



Human Relations Commission 2024-2025 Workplan

Staff Liaison: Minka van der Zwaag, Human Services Manager
Lead Department: Community Services

About the Commission

This workplan covers portions of Fiscal Year 2024 and 2025 (May 2024 – April 2025) for the Human Relations Commission (HRC). The Commission is composed of 7 members who are residents of Palo Alto. Terms are for 3 years. See Palo Alto Municipal Code (PAMC) Sections 2.16 and 2.22. For more information about the HRC please visit our webpage at <http://www.cityofpaloalto.org/gov/boards/hrc>

Current Commissioners

- Adriana Eberle (Chair)
- Michelle Kraus (Vice Chair)
- Don Barr
- Katie Causey
- Amy Hsieh
- Mary Kate Stimmler
- Kaloma Smith

Mission Statement

HRC Mission: To promote the just and fair treatment of all people in Palo Alto, particularly our most vulnerable populations. By promoting awareness of issues and enabling conversations that enhance inclusion, the HRC strives to create a community where civility, respect and responsible actions are the norm.

HRC Jurisdiction: Muni Code 2.22.050

(a) The Human Relations Commission has the discretion to act with respect to any human relations matter when the commission finds that any person or group does not benefit fully from public or private opportunities or resources in the community or is unfairly or differently treated due to factors of concern to the commission.

(1) Public or private opportunities or resources in the community include, but are not limited to, those associated with ownership and rental of housing, employment, education and governmental services and benefits.

(2) Factors of concern to the commission include, but are not limited to, socioeconomic class or status, physical condition or handicap, married or unmarried state, emotional condition, intellectual ability, age, sex, sexual preference, gender identity, race, cultural characteristics, ethnic background, ancestry, citizenship, and religious, conscientious or philosophical belief.

(b) The commission shall conduct such studies and undertake such responsibilities as the council may direct.

**Prior Year
Accomplishments**

Goal #1 – Core Responsibilities: Reviewed and made funding recommendations to Council for 22 two-year Human Services Resource Allocation Process (HSRAP) grants totaling \$896,035 to fund critical needs in the community for FY 2024-25 (March and April 2023). A subcommittee of HRC commissioners and city staff served as the review committee for the Emerging Needs Fund. In 2023, a total of 6 grants totaling \$44,000 was approved (January, March, June, September 2023). Reviewed and made funding recommendations to the Finance Committee for 9 grants totaling \$488,000 as part of the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Funding program for Fiscal Year 2023-24 (February 2023).

Goal #2 – Inclusion & Belonging: Conducted a survey of the lived experience of Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) community members in Palo Alto in response to the Council's referral to research the lived experience of AANHPI communities (April 2023). Approved motion to forward the AANHPI survey results and a report to City Council (March 2024). Approval of HRC support of Multi Faith Peace Picnic and Prayer Services on September 11, 2023, on King Plaza (August 2023). Conducted a community listening session on Local Muslim, Palestinian, and Arab Experiences in the Face of Rising Islamophobia and Anti-Arab Hate (December 2023). Conducted a community listening session on Local Jewish Experiences in the Face of Rising Antisemitism (January 2024).

Goal #3 - Public Safety: Approved recommendations to City Council for actions based on the recommendations made by the public at the Community Listening Sessions on local experiences of Islamophobia and Anti-Semitism (March 2024).

Goal #4 – Climate Change: Presentation of the draft Frontline Communities Report, a report on the impact of climate on vulnerable communities in Palo Alto, by the Palo Alto Student Climate Coalition (August 2023).

Goal #5 – Learning Sessions: Hosted an Older Adults Learning Series: Presentation of the results from the Avenidas' Community Assessment Survey of Older Adults (CASOA) by the Avenidas CEO. (September 2023). Presentations by Alta Housing, La Comida, Lytton Gardens, Oshman Jewish Community Center, Second Harvest Food Bank, and Social Services Agency of Santa Clara County (October 2023).

Goal #6 - Emerging Needs: Additional recommendations passed in response to the City Council referral to the Commission on ways to improve implementation of current City renter protections (February and April 2023). Conducted a public hearing on the Recommendation of the Adoption of a Draft Ordinance Amending Palo Alto Municipal Code (PAMC) to Add Rental Registry Program (RRP) Ordinance. Approved to accept the basic framework of the RRP as presented by staff with outstanding issues needing to be addressed (May 2023).

