



Annual Internal Review

This report covers the time period of 01/01/2012 - 12/31/2012.

(This report is due in the first quarter of each fiscal year for the previous period)

Austin Human Rights Commission

The Commission mission statement (per the City Code) is:

The commission shall:

- (1) advise and consult with the city council on all matters involving racial, religious, or ethnic discrimination, and devise practices to promote equal opportunity;
- (2) serve in an advisory and consultative capacity to all city departments, advisory boards, and regulatory agencies to assure effective compliance with non-discrimination policies and orders, and recommend to the city manager measures to improve the ability of various departments and agencies to insure equal protection of any and all persons and groups against discrimination;
- (3) recommend to the city council legislation to aid in programs designed to eliminate prejudice and discrimination and encourage community support for the legislation;
- (4) aid in the formulation of local community groups in neighborhoods as needed to carry out specific programs;
- (5) initiate and facilitate discussions and negotiations between individuals and groups to lessen tensions and improve understanding in the community;
- (6) assist in the enforcement of all laws prohibiting discrimination against persons where jurisdiction is not specifically vested in another agency;
- (7) receive and investigate complaints and, as provided by state law, and if necessary, subpoena witnesses and documents needed for investigation of those complaints, and initiate investigations of tensions, acts of prejudice, and practices of discrimination;

(8) conduct public hearings on complaints and investigate and report to the council in writing facts, findings, and recommendations after using persuasion, mediation, and conciliation before any public hearing, and after making certain that any person named in any report of investigation was given the opportunity to be heard before the board with the right to examine and cross-examine witnesses;

(9) institute and conduct educational programs to promote equal treatment, opportunity and understanding, and sponsor meetings, institutes, forums, and courses of instruction to lead to a clearer understanding and solution of human relations problems;

(10) assist in training city employees to use methods of dealing with intergroup relations that result in respect for equal rights and equal treatment, and cooperate with the local Police Department in developing and including human rights courses in the curriculum of police training;

(11) conduct research, obtain factual data and hold public hearings to ascertain the status and treatment of racial, religious, and ethnic groups in the city and the best means of progressively improving human relations;

(12) provide services and information to the city manager and heads of all city departments and agencies to achieve the purposes of this chapter; and

(13) cooperate with all city, state, county, federal, and other governmental agencies, as well as racial, religious, ethnic, nationality, educational, community, civic, fraternal, benevolent and other groups, associations, societies, and individuals with constructive talents and resources helpful in achieving mutual appreciation of the privileges and the responsibilities of citizenship in a land of freedom enriched by free commerce and full utilization of all human resources from all racial, religious, ethnic and national groups.

For reference, the simplified mission statement adopted by the Commission on February 27, 2012, for purposes of external relations is:

The Austin Human Rights Commission exists to help all City residents live free from discrimination based on race, color, disability, religion, sex, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, or HIV status. The Commission, in partnership with the Austin Equal Employment Opportunity/Fair Housing (EEO/FH) Office, resolves discrimination complaints about employment, housing, goods, and services provided by businesses, disabilities, and HIV status. Preventing discrimination, however, is just as important as remedying discrimination after it has occurred. To this end, the Commission promotes human rights awareness through educational programs and by sponsoring, attending, and speaking at community meetings and events. Public participation at all Commission activities is vitally important and always welcome!

1. Describe the board's actions supporting their mission during the previous calendar year. Address all elements of the board's mission statement as provided in the relevant sections of the City Code

