in and we welcome all cultural backgrounds to worship and grow with us.” <http://woodburnfoursquarechurch.org/our-church/>
- **Mid Valley Community Church:** “We dream of seeing God use us to reach out to the thousands of people in the Willamette Valley: all ages, cultures and backgrounds, with the life-changing, society-transforming message of the wonderful grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.” <http://midvalleycommunitychurch.com/who-we-are/>. Contact: midvalleycommunitychurch@gmail.com

Schools: Similar to the church groups, many of Woodburn’s schools at all levels emphasize multiculturalism and language education. This could be a huge asset to planners looking for channels to non-English speaking and 1st and 2nd generation American populations. Unlike the church groups, many of these schools fall under the umbrella of one larger entity: the Woodburn School District. This could create more efficiency in the outreach process, but there are also risks that some voices could be lost in the bureaucracy. With the non-district schools it makes sense to start with the highest-ranked leaders, but more nuance might be required with the district schools.

- **Chemeketa Community College:** “Chemeketa Woodburn works with the Woodburn Chamber of Commerce, local schools and a wide array of agencies and non-profit organizations to provide services for employment skills, continuing education, and English language learning.” <https://www.chemeketa.edu/contactus/services/>. Contact: General info (503) 339-5000
- **St. Luke Catholic School:** “Today there are over 1800 families registered at St. Luke Parish. The school is just one of many ministries of the parish. The parish hosts Mass in both Spanish and English on Sunday and an English Saturday Vigil.” <http://www.stlukeschoolwoodburn.org/about/>
- **Academy of International Studies:** “All students will graduate from AIS prepared for college, work, and citizenship; empowered to act a better world and literate in

more than one language.” <http://www.woodburnsd.org/academy-of-international-studies/>

The following schools are all part of the Woodburn School District:

- **Woodburn High School:** “Woodburn School District is an exceptional, equitable, and multilingual district, where all students are motivated, empowered, and prepared to succeed.” <http://www.woodburnsd.org/>. Contact: Jenne Marquez, Executive Board Secretary. J.marquez@woodburnsd.com
- **Heritage Elementary School:** “Heritage offers many different learning opportunities, with K-5 bilingual programs in Russian/English and in Spanish/English.” This is the largest elementary school in Oregon (900 students). <http://www.woodburnsd.org/heritage-elementary-school/>Contact: Sherrilyn Rawson, Principal. Srawson@woodburnsd.org
- **Valor Middle School:** “Valor Middle School is a Dual-Language (Russian/Spanish/English) School. We provide an AVID experience... which targets English Language Learners.” <http://www.woodburnsd.org/valor-middle-school/>. Yolanda Lopez, Subdirectora- Secundaria Valor.

Summary:

Mendoza notes something of interest when it comes to the Latinx population in Oregon, which is that Spanish-language maintenance “applies only in the first two or three generations, after which there is a rapid decline. The prevalence of cultural symbols, however, usually lasts much longer.” This is important to consider as Oregon’s reputation as a “white bastion” might encourage someone attempting to do outreach in Woodburn into thinking that the community, while full of young people and new arrivals, does not have a multi-generational connection to the town and the land around it.

These cultural symbols, which in Woodburn take the form of food, music, items in a party store, hairstyles offered at the salons, religious practices, and more, offer countless opportunities for making connections with the Latinx community. This community has the extra advantage of being a brand name thanks in part to Fiesta Mexicana, meaning that there are residents who are *looking* to inform and engage with people unfamiliar with the community. Based on the research in this paper, those individuals can be found in stores and restaurants as well as in city hall and at local non-profits. Considering the wealth of organized stakeholders for the Latinx community in Woodburn, incorporating this population in to regional planning efforts has a lot going for it.

References:

- [1] *When Labels Don’t Fit: Hispanics and their views on identity* (2011), Pew Research Center: <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2012/04/04/when-labels-dont-fit-hispanics-and-their-views-of-identity/>
- [2] *Latinos in Oregon* (2016), The Oregon Community Foundation: https://www.oregoncf.org/Templates/media/files/reports/latinos_in_oregon_report_2016.pdf
- [3] *Oregon’s Latino population is growing faster than the nationwide average* (2016), The Oregonian: https://www.oregonlive.com/pacific-northwest-news/index.ssf/2016/09/oregons_latino_population_is_g.html
- [4] US Census Bureau QuickFacts: Woodburn, Oregon: <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/woodburncityoregon/POP645216#viewtop>
- [5] US Census Bureau QuickFacts: Oregon: <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/or>

[6] Mendoza, Marcela (2009). *150 Years of Latino Contributions in Oregon*: Oregon Commission of Hispanic Affairs:

https://www.oregon.gov/Hispanic/pdfs/150_years_of_latino_contributions_in_oregon.pdf

[7] *Immigrants in Oregon Fact Sheet* (2017), American Immigration Council:

<https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/research/immigrants-oregon>

[8] *Natality (2015)*, Oregon Health Authority: Oregon Vital Statistics Report:

<https://www.oregon.gov/OHA/PH/BIRTHDEATHCERTIFICATES/VITALSTATISTICS/ANNUALREPORTS/VOLUME1/Documents/2015/Chapter2Narrative.pdf>

[9] *Oregon's Soviet Diaspora: 25 years later, the refugee community wants to be known* (2016). Oregon Public Broadcasting: <https://www.opb.org/radio/programs/thinkoutloud/segment/oregon-soviet-diaspora-refugee-community/>

[10] *Woodburn Heritage Month: Giving People A Voice* (2018), Woodburn Independent:

<https://pamplinmedia.com/wbi/152-news/408705-307480-woodburn-celebrates-hispanic-heritage-month-giving-people-a-voice>