PROJECT/GOAL 1: Core Responsibilities	Funding Programs - Human Services Resource Allocation Process (HSRAP), Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and Emerging Needs Fund. Continue to review and give input to funding decisions. Priority during this workplan cycle includes assisting staff with the HSRAP application process for the FY26 funding cycle and reviewing the Human Needs Assessment prepared by RDA Consulting. The Needs Assessment assess the current human service needs of the Palo Alto community, the role of the program, the goals of the program, and how program impact is measured.			
BENEFICIAL IMPACTS	TIMELINE	RESOURCES NEEDED	MEASURE OF SUCCESS	STATE MANDATED / LOCAL LAW / COUNCIL-APPROVED
The funding programs provide human services organizations with essential monetary support to serve vulnerable and underserved residents of Palo Alto.	Ongoing	Adhoc HRC subcommittee and staff time for the funding decisions. Moderate level of staff and adhoc subcommittee time.	Results of Human Services Needs Assessment will provide the HRC, staff and Council with updated and vital information on current human needs in the community, concrete suggestions for changes/additions to the HSRAP priority of needs, application and/or review process, and increased ways in which to measure the effectiveness of the City's funding investment in Human Services organizations.	N/A
HIGH PRIORITY		LOWER PRIORITY		COUNCIL-DIRECTED POLICY UPDATE
Continue to provide funding recommendations for HSRAP, CDBG and the Emerging Needs Fund as needed.				N/A
PROJECT/GOAL 2: Inclusion and Belonging (I&B)	Inclusion & Belonging - Explore ways in which the Commission can continue to positively affect the sense of inclusion and belonging in the community. Projects include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conduct Listening Session with local faith leaders to better understand their needs and the communities they serve.• Revisit issues raised and recommendations from panelists at the 2023 Senior Learning Sessions and identify next steps.• Continue the work done to create connections and learn about the lived experiences of community members, such as the AANHPI, MENA, and Jewish communities.			
BENEFICIAL IMPACTS	TIMELINE	RESOURCES NEEDED	MEASURE OF SUCCESS	STATE MANDATED / LOCAL LAW / COUNCIL-APPROVED
All individuals who live, work or worship in Palo Alto have the right to feel included and valued as members of the community.	Summer-Fall 2024	Adhoc HRC subcommittee and staff time Moderate level of staff and adhoc subcommittee time.		N/A
HIGH PRIORITY		LOWER PRIORITY		COUNCIL-DIRECTED POLICY UPDATE
Conduct Listening Session with local faith leaders to better understand their needs and the communities they serve. Revisit issues raised and recommendations from panelists at the 2023 Senior Learning Sessions and identify next steps. Continue the work done to create connections and learn about the lived experiences of community members, such as the AANHPI, MENA, and Jewish communities.				N/A

PROJECT/GOAL 3: Public Safety (PS)	Public Safety - Explore and implement avenues to decrease incidences of crimes in the community. <ul style="list-style-type: none">Convene a community meeting in 2024 to discuss hate crimes with representatives of law enforcement, city leadership, and experts in the field.			
BENEFICIAL IMPACTS	TIMELINE	RESOURCES NEEDED	MEASURE OF SUCCESS	STATE MANDATED / LOCAL LAW / COUNCIL-APPROVED
All individuals who live, work or worship in Palo Alto have the right to do so without fear of verbal or physical abuse or attack.	Summer-Fall 2024	Adhoc subcommittee and staff time. Space and marketing for educational programming. Moderate level of staff and adhoc subcommittee time.	Measures may include: How many people attend educational programming, specific actions taken by members of the public to combat hate crimes, and the increased reporting of hate crimes.	N/A
HIGH PRIORITY		LOWER PRIORITY		COUNCIL-DIRECTED POLICY UPDATE
Convene a community meeting in 2024 to discuss hate crimes with representatives of law enforcement, city leadership, and experts in the field.				N/A
PROJECT/GOAL 4: Public Health (PH)	Public Health – Support current efforts to address youth mental health issues in the community. <ul style="list-style-type: none">Request that a member of the HRC serve on the Mayor’s mental health task force and/or explore ways in which the HRC can partner with high school groups working on mental health issues.			
BENEFICIAL IMPACTS	TIMELINE	RESOURCES NEEDED	MEASURE OF SUCCESS	STATE MANDATED / LOCAL LAW / COUNCIL-APPROVED
Goal coincides with the Council Goal of “Community Health, Safety, Wellness & Belonging”		Member of HRC serves on Mayor’s Task force and provides updates to the full commission that may lead to other actions by the Commission. Low Level of Staff time		N/A
HIGH PRIORITY		LOWER PRIORITY		COUNCIL-DIRECTED POLICY UPDATE
As the Mayor’s Youth Mental Health Task Force has already been meeting, it is a high priority to request participations by a member of the HRC.				N/A