- 1 As part of the Human Right's Commission's mission to conduct research, obtain factual data, and hold public hearings to ascertain the status and treatment of racial, religious, and ethnic groups in the city and the best means of progressively improving human relations, the Commission heard reports from the following organizations:
 - The Austin/Travis County Hate Crimes Task Force - An organization comprised of citizens, city leaders, law enforcement, non-profit groups, and the district attorney's office to assess and develop policy strategies for prevention and response to hate crimes. The commission receives annual reports at the request of commissioners related to the progress of the task force, and the policy changes and accomplishments achieved over the previous year. Individual Commissioners are also briefed when a hate crime incident occurs. 01/23/2012
 - Judicial Support Task Force - An organization of city leaders, judges, and lawyers, working on the development of a Youth Court and Student Rights to Education Initiative. The task force is centered around these areas of focus:
 - To identify reforms in the youth justice system less punitive for youth.
 - To be more supportive of children and families - particularly regarding truancy, curfew violations, and related infractions.
 - To develop strategies to reduce the number of youth referred into the juvenile/youth justice system (prevention and juvenile diversion).
 - To promote school- and community-based dispute resolution and problem solving as critical components of the youth justice system.Commissioner Cortez is an an active and pivotal member on the task force and representative of the Human Rights Commission, and requests annual reports to the commission. 01/23/2012
 - Americans Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) - Local representative, Debbie Russell. Represented the movement advocating for the Austin Police Department to change from a use of force policy of Objective Reasonable Force Standard policy to a Preservation of Life Standard policy. 05/31/2012
 - Austin Immigrant Rights Coalition (AIRC) - Organization working to improve Human Rights standards for immigrant communities. AIRC held a Human Rights Conference in Austin to discuss issues, hold human rights workshops, and draft a Declaration of Human Rights for immigrant communities. 08/27/2012
 - The Austin Heritage Foundation - Organization with goals to educate the public and hold public events in the memory and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The organization hosts the annual MLK Day March at the Texas Capitol and

festival at the Huston Tillotson College. The organization also holds scholarship competition providing financial opportunities for children to go to college.
11/26/2012

2. As part of the Human Rights Commission's mission to (1) advise and consult with the city council on all matters involving racial, religious, or ethnic discrimination, and devise practices to promote equal opportunity, and (3) recommend to the city council legislation to aid in programs designed to eliminate prejudice and discrimination and encourage community support for the legislation, the Human Rights has taken the following actions:

- The Human Rights Commission voted in support of the the recommendation by the City of Austin's Charter Revision Commission which voted for changing the City of Austin's government representative structure in favor of 10 single-member districts, electing the Mayor at large, and for the creation of an independent redistricting committee to facilitate the drafting of the 10 single-member districts. 02/27/2012
- The Human Rights Commission voted to support a joint resolution with the Commission on Immigrations Affairs, asking the Austin City Council to oppose certain provisions of the 'Secure Cities' law enforcement policy. Specifically, the joint resolution asked the Austin City Council to oppose the Travis County Jail's continued honoring of every "hold" request, and urged Travis County Sheriff Greg Hamilton to request individualized justification (in the form of a Notice to Appear) and reimbursement from ICE prior to honoring any hold. 03/26/2012
- The Human Rights Commission voted in support of a resolution recommending the Austin City Council oppose the Death Penalty as a form of Texas punishment. Further, the Commission recommended support for a moratorium on executions and the creation of a "Texas Capital Punishment Commission" to study the administration of capital punishment and whether Texas should repeal the death penalty altogether. Lastly, the Commission recommended that the Council encourage the Travis county District Attorney to not seek the death sentences in capital murder cases, and not to set execution dates for current death row prisoners who were convicted in Travis County. 07/23/2012
- The Human Rights Commission voted in support of a resolution in favor of Council's actions to providing additional public funding to help homeless women on the streets of Austin. Additionally, the commission praised the City Council for including in the 2012 bond proposal \$3.8 million to expand the homeless shelter, and recommended the Council allocate those funds in order to create short-, medium-, and long-term solutions for homeless women and children. 08/27/2012
- The Human Rights Commission voted to support a resolution recognizing December 10th as UN Human Rights Day in order to promote awareness of the history of Human

Rights among citizens, especially children and young adults. The Commission asked City Council to recognize Human Rights Day and the hard work performed by Human Rights workers locally and around the world.

