

City of Allentown
ATTN: Mayor Matt Tuerk
Allentown Human Relations Commission
Annual Strategic Plan
Chair: Shane J. Gill, PhD, LPC (GA & PA)
July 1st, 2022-December 31st, 2022
January 1st, 2023-December 31st, 2023

Introduction

In accordance with the ordinances established in Chapter 27, this report provides a strategic plan for the remainder of the current fiscal year and the following fiscal year (July 1st, 2022-December 31st, 2023). To date, the commission has not fulfilled all ordinances as required and is in the early stages of development including appointing new commissioners, educating all parties on the purpose and mission of the commission, and identifying programs and initiatives that fulfill the duties of the commission as outlined in the ordinances established in Chapter 27 outlined in 181.07 Article which states the following:

The Commission is hereby vested with the authority to administer and enforce this Article and shall be given sufficient administrative and legal support from City staff persons to carry out the following powers and duties:

3. To **initiate, receive, investigate and pass upon complaints** charging unlawful discriminatory practices in violation of Sections 181.03, 181.04, 181.05, 181.06 taking place within the City limits of Allentown.

4. To **study the problems of discrimination** and foster, through community effort or otherwise, good will among the groups and elements of the population of the city;

5. To **issue such publications and such results of investigations and research** as, in its judgement, will tend to promote good will and minimize or eliminate discrimination.

Strategic Plan July 1st, 2022-December 31st, 2022

The purpose of the strategic plan for the remainder of this fiscal year is to **propose** a structure aligned with the 2030 Vision of the City of Allentown. This plan will provide recommendations to restructure the Human Relations Commission (HRC), establish a hierarchy and organization chart to include leadership from the Mayor's Office, develop additional committees to increase compliance with ordinances and bylaws, identify actionable goals and objectives and timelines to advance the interests of the Human Relations Commission (HRC), with an effort to increase equality of residents of Allentown and eradicate discrimination based on the ordinances outlined in Article 181.07.

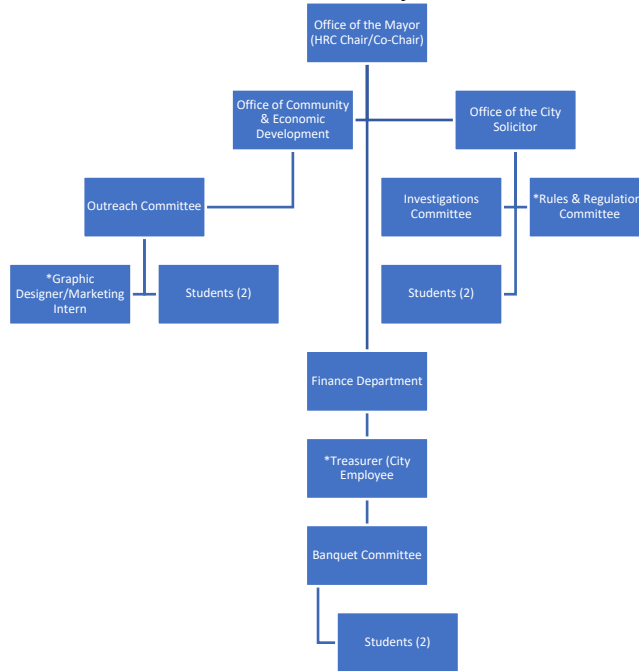
Aims

- I. Aim 1. To create a structure of the Human Relations Commission that aligns with the mission, vision, and 2030 vision of the City of Allentown.
- II. Aim 2. To educate commissioners on ordinances, bylaws, and state/local regulations, and development and dissemination of annual reports to inform best practices and policies that promotes diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- III. Aim 3. To establish a process for recruitment of commissioners, clearly defined criteria for candidacy, duties and obligations, and onboarding of commissioners once elected.
- IV. Aim 4. To create 4-5 standing programs and initiatives that targets the following (a) education about diversity, (b) best practices to promote and increase equity in accessing and obtaining housing, employment and fair wages, access and engagement in healthcare services, and quality education tailored to address discriminatory and predatory practices in education that impacts marginalized communities.
- V. Aim 5. To amend current articles to align with changes in the economic and political climate to promote engagement and consistent participation in meeting all expectations

identified in the ordinances. **The Human Relations Commission will create and adopt a Code of Ethics as part of restructuring.**

Goals and Objectives

- I. Aim 1. To create a structure of the Human Relations Commission that aligns with the mission, vision, and 2030 vision of the City of Allentown.