PROJECT/GOAL 5: Housing, Economic Justice and Development (HEJD)	Housing, Economic Justice and Development - <ul style="list-style-type: none">Identify ways in which HRC can provide assistance to support programs for unhoused community members (including RV dwellers).			
BENEFICIAL IMPACTS	TIMELINE	RESOURCES NEEDED	MEASURE OF SUCCESS	STATE MANDATED / LOCAL LAW / COUNCIL-APPROVED
Providing active HRC participation in actions to positively affect the lives of unhoused members of the community.	During the term covered by this workplan	Staff and HRC commissioner time Lower level of staff and adhoc subcommittee time.		N/A
HIGH PRIORITY		LOWER PRIORITY		COUNCIL-DIRECTED POLICY UPDATE
Continued participation by HRC members on a local RV Dweller concerns committee, especially in light of looking for solutions to the loss of parking on El Camino Real and it's affect on RV dwellers.		Other items to be determined during the year.		N/A
PROJECT/GOAL 6: Climate Change (CC)	Climate Change - Explore ways in which climate change may disproportionately affect specific populations in the community. <ul style="list-style-type: none">Engage with the Palo Alto Student Climate Coalition and the newly formed Youth Advisory Board (a formal City advisory board).			
BENEFICIAL IMPACTS	TIMELINE	RESOURCES NEEDED	MEASURE OF SUCCESS	STATE MANDATED / LOCAL LAW / COUNCIL-APPROVED
Climate change is a priority for the State of California and the City of Palo Alto. Climate awareness and changes in habits help everyone thrive and special attention should be paid to vulnerable populations.	Summer-Fall 2024	Yet to be determined based on outcome of Learning Sessions listed under Goal #7. Adhoc subcommittee and staff time.		N/A
HIGH PRIORITY		LOWER PRIORITY		COUNCIL-DIRECTED POLICY UPDATE
Determine possible roll for a representative of the HRC to play with the newly formed Youth Advisory Board (a formal City advisory board).				N/A

PROJECT/GOAL 7: Learning Sessions	Learning Sessions - Engage in learning sessions to gain more understanding on the following topics before proceeding with any HRC action: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Research and identify housing programs that could best address equity and access needs in the community (cross sectional senior, families, low income.) (HEJD)• Availability and affordability of child care programs in the community (HEJD)• Explore ways in which Utility costs affect low-income members of the community and current city programs/services that provide assistance. (HEJD)• Research and identify housing programs that could best address equity and access needs in the community (cross sectional senior, families, low income.) (HEJD)• Better understand the demographics of city staff and commission to understand if there are underrepresented groups. (I&B)• Better understanding of the City's "Safe Streets for All" safety action plan (PH)• Examine the post COVID impact on the community, including housing as part of healthcare; inflation/unemployment/effects of AI. (PH)• Better understand the city's response to respite/shelter needs of the unhoused during extreme weather events. (CC)• Presentation on the City's Plan to positively affect climate change with an eye to understanding how it takes the needs of vulnerable populations into consideration. (CC)			
BENEFICIAL IMPACTS	TIMELINE	RESOURCES NEEDED	MEASURE OF SUCCESS	STATE MANDATED / LOCAL LAW / COUNCIL-APPROVED
Learning sessions are utilized by the HRC to explore an issue with the help of subject matter experts in order to 1) Become informed on the topic(s); 2) Explore whether there is a role for the HRC in addressing/recommending any action.	During the term covered by this workplan	Staff and HRC commissioner time Lower level of staff and adhoc subcommittee time.	HRC discussions, deliberations, actions and recommendation are all well served by the review of information presented by subject matter experts.	N/A
HIGH PRIORITY		LOWER PRIORITY		COUNCIL-DIRECTED POLICY UPDATE
Priority level of the individual Learning Sessions will be determined by the HRC.				N/A
PROJECT/GOAL 7: Exploratory	Exploratory –Adhoc subcommittee to explore topics raised below at the Workplan retreat to further coalesce thinking before agendizing as a Learning Session. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The financial hardship for many to live in the community as the income needed to afford living in Palo Alto is untenable. (HEJD)• LGBTQI+/Pride events and recognition (I&B)• Create a grassroots effort to reengage vulnerable, underserved, minority community members in public meetings. Review/improve media and marketing outreach for the HRC. (I&B)			
BENEFICIAL IMPACTS	TIMELINE	RESOURCES NEEDED	MEASURE OF SUCCESS	STATE MANDATED / LOCAL LAW / COUNCIL-APPROVED
	Fall-Winter	Adhoc subcommittee and staff time.		N/A
HIGH PRIORITY		LOWER PRIORITY		COUNCIL-DIRECTED POLICY UPDATE
		Lower Priority		N/A

PROJECT/GOAL 8: Emerging Issues	Emerging Issues - The HRC will identify emerging issues in the community, prioritize those that need further attention and bring any major initiatives, including those that involve significant staff time to the Council for approval. The Commission will also be responsive to future referrals by the Council.			
BENEFICIAL IMPACTS	TIMELINE	RESOURCES NEEDED	MEASURE OF SUCCESS	STATE MANDATED / LOCAL LAW / COUNCIL-APPROVED
The HRC has the discretion to act with respect to any human relations matter when the commission finds that any person or group does not benefit fully from public or private opportunities or resources in the community, or is unfairly or differently treated due to factors of concern to the commission.	Ongoing	TBD	TBD	N/A
HIGH PRIORITY		LOWER PRIORITY		COUNCIL-DIRECTED POLICY UPDATE
		Lower priority		N/A