



## City of Tampa Mayor's Hispanic Advisory Council 2024-2025 Members Roster



**MARILYN ALVAREZ**

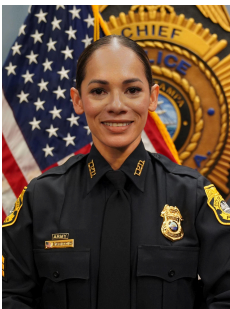
***Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office Hispanic Liaison***



Marilyn Alvarez has been with the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office for over 27 years, first as a sworn deputy and currently as a Community Relations Coordinator. She also serves as the Hispanic Liaison, acting as a bridge between the Sheriff's Office and the Hispanic community. Considered a leader in the community, she serves on several boards, including

The City of Tampa Mayor's Hispanic Advisory Council (past Vice Chair) and the Tampa Bay Area Refugee Task Force. She is also an advisor and liaison to the Sheriff's Hispanic Advisory Council.

Outside of work, Marilyn actively supports local community organizations and has served as a mentor through the Hispanic Professional Women's Association. Marilyn has received the 2008 Hispanic Deputy of the Year Award from the Sheriff's Hispanic Advisory Council, the 2016 Deputy of the Year from All American Productions Viva Tampa Bay Festival, the 2017 Tampa Hispanic Heritage Inc. Woman of the Year, and the 2019 Premios Enfoque Leadership Award for Community Service. She was also chosen as one of the 2024 Girl Scouts of West Central Florida Women of Distinction.



**SGT. ROSE ANGELAKOPOULOS (TPD Liaison)**

***Police Liaison, Tampa Police Department***



Rose Angelakopoulos has been a member of the Tampa Police Department for 10 years. Prior to joining TPD, she worked for HCSO as a Detention Deputy for 6 years. During her tenure here, she has been assigned to various divisions and is currently the Chief Executive Officer. Rose Angelakopoulos also serves as the department's Hispanic Liaison.

Sergeant Angelakopoulos earned her bachelor's degree from Saint Leo University and is working on her master's degree. Sergeant Angelakopoulos is currently a Sergeant First Class in the Army Reserves.



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**MARUCHI AZORIN, MBA**

***Entrepreneur; Owner of Villa Rosa Linens Specialty Store (since 1984)***



Maruchi Azorin's lifelong commitment to mentoring Hispanic students seeking opportunities for higher education stems from her early childhood experiences in the United States. Born in Cuba, she emigrated to the U.S. in 1960, settling in Plant City, FL.

She graduated from Plant City High School with honors and was named PCHS Girl of the Year. Maruchi earned both a BA and an MBA (cum laude) from the University of Florida, where she became the first Hispanic woman selected to the UF Student Hall of Fame. Appointed by Mayor Sandra Freedman in 1987, she served on the Mayor's Hispanic Advisory Council and chaired it from 1992–2001. She was the founding chair of the Latinos Unidos Luncheon in 1998 and co-chaired the 20th Anniversary Luncheon in 2018.



**MARIA M. BERMUDEZ-TORRES**

***Hillsborough Community College; Distance Learning Coordinator***



After 23 years supporting her husband's military career, Maria M. Bermudez-Torres and her family made Tampa their home. She currently serves as President of Tampa Hispanic Heritage, Inc., leading initiatives that promote higher education and empower the community.

Maria holds a Master of Arts in Adult Education from the University of South Florida (USF) Sarasota-Manatee, a Graduate Certificate in Leadership and Human Resources from USF, and a Bachelor's in Latin American Studies from the University of Arizona. With over two decades of professional experience at institutions such as the University of Arizona and in various leadership roles, Maria is deeply committed to student success. She was instrumental in the creation of Hillsborough Community College–South Shore and the Lennard Collegiate Academy, both of which help high school students earn college credits. Additionally, she has supported Hispanic students through programs such as Apoyo and the Title V "Transition to Success" retention initiative. Her dedication continues to have a profound impact on the Tampa Bay area.



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**LISA COSTAS, Ph.D.**

***Associate Professor and Licensed Psychologist, National Louis University–Tampa***



Serving on the Council since 2006, Dr. Lisa Costas grew up in Puerto Rico where service to others and community were instilled in her by her mother, grandmother, and culture. She is passionate about the education and mentoring of Latino students to address the critical shortage of bilingual mental health providers. She has called the Tampa Bay area home since 1992.

