



Mexicantown Economic Development Corporation

RAY LOZANO PROVIDES A
PERSPECTIVE OF
GROWTH AND CULTURAL
HERITAGE IN
MEXICANTOWN

Photos and Story by Phil Eich,
Storyville Social, as part of the
Michigan Main Street Story
Series

“Mexicantown has a great history and sense of community. People are very welcoming in this area. And, even though we label it Mexicantown, it's comprised of a variety of Latino folks from different countries and immigrants from non-Latino countries. People consider it a neighborhood—not a place divided by ethnicity— and it's a great neighborhood to be a part of. I was born and raised in the Mexicantown area. I'm retired from DTE Energy, but I'm fortunate to be working with all these great folks and still active in the community.

Mexicantown is in zip code 48216, and, if you look at the zip code, it is no longer low-income.

With gentrification, Ford Motor, and a lot of younger folks moving in, the income level and housing costs have risen. There are houses going for \$100,000, \$200,000, even \$300,000. So my organization, Mexicantown Community Development Corp., will go into a re-envisioning period to see what we can do to help the community going forward.

With gentrification and things rapidly changing, I do worry it could lose its ethnic influence, its ethnic identity. Change and gentrification are a reality, so it comes down to how we manage that change so we can retain the history, culture, and feel of the community.

We want to maintain the culture of our community because it has so much to offer.

Even just driving around Mexicantown, you'll see all the creativity, all the talent. There's a lot of public art. There's a lot of beautiful graffiti art. People have put their creativity into this community over the decades, and you see it in the neighborhoods; you see it all over the place.

We talk about Main Street being a destination, but we want to draw folks to at least 21st Street and maybe further by providing cultural events and other kinds of festivities. We're hoping our new Galleria Cafe will be open in our Welcome Center building by the fall. It will be a destination for folks coming into the area to see great Latino and southwest Detroit art and have a cup of coffee at the same time. It's our goal that the Mexicantown Mercado project will give opportunities for businesses that graduate from our entrepreneurial program to rent spaces for two years until their business is sustainable, allowing them to go out and fill vacant storefronts in the community.

We get a lot of folks who come into the area for the cultural and religious holidays, and they tend to go to the places they're used to, but I always encourage people to go out of their comfort zone and visit other areas and explore a little bit. There's just so much in this area. There's a lot of Spanish being spoken, wonderful bakeries and art. There's a lot of culture here folks will discover and hopefully want to maintain after they realize the value of what's here."

- Raymond "Ray" Lozano,
Executive Director
Mexicantown Community
Development Corporation



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