3. As part of the Human Rights Commission's mission to (9) institute and conduct educational programs to promote equal treatment, opportunity, and understanding, and sponsor meetings, institutes, forums, and courses of instruction to lead to a clearer understanding and solution of human relations problems; the Human Rights Commission or hosted or attended in the official capacity of City Officials the following:

- The Commission participated in the Equal Employment/Fair Housing Office (EE/FHO) Community Outreach event, which brought together city departments and nonprofits to promote services available to the community. The EE/FHO and Human Rights Commissioners helped educate the public relating resources available to the community for anyone who has been discriminated against in employment, housing, or public accommodation. Staff and Commissioners provided pamphlets regarding procedures for filing complaints with the COA's EEO/FHO department. 03/24/2012
- Several Human Rights Commissioners participated in the City of Austin EEO/FHO's, "Fair Housing: It's Not an Option, It's the Law" conference. Two workshops outline the application of the Federal Housing and Urban Development policy clarification amending the definition of the word "family" to include persons in the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community. The change grants equal access to housing in HUD programs, prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity as a determinative factor as to eligibility for FHA-insured loans, and requires grantees to comply with state and local laws that prohibit LGBT discrimination. The keynote speaker was Dr. Joe Leonard, Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. 04/30/2012
- Human Rights Commissioners participated in the EE/FHO outreach efforts at the 2012 Austin Pride Festival for the LGBT Community. Commissioners assisted staff in communicating to the LGBT community about local anti-discrimination laws and provided pamphlets regarding procedures for filing complaints with the COA's EE/FHO department.
- Human Rights Commissioners participated and attended the event: "Vincent Chin 30" remembering the life of Vincent Chen, who was murdered because of his race. One commissioner participated in a panel discussion about bias based violence and the Austin anti-discrimination laws and EE/FHO resources available to anyone who feels they have been discriminated against.

2. Determine if the board's actions throughout the year comply with the mission statement.

All actions of the Human Rights Commission during 2012 complied with the mission statement.

3. List the board's goals and objectives for the new calendar year.

**Austin Human Rights Commission
Annual Work Plan 2013**

S.M.A.R.T (Specific, Measurable & Observable, Aggressive yet Achievable, Results Oriented & Relevant, Time-Bound) Goals:

Goal #1: Community Discussion/Forum on Racism – The Human Rights Commission will organize and host a community-wide forum to discuss racism in the City of Austin; the forum will be held in coordination with Human Rights Day in December 2013.

- Forum will seek to answer the question of whether racism exists in Austin and if so, the extent and specific kinds of racism.
- Forum will include a panel discussion among community and civil leaders.

Measures of Success

- Identification of at least 2 actionable policy recommendations that will improve race relations in the City of Austin.
- Level of participation from different community groups.

Goal #2: Outreach to Community – Establish personal contact with stakeholders in various community groups through phone calls and in-person meetings to increase awareness of the Human Rights Commission and to inquire about city policy initiatives the commission could recommend to city council.

- Create a database of community groups and community leaders by April's Commission meeting.
- Assign Commissioners to community groups.
- Set up a staggered schedule by which each commissioner will give a report on the community groups they have been assigned at regular commission meetings.

Measure of Success:

- At least 1 resolution sent to Council as a result of the commission community outreach.

Goal #3: Improve Internal Process

Staff Related

- Request staff to provide training to Human Rights Commissioners on the discrimination complaint and hearing process at the Equal Employment/Fair housing Office.
- Improve the process by which discrimination complainants who receive a ‘no cause’ finding are made aware of the appeals process with the Human Rights Commission.
- Request city legal to give a presentation on chapter 5 of the City Code related to Civil Rights and the varying complaint processes for employment and housing discrimination; inquire if Sections 5.2, 5.3, and 5.4 of the City Code can be rewritten so the provisions of those sections are made to agree with each other.

Commission Related

- Inquire with the City Clerk’s office about alternate times for commission meetings to increase time in city council chambers and allow for longer policy discussions there.
- Establish ground rules for joint commission meetings to ensure civility and productive discussions.
- Pass resolutions that the City Council can take action on.

Passed by the Human Rights Commission on 03/25/2013