Dr. Costas brings over 20 years of experience in graduate-level teaching in psychology and counseling, as well as clinical experiences with diverse populations, particularly within Spanish-speaking communities. She earned her doctorate in counseling psychology and her master's degree in clinical psychology at the University of North Texas. She completed her doctoral internship and began her career as a psychologist and instructor at USF. For the past 16 years, she has been an Associate Professor at the Florida School of Professional Psychology at National Louis University–Tampa. Dr. Costas is a past president and board member of the Hispanic Professional Women's Association (HPWA). Her advocacy focuses on enhancing educational opportunities and improving mental health services tailored to Latino populations, ensuring providers possess the necessary multicultural and linguistic competencies to serve effectively.



**MARIA ELENA ELIZALDE, MBA**

***IT Group Manager, Citi Bank***



With over 20 years of banking experience, Maria Elena Elizalde, originally from Ecuador, earned her MBA at the University of Tampa. She currently serves as an IT Group Manager at Citi, managing a budget of USD \$1 billion and overseeing international operations, restructurings, process improvements, and third-party contracting. One of Maria's passions is advancing others professionally.

She has been actively involved in the Tampa Bay community, serving as a board member of local and national nonprofit organizations. As a result of her successful career and extensive community involvement, Maria Elena was chosen as a finalist for Tampa Bay Business Journal's Business Woman of the Year Award and was a recipient of the Hispanic Heritage Award for Civic Involvement.



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**MARIBEL R. GARRETT, MA.**

***Community Engagement Coordinator & Hispanic Liaison, City of Tampa***



Maribel Garrett is the Community Engagement Coordinator for the City of Tampa's Community Engagement & Partnerships Department and also serves as the Hispanic Liaison. In this role, she collaborates with other departments to ensure Spanish speakers are informed, engaged, and have access to resources.

Prior to this role, Garrett worked in various educational settings in both the public and private sectors. Born and raised in Puerto Rico, she earned her undergraduate degree at the University of Puerto Rico. She later moved to Tampa to pursue her master's degree at the University of South Florida, becoming involved with numerous Hispanic organizations that keep her connected to her culture and traditions. She remains active in community organizations such as the Mayor's Hispanic Advisory Council, Tampa Hispanic Heritage, Inc., Rotary Club of Ybor City, and the USF Latin Community Advisory Council.



**JOSE GUEVARA (Vice-Chair)**

***Youth Outreach Manager, Suncoast Credit Union***



Joose Guevara serves as Youth Outreach Manager at Suncoast Credit Union, overseeing the Student Run Branch Program, Collegiate Outreach, and K-12 & Nonprofit efforts.

With more than a decade of experience in the financial industry, he previously worked in compliance.

A longtime Tampa Bay resident, Jose is passionate about bringing financial education to youth and the Hispanic community. He has served as co-chair for the Academy of Finance for Hillsborough County Public Schools and currently sits on both the Mayor's Hispanic Advisory Council and the Hispanic Advisory Board for Suncoast. Jose earned a bachelor's in management and organizational leadership with a focus on project management from St. Petersburg College, and in 2023, completed his MBA in Leadership at Florida Gulf Coast University. He also holds a Financial Education Instructor Certificate.



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**KARLA GUZMÁN-MIMS**

***Corporate Social Responsibility Manager – The Mosaic Company***



With over 20 years of experience in corporate philanthropy, stakeholder engagement, and strategic planning, Karla Guzmán-Mims is a Corporate Social Responsibility professional. She joined the Mayor's Hispanic Advisory Council in 2020 under Mayor Jane Castor.

Karla holds a Master of Public Administration from the University of South Florida and a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Massachusetts, Boston. She currently resides in Valrico with her family.



**DANIELLE V. HERNANDEZ, Esq.**

***Founder, DVH Law Group***



Danielle Hernandez is a community leader and advocate in Tampa Bay and beyond. Danielle has worked for the federal government, international organizations, and private practice and recently opened her law firm. Danielle is an immigration attorney, and through DVH Law

Group, her firm, she advocates for immigrants' rights. Danielle serves as the President of the Tampa Bay Latin Chamber of Commerce and has dedicated her time to helping Latino entrepreneurs in Tampa Bay. Danielle was recently appointed to the Board of Directors of Enterprising Latinas.



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**ILEANA ITURRIAGA GIORDANO**  
*Multicultural Marketing Professional*



Born in Cuba, Ileana Iturriaga Giordano has lived in Tampa most of her life. She was appointed to the Mayor's Hispanic Advisory Council (MHAC) in 2017 by Mayor Bob Buckhorn and has served in various capacities, including co-chair of the 2023 Latinos Unidos Scholarship Luncheon.

Ileana earned a Bachelor of Arts in Communication from the University of Tampa and enjoyed a successful 40-year career in sales and marketing. She recently retired from her position as Advertising Sales Manager with NBCUniversal and remains active as a community and church volunteer. She and her husband reside in Carrollwood, where they enjoy local neighborhood activities, family time, and traveling.