- II. Aim 2. To educate commissioners on ordinances, bylaws, and state/local regulations, and development and dissemination of annual reports to inform best practices and policies that promotes diversity, equity, and inclusion.
 - a. To establish a relationship with the Human Relations Commission of Pennsylvania and the advisory council stationed in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.
 - b. To encourage two (2) commissioners to attend state meetings if invited either in-person or virtually and contingent upon current budget and expenses.
 - i. Commissioners will be tasked with providing a report at the state meeting on behalf of the Allentown HRC and providing a report that includes goals, objectives, outcomes, and recommendations to Allentown HRC from the state to promote continuity in strategic planning.
 - c. To create an onboarding process to occur within the first 30-45 days of appointment to the commission.
 - i. Training will include but is not limited to the following: Mission/Vision of HRC, organizational structure, seven ordinances required of the commission, duties and obligations of each committee depending on the committee assigned to, policies and procedures for investigation, leadership and assertive communication, *conflict resolution, and reporting procedures (monthly, semi-annually, or annually).
 - ii. Training will include fair practices that reduce discrimination and promotes equity for the protected classes. Commissioners will be selected

to complete trainings required of city employees semi-annually that will be offered in-person, virtually, or pre-recorded.

- d. ***To create an onboarding process for students who will be assigned to a committee depending on their interest AND a mentor for the duration of their time in the commission to foster relationships, cohesion, and early exposure to career opportunities specific to civic engagement and advocacy.**
- II. Aim 3. To establish a process for recruitment of commissioners, clearly defined criteria for candidacy, duties and obligations, and onboarding of commissioners once elected.
- a. Recruitment Procedure: Prospective commissioners will be recruited using the following procedures:
 - i. The commission will advertise an open call for potential commissioners within 5-7 business days from receiving the notice of resignation or a vacancy.
 - ii. The commission will post a formal announcement on the city website and approved social media platforms including the following information: position title, date of vacancy, application open/closing date, and summary of requirements.
 - iii. The commission will close the announcement within 30 days of posting an opening or when 5-7 applications are received.
 - iv. Applications will be submitted online using a google form imbedded in the website and social media platforms OR a paper application to ensure accommodations are available. For persons with visual or hearing impairments, the commission will appoint a designee to ensure applicants receive necessary accommodations to complete the application and all other requirements within reason.
 - v. Applicants will be notified by phone, email, or mail upon receipt of their application based on the preferred method of contact. Contact will be made within 5 business days to confirm receipt of the application.
 - vi. The chair/co-chair will contact the commission to schedule an executive session to review potential applicants using the criteria established.
 - vii. Commissioners will be required to vote, with the majority vote being used to identify candidates to interview for the vacancy/vacancies.
 - viii. Group interviews will be conducted with prospective candidates and all commissioners present.
 - 1. If a commissioner is absent or unable to attend, interviews will be recorded with the verbal and signed consent of the interviewee and made available to commissioners that are absent for review and voting.
 - ix. Upon completion of interviews, the commission will determine the appropriate candidates at the monthly meeting following the executive session. The nominations and elections committee will forward the finalists' applications to the chair/co-chair who will then forward the finalists' applications to the mayor's designee for further review and approval.
 - x. Selected candidates will be contacted by the nominations and elections committee within seven (7) calendar days by the co-chair to extend an

offer to fill the vacancy/vacancies. Candidates will be given five to seven (5-7) business days to respond. Failure to respond will result in assumed withdrawal of applications.

b. Duties and Obligations (Amended):

i. The following two committees will be added to the commission to promote oversight and compliance with the articles and ordinances and preserve the integrity of the nomination process of commissioners:

