



Tuesday, November 23, 1999



News

Foundation grants millions to city

By Lee Bonorden

The Hormel Foundation will commit up to \$5 million for a major Austin community initiative.

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The Hormel Foundation will commit up to \$5 million for a major Austin community initiative. It the largest single disbursement in the history of the Hormel Foundation and will help finance affordable housing, a cultural center, affordable child care, a scholarship program and public transportation enhancements.

Richard L. Knowlton, president of the Hormel Foundation, made the announcement Monday afternoon at an Austin City Hall press conference.

Knowlton, an Austin native son and former chairman of the board, president and CEO of Hormel Foods Corporation, came to the press conference only minutes after the Hormel Foundation's board of directors unanimously approved the \$5-million grant to help the city of Austin meet its multi-cultural challenges.

"The Hormel Foundation believes it is important in our quest to answer the needs of the city," Knowlton told reporters.

"We're all excited about this," Knowlton said. "We're counting on matching funds by other state and local agencies and other entities as well."

If the foundation's \$5-million is matched, that means \$10 million will be available to address the challenges posed by the changing face of Austin.

The city of Austin will be responsible for developing a plan acceptable to the Hormel Foundation for each of the priorities.

In addition, the Hormel Foundation will make the \$5 million available on a matching basis, there fore encouraging the city to seek financial partners.

The challenges to be addressed include:

- Develop a plan for affordable housing to build up to 100 homes in the Austin area now and study long-term needs for affordable housing.

- Create a cultural center in Austin to coordinate and direct visitors and immigrants

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to the proper infrastructure facilities.

- Facilitate the development of adequate affordable child care facilities; especially for children whose parents work day and/or night shifts.
- Develop a scholarship program to coordinate training for technical, nursing and trade jobs.
- Develop an adequate transportation environment (i.e., busing).

Joining Knowlton, who left immediately after making the announcement for another important engagement, were Austin Mayor Bonnie Rietz and Jerry Anfinson and Pat Ray, co-chairs of the Austin Community Vision and Projects Committee.

Anfinson also sits on the Hormel Foundation's board of directors and he, Knowlton and Kermit Hoversten, a former long-time Austin city attorney, comprise the committee's funding sub-committee.

The committee will meet Dec. 14, at Austin Public Library, beginning at 9:30 a.m., to plan the next steps in carrying out the mandate to implement the initiatives. Mayor Rietz said the public's input was welcome at the meeting.

Anfinson said the impetus for the multi-faceted initiatives was the "changing make up of the community" and the committee organizers' desire to be "proactive" in addressing the issues.

Since the mid-1980s, more and more people of color have come to Austin and the surrounding areas to seek employment.

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