**JANICE JUSTINIANO**  
*Assistant Director of Assisted Housing, Tampa Housing Authority*



With a passion for community service, Janice Justiniano has dedicated 19 years to the Tampa Housing Authority, where she currently serves as the Assistant Director of Assisted Housing. She helps manage a portfolio of over 12,000 Housing Choice Vouchers with a budget of \$175 million, overseeing supervisors, inspections, and customer service.

Janice holds an associate's degree in business management from Hillsborough Community College and a bachelor's degree in marketing from the University of South Florida. She has earned more than 12 certifications from the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO) and holds a Green Belt Six Sigma Certification, reflecting her commitment to operational excellence. She collaborates with organizations that help families achieve self-sufficiency and secure decent housing. Janice is a proud member of the Mayor's Hispanic Advisory Council as well as the Tampa Bay Fair Housing Consortium.





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**MARTHA MURILLO**

*Retired Field Training Lieutenant, Tampa Police Department*



A member of the Mayor's Hispanic Advisory Council since 2017, Martha Murillo is the daughter of Peruvian and Colombian immigrant parents. Raised in Northern Virginia, she has lived in Tampa for over 27 years. She holds a bachelor's degree in criminal justice and recently retired as a Police Lieutenant from the Tampa Police Department after 23 years of service.

Currently working as both a real estate agent and a travel agent, Martha joined the Council to help develop meaningful projects that foster positive relationships between law enforcement and the Hispanic community. She remains committed to being a positive role model for Hispanic youth, inspiring them to set goals and remain actively engaged in their communities.



**SYLVIA PARKER (Treasurer)**

*Senior Vice President of Sales, Congruity HR*



After moving to Tampa, Sylvia Parker built a 20-year career in the Professional Employer Organization sector, becoming known for her expertise in payroll, HR, benefits, and risk management. She currently holds a leadership role at Congruity HR, a national provider of HR services.

A native of Chicago and a second-generation Puerto Rican, Sylvia has called Tampa home for 30 years. She served as President of Tampa Hispanic Heritage in 2016 and is a council member of the Mayor's Hispanic Advisory Council and Treasurer. She is also a board member of the Hispanic Professional Women's Association (HPWA). A breast cancer survivor, Sylvia joined the Pink Dragon Ladies (Team Survivor Tampa Bay) in January of 2024 and earned her first gold medal in dragon boat racing in April of the same year. She is most proud of advocating for her three children—all USF alumni—to attain their degrees.



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**DONNA PARRINO**  
*Retired Educator, University of South Florida*



A descendant of Cuban-Spanish cigar workers, Donna Parrino is a lifelong advocate for helping others achieve the American dream. Her heritage has nurtured a deep connection to both her languages and cultures, as well as to Tampa's diverse history.

Armed with BA and MA degrees, she spent 33 years at USF in roles ranging from librarian to assistant to the president and as a student success and Hispanic advocate.

Donna is proud of receiving both local and national recognitions but cherishes most her pioneering Hispanic bridge-building efforts at USF as the founding director of the USF Latino Scholarship Program. On the Council, she led the Salcines Statue/West Tampa Library Project (2016–17) and the Hispanic Heroes Book Club (2020–21). Through her church-related volunteering, she serves as a case manager for families facing economic distress.



**ANTHONY PEREZ, SVP, TAMPA MARKET EXECUTIVE, BANK FIRST**



Anthony is the Senior Vice President for Bank First, a leading bank in the state of Florida. He is a former chairman of the Mayor's Hispanic Advisory Council. As a first-generation American, I was born in Chicago to Cuban-born parents. Growing up I found inspiration in my parents' story of sacrifice.

Today that inspiration has transformed into a passion of giving back to disadvantaged Hispanic youth. I earned a Master's in Business Administration from the University of South Florida and serve on the USF Latin Community Advisory Committee. I also serve on the Board of Directors of the Judeo-Christian Clinic.





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**RAFAEL PIZANO**

*Firefighter/Paramedic, City of Tampa; Army Veteran*



A first-generation American of Cuban descent, Rafael Pizano was raised in Tampa and is a product of the Hillsborough County school system. He enlisted in the U.S. Army as an infantry/paratrooper. After his honorable service, he studied Emergency Medicine and Fire Science at Hillsborough Community College.

Currently employed by the City of Tampa as a Firefighter/Paramedic, Rafael also volunteers with community initiatives supporting veterans and mental health awareness. He works with organizations dedicated to advocating for human rights—an inspiration rooted in his family's flight from totalitarian rule in their native land. Rafael believes that serving is an opportunity to bring humanity together.