1. *Rules & Regulations Commission: The Rules & Regulations will be tasked with creating a Code of Ethics and overseeing the continued review of articles relevant to the commission. Violations of articles or ethical codes will be reviewed by this committee who will then report to the chair and co-chair and designee of the mayor's office. This committee will engage in quality assurance activities by reviewing activities of the commission to ensure that these activities are aligned with the articles and duties of the commission.
2. *Nominations Commission: The Nominations Committee will oversee the development of the application process for prospective commissioners, students, and interns. This committee will aid in advertising/marketing for vacancies, receive and process all applications for interested persons, and ensure that the chair and co-chair receive all applicants in a timely fashion for review. Their duties will include contacting interested persons to schedule interviews and submitting all follow-up information to the chair and co-chair who will then submit to the mayor for a final review and approval.

c. Onboarding:

- i. Upon verbal acceptance of an offer to volunteer as a commissioner, the candidate will receive an invitation for a formal onboarding from the chair/co-chair to occur within 14 days of acceptance.
- ii. The candidate will be onboarded by the chair and co-chair of the commission. During onboarding, the following will be reviewed:
 1. Mission and vision of the commission.
 2. History of the commission.
 3. Organizational hierarch and duties of each committee and officers.
 4. Review of the 2030 vision of the City of Allentown including chapters 2 and 3 and strategic goals of the commission.
 5. Duties and obligations of the commission.
 6. Reporting procedures and submission of reports.
 7. Virtual training of diversity, equity, inclusion, and fair practices available at the local and state level.
 - a. If virtual or pre-recorded trainings are not available, the candidate will receive a schedule of in-person trainings or future dates. Candidates will select potential dates of attendance. A record of trainings attended will be maintained in commissioners' volunteer folders.

8. Leadership, assertive communication, and conflict resolution.
 9. Roberts Rules of Order and voting procedures.
 10. Committee and mentor assignment.
 - a. Prospective candidates will be assigned to a mentor within the commission that will offer professional development education within the commission and aid as a source of support for the first 6-8 months.
 11. Signed letter attesting to knowledge of their duties and obligations and agreement for a two-year appointment
- III. Aim 4. To create 4-5 standing programs and initiatives that targets the following (a) education about diversity, (6) best practices to promote and increase equity in accessing and obtaining housing, employment and fair wages, access and engagement in healthcare services, and quality education tailored to address discriminatory and predatory practices in education that impacts marginalized communities.
- a. The Outreach Committee will create 4-5 standing programs. The programs will occur one per quarter and can be an educational event or an event dedicated to advocacy. One program **MUST** be dedicated to each of the following: housing, employment, and public accommodations. Education and advocacy are defined as follows:
 - i. **Education:** An educational event is defined as an event designed to educate residents, stakeholders or organizations, or both on diversity, equity, or inclusive practices in housing, employment, or public accommodations.
 - ii. **Advocacy:** An advocacy event is defined as event designed to engage in service in the community. These events will be created and facilitated by the Human Relations Commission independently and are specific to housing, employment, or public accommodations, and will serve residents or stakeholders or organization, or both in the community.
 - iii. ***Special Topics/Training (advocacy for protected classes):** The commission will identify other opportunities for education and advocacy in the community for marginalized persons and will be able to create and implement an educational or advocacy-focused project targeting residents, stakeholders or organizations, or both. Examples can include but are not limited to re-entry, racial justice, LGBTQAI+, restorative justice, mental and emotional disabilities, behavioral health, opioid crisis, migration and refugee populations, maternal health, total health and wellness, COVID-19 screening and vaccination, special education, employment and vocational training for at-risk youth, music and arts, etc.
 - iv. **Neighborhood Forums (bi-monthly)**
 - v. **Interdisciplinary Stakeholder Meetings (quarterly)**
- IV. Aim 5. To amend current articles to align with changes in the economic and political climate to promote engagement and consistent participation in meeting all expectations identified in the ordinances.
- a. Article II: Commissioners
 - i. 5. Current Language: “A majority of the appointed Commissioners in office shall be necessary to constitute a quorum for the transaction of

business, and the acts of a majority of the Commissioners present at a meeting at which a quorum is present shall be the acts of the Commission.” (pp. 77)

