

ANNOUNCEMENT

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East Austin VOTA! Campaign Mobilizes Community, Tops Off with Candidate Forum

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With three of the Austin City Council positions up for election in May, this year's race constituted a high priority for Southwest Key and its vision to empower the East Austin community. To promote this vision, Southwest Key and the Community Advisory Council launched the East Austin VOTA! Campaign to encourage political participation in this historically under-served community. The initiative was led by community organizers Carmen Llanes and Daniel Llanes in partnership with Southwest Key and the Community Advisory Council.

The VOTA! Campaign focused its efforts in three East Austin precincts which included the Govalle/Johnston Terrace area where Southwest Key's headquarters are located. The campaign kicked off in early February with a voter registration drive and culminated with a City Council Candidate Forum and a get-out-to-vote block walk. Early voting was also held on site at the Southwest Key headquarters.

By conducting a voter registration drive, coordinating voter outreach, block walking, posting flyers, sending mail-outs, phone banking and organizing a Candidate Forum, the VOTA! Campaign was able to illustrate to city and county leaders that East Austin is not apathetic and is certain to hold City Council members accountable for issues involving East Austin. About 130 people present at the Candidate Forum made it one of the most successful forums held in the city. All candidates present at the forum committed to return to the community center to work with Southwest Key and the Community Advisory Council to create an action plan and timetable to address issues of greatest concern to the East Austin community, including gentrification, affordable housing, rising property taxes, unemployment and education. As a result of the VOTA! Campaign, neighborhood planning issues are garnering more attention from the council members. The campaign also drew considerable media attention which has helped expose these prominent issues to a wider audience.