**JOSE J. RINCON (Chair)**

*Founder, Culture Bridge Solutions*



Arriving from Colombia in 2000, Jose Rincon earned his education at Hillsborough Community College, the University of Tampa, and the University of South Florida.

Over 21 years, he gained extensive experience in public and private sectors across multiple industries. An entrepreneur, Jose most recently co-owned and sold a HomeWell Care Services franchise and currently heads Culture Bridge Solutions, which connects Hispanic consumers and businesses with non-Spanish-speaking counterparts. He and his wife, Katie, are dedicated to investing their time and resources to create opportunities for others, including their daughters, Olivia and Mia.



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### **TONY ROKITA**

***Senior Vice President, Community Engagement & Social Responsibility, The Florida Aquarium***



In 2022, Tony Rokita became The Florida Aquarium's first Senior Vice President of Community Engagement & Social Responsibility.

Collaborating across departments, he enhances conservation efforts, educational programs, career recruitment, and outreach to authentically engage and reflect the Tampa Bay community.

Previously, Tony spent 32 seasons with the Chicago Bulls in leadership roles overseeing Alumni Relations, Community Relations, and Player Programs. He pioneered community engagement and social responsibility initiatives in professional sports, earning accolades such as the NBA's "Values of the Game" Award and contributing to the Chicago Bulls' ESPN Humanitarian Team of the Year Award. Today, Tony remains deeply involved in the community, serving on the Mayor's Hispanic Advisory Council, the Advisory Board for the USL Super Team Tampa Bay Sun, the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) Diversity Committee, and the Aquarium Conservation Partnership Executive Committee.



### **BRIAN SERRANO, MBA**

***Sample Insights Leader, Nielsen***



As the Customer Experience Field TV Liaison for Nielsen Media, Brian Serrano advocates for TV samples covering the U.S., leading business relationships between Field Operations and national TV media clients. He is also the founder of Serrano Investments Inc., a boutique consulting firm supporting small businesses in revenue growth.

Originally from Miami, Brian moved to Tampa in 2012 and resides in historic Seminole Heights. In 2001, he graduated from Florida State University with a BA in English and Creative Writing, and in December 2020, he earned his MBA (with honors) from Southeastern Oklahoma State University. Brian chaired the Mayor's Hispanic Advisory Council from 2020–2024, having joined in 2017. He also serves as an Ambassador of the Tampa Business Club and is a member of the National Association of Asian American Professionals (NAAAP).



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**MARIA T. STEIJLEN**

*Chief Financial Officer, Tampa Bay History Center*



Maria Steijlen joined the Tampa Bay History Center in 2008, where she now serves as Chief Financial Officer, managing financial operations, human resources, and risk management. Before joining the History Center, she spent seven years as Director of Business Affairs for Bay News 9/Time Warner and served as Business and Traffic Manager for ZGS Broadcasting of Tampa, Inc.

Maria has a Master's in Business Administration and is a member of the Institute of Management Accountants and the Society of Human Resources. She has a long history of community engagement. Appointed to the Mayor's Hispanic Advisory Council in 2002 by Mayor Dick Greco, Maria has served continuously (including as Chair, 2003–2008) and currently holds the position of Treasurer. Her previous civic involvements include serving on the Board of Trustees of the Museum of Science and Industry (MOSI), the Hispanic Professional Women's Association, Tampa Hispanic Heritage, Inc., and the Tampa Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. Among her honors are the Time Warner Andrew Heiskell Award nomination, recognition as Hispanic Business Woman of the Year (2003), and Hispanic Woman of the Year (2007).



**MYRIAM WARREN,**  
*Journalist-Editor*



A graduate of Xavierian University in Colombia, Myriam Warren is an award-winning journalist honored by both the Florida Society of News Editors and the Society of Professional Journalists. She worked at Diners Magazine in Colombia and a government publication, as well as a children's magazine, before moving to the U.S. in 2004

In Tampa, she joined The Tampa Tribune as a multimedia journalist and later became editor of CENTRO Tampa, the leading Hispanic publication in Tampa Bay owned by the Tampa Bay Times. Currently, she is editing an educational book on preventing child abuse in natural family environments—an endeavor that aligns with her passion for sharing stories with the diverse Hispanic community.



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**RAY WONG,**  
***Architect, Baker Barrios***



Born in Panama to immigrant parents, Ramon “Ray” Wong is the first in his family to graduate from college and pursue advanced degrees in Architecture and Business (UF).

Now a naturalized citizen, he relates to the challenges many face on the path to U.S. citizenship.

Ray is devoted to service in the greater Tampa area, staying active in the Greater Tampa Chamber, Downtown Advisory committees, architectural organizations, and the Mayor’s Hispanic Advisory Council. Through his success as an architect, he hopes to inspire others to aim high and achieve their professional and personal goals.