1. Amendment: “A majority of the appointed Commissioners in office shall be necessary to constitute a quorum for the transaction of business, and the acts of a majority of the Commissioners present at a meeting at which a quorum is present shall be the acts of the Commission. **Should commissioners be unable to attend the meeting resulting in quorum not being met, the chair and co-chair will make reasonable accommodations to increase participation and establish quorum for the purpose of voting, including but not limited to teleconference and video conference using approved software. Reasonable accommodation must be requested in writing within 72 hours of the meeting unless there is an emergency circumstance.”**
- b. Article IV: Officers
- i. **5 (Addendum): “The treasurer shall attend all sessions of the Commission and act as a liaison between the Human Relations Commission and the Department of Finance. He/she/they/them will record and maintain financial records of all transactions as it pertains to the commission’s activities and oversight of all financial accounts. He/she/they/them will be responsible for receiving and submitting all requests for invoices, documenting approval or rejection of invoices and activities, and advising of best practices for finance management to increase the integrity of the all committees; shall perform light duties for all committees of the Commission when required.” (pp. 78)**
 - ii. 4-5. Current Language: “After two (2) consecutive, unexcused absences or any combination of five (5) excused and unexcused consecutive absences from meetings of the Commission, a member will be notified by the Chair of the Commission, in writing, that his/her absence at one more Commission meeting shall constitute his or her resignation from the Commission.” (pp. 76-77)
 1. Amendment: “After two (2) consecutive, unexcused absences or any combination of five (5) excused and unexcused consecutive absences from meetings of the Commission, a member will be notified by the Chair of the Commission, in writing, that his/her absence at one more Commission meeting shall constitute his or her resignation from the Commission. **The chair and co-chair shall inform the commission of the notice to be submitted to the commissioner and document the total absences on the current minutes. The chair and co-chair shall submit in writing, a notice to the commissioner at the address provided on the application and the commissioner’s residence. This letter shall be sent via certified mail to ensure that receipt is confirmed. The date and time that the notice is sent and received will be documented in the minutes for the public record. The chair and co-chair shall notify the Mayor’s**

Office of the resignation of a commissioner and maintain record of the reason to ensure alignment with the current articles and to promote transparency and integrity within the commission. Commissioners shall abide by all articles with regards to termination of a commissioner.”

2. Under no circumstances will commissioners encourage, coerce, or recommend that commissioners be terminated or removed from their appointed position without due process including a final review of recommendations by the designee of the Mayor’s Office to ensure compliance with current articles and ethical guidelines. Formal complaints regarding engagement, attendance, or behavior that is deemed unethical, illegal, or impacts the function of the commission shall be submitted to the chair and co-chair in writing for review. If the grievance is unable to be resolved by the commission, the grievance will be submitted to the designee of the mayor’s office for further review up to and including a formal hearing or termination from one’s position as a commissioner.” (pp. 76-77)

Strategic Plan January 1st, 2023-December 31st, 2023

The purpose of the strategic plan for the upcoming fiscal year is to **develop strategic partnerships with stakeholders, increase community presence, and to educate the general public on outcomes pertaining to cases of discrimination to make recommendations to city officials that will establish laws and regulations that promote equity and inclusive practices for all persons.** The recommendations proposed are based on the ordinances outlined in Article 181.07.

Aims

3. To **initiate, receive, investigate and pass upon complaints** charging unlawful discriminatory practices in violation of Sections 181.03, 181.04, 181.05, 181.06 taking place within the City limits of Allentown.
4. To **study the problems of discrimination** and foster, through community effort or otherwise, good will among the groups and elements of the population of the city;
5. To **issue such publications and such results of investigations and research** as, in its judgement, will tend to promote good will and minimize or eliminate discrimination.

Goals and Objectives

3. To **initiate, receive, investigate and pass upon complaints** charging unlawful discriminatory practices in violation of Sections 181.03, 181.04, 181.05, 181.06 taking place within the City limits of Allentown.
 - a. The Investigations Committee will attempt to establish a relationship with the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission.
 - i. The committee will attempt to establish a relationship with the Director Enforcement, Director of Fair Housing and Commercial Property,

- and the Director of Policy and Intergovernmental Affairs and Director of Mediation to advise on complaints that would benefit from review at the state level.
- ii. The committee will collaborate with the solicitor's office to review **workshare agreement** accepted and voted on in June 2016.
 1. The committee will receive education on policies and procedures regarding the process of escalating reports or collaborating with the state.
 2. The committee will identify criteria that cases must meet to be reviewed at the state level.
 3. The committee will identify their role of reviewing and publishing the outcome of cases escalated to the state level.
 4. The committee will establish best practices for future review of similar cases reviewed by the state and vote upon procedures to be used when reviewing all cases.
 - b. The Investigations Committee will attempt to maintain a licensed civil rights and litigation attorney on the committee to exercise oversight of review procedures for all cases of discrimination in partnership with the Human Relations Investigator.
 - i. The committee will collaborate with the Human Relations Investigator to review current procedures for review of cases of discrimination.
 - ii. If no procedures or protocol has been established, the investigator, in partnership with the attorney, will establish a protocol for review of all cases including criteria used to establish **prime facie**.
 - iii. The attorney will collaborate with the investigator and committee to create interview protocols for all cases of discrimination, with general questions for all cases and specific questions based on the type of alleged discrimination upon review of all cases and identification of patterns or themes that emerge.
 - iv. The attorney will be present during interviews with plaintiffs to advise of best practices and limit the probability of leading questions that could elicit a given response from the client.
 - v. The committee will maintain record of all communication between all parties and report any

- barriers with meeting the deadlines for review as established in the investigation procedures.
- vi. The attorney will collaborate with the investigator to **create a report template that will be submitted annually to council as part of the annual report submitted by the chair.**
4. **To study the problems of discrimination** and foster, through community effort or otherwise, good will among the groups and elements of the population of the city;
- a. The Human Relations Commission will attempt to establish a partnership with Muhlenberg College OR Cedar Crest College in the city of Allentown. This relation was established by the commission as stated in the report sent to council in 2016.
 - i. The Investigations Committee will collaborate with the university to establish a research protocol that uses qualitative measures and mixed methods (to be determined) to study discrimination in the city of Allentown.
 - ii. The committee will collaborate with the university to conduct a meta-analysis to explore trends in discrimination in the city using prior data from the past 1-2 decades.
 - iii. The committee will collaborate with the university to create an operating budget to fund the following: developing the study protocols, marketing and advertising, recruitment, participant incentives (if approved by the Institutional Review Board), transportation, location and occupancy to conduct the study, technology and recording software, data transcription and analysis software, transcription services, and developing and disseminating reports.
 - iv. The committee will collaborate with the solicitor's office to establish a memorandum of understanding to detail the scope of the relationship, duties and obligations of each party, rights and responsibilities and ownership of the research, and terms of termination.
 - v. ***The committee will identify government, state, and local funding in the form of grants and foundational grants to fund research efforts and program development based on research findings.**
 - b. The commission will establish partnership strategic partnerships with stakeholders and residents to host open

forums pertaining to discrimination including education and advocacy efforts.

- i. The commission will attempt to partner with the following stakeholders:
 1. NAACP Allentown
 2. United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley
 3. Lehigh Valley Community Foundation
 4. Jewish Federation of the Lehigh Valley
 5. Lehigh Valley Arts Council
 6. Hispanic American Organization
 7. Lehigh County Children & Youth
 8. Jewish Family Service of the Lehigh Valley
 9. The 912 Project of the Lehigh Valley
 10. The Literacy Center
 11. YWCA Allentown/The Perfect Fit for Working Women
 12. Lehigh County Human Services Department
 13. Center for Humanistic Change
 14. Casa Guadalupe Center
 15. Lehigh Valley Planning Commission
 16. The Arc of Lehigh & Northampton Counties
 17. PA CareerLink Lehigh Valley
 18. Bradbury-Sullivan LGBT Community Center
 19. Trapani Law Firm
 20. Crosson Richetti & Daigle Family Law
 21. Lehigh County District Attorney
 22. Lehigh County Public Defender
 23. Allentown Housing Authority
 24. Black Heritage Association of Lehigh Valley
 25. *Organization of Asian Americans
 26. American Civil Liberties Union ACLU Greater Lehigh Valley (Allentown) Chapter
 27. Polish Americans Citizens Society
 28. Museum of Indian Culture
 29. Allentown Police Department
- ii. The commission will invite a representative from each organization on a rotating basis to attend monthly meetings that are open to the public and will allocate time (to be determined by the commission) for each party to present about their activities, initiatives, advocacy efforts, current strategies to reduce discrimination, and service.

- iii. The commission will maintain an organizational calendar of events held by stakeholders.
 1. The outreach committee will create a calendar a month in advance prior to the 1st with ALL activities that align with our ordinances.
 2. The outreach committee will maintain an electronic roster of volunteer opportunities for commissioners to attend and be present at events held by stakeholders.
 3. The outreach committee will maintain information regarding the date, time, attendance requirements, application for vendors (if applicable), costs, duration, and persons that will be assigned prior to the event.
 4. The commission will attempt to have two commissioners and one student present at each event on behalf of HRC to foster relationships and promote civic engagement.
- c. The commission will host quarterly interdisciplinary meetings with community stakeholders that are available to explore current efforts to eradicate discrimination, promote equity and just practices, and inclusivity for all persons.
 - i. The commission will host an open forum for all parties to converse about current challenges in eradicating discrimination.
 - ii. The commission will collaborate with stakeholders to identify gaps in knowledge and practice about eradicating discrimination.
 - iii. The commission will engage stakeholders in exploring changes to current policies and practices to promote what is just and ensure all persons are treated equally and that current practices are inclusive and celebratory of individual differences, in particular, for marginalized and disenfranchised groups.
 - iv. The commission will work in collaboration with these organizations to publish literature about joint efforts in the city of Allentown to serve residents as uphold the ordinances established.
- d. The commission will obtain permission to create neighborhood tasks forces in each section of the city to

foster engagement and relationships with community members and accessibility.

- i. The commission will use the 2030 vision to identify at-risk sections of the city based on demographics and previous research.
 - ii. The commission will collaborate to assign 2-3 commissioners per section of the city.
 - iii. The commission will develop a focus group to facilitate every two months with residents and stakeholders in the community regarding discrimination.
 1. These forums will include education, current events, state legislature, city legislature, advocacy efforts, complaints, resolutions (determined by the group of attendees), actions, and follow-up.
 - iv. The commissioners will submit a report every two month to the chair for further review to incorporate into the research study on discrimination in the city of Allentown.
 - v. The commissioners will collaborate to identify strategies to create dialogue between residents and organizations/companies and stakeholders to effectively resolve conflict and foster working relationships and trust.
5. **To issue such publications and such results of investigations and research** as, in its judgement, will tend to promote good will and minimize or eliminate discrimination.
- a. The Human Relations Investigator will collaborate with the attorney (if available) on the commission to consolidate the following information: quantity of complaints, categories of discrimination, racial/demographic data, age, area of residence, and reason for the complaint. The investigations committee will draft a report using the template developed and approved to include all pertinent information including outcomes and recommendations for intervention and prevention.
 - b. The Human Relations Commission will consult with the Mayor's Office and receive approval to publish research studies and outcomes in the **International Journal of Discrimination and the Law** in partnership with the select university.
 - c. The Human Relations Commission will request approval to submit a report to the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission. The frequency of which they desire a report would be determined by both parties.

Budget

The budget for the remaining time of the current fiscal year and 2022-2023 will be submitted in an spreadsheet

END