



Human Relations Commission FY2026-27 Workplan

Staff Liaison: Sophie Pigman, Human Services Manager
Lead Department: City Manager

About the Commission

This updated workplan covers the calendar year 2026 (fiscal years 2026-27) for the [Human Relations Commission \(HRC\)](#). The Commission is composed of 7 members who are residents of Palo Alto. Terms are for 3 years and commence on November 1. See Palo Alto Municipal Code (PAMC) Sections [2.16](#) and [2.22](#).

Current Commissioners

- Michelle Kraus (Chair)
- Katie Causey (Vice Chair)
- Salwa Ansari
- Don Barr
- Amy Hsieh
- Sridhar Karnam
- Mary Kate Stimmler

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: Municipal 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
April 2024-December 2025**

Goal #1 – Core Responsibilities: Discussed the findings of the Human Services Needs Assessment and determined the Priority of Needs for the FY2026-27 Human Services Resource Allocation Process (HSRAP), (October 2024). Reviewed and made funding recommendations to Council for 21 two-year HSRAP grants totaling \$941,735 to fund critical needs in the community for FY 2026-27 (March and April 2025). A subcommittee of HRC commissioners and city staff served as the review committee for the Emerging Needs Fund. In Fiscal Year 2025 (July 2024-June 2025), a total of 6 grants totaling \$50,000 was approved. Reviewed and made funding recommendations to the Finance Committee for 8 grants totaling \$480,000 as part of the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Funding program for Fiscal Year 2025-26 (May 2025). Hosted the Planning and Development Department’s public hearing on the summary of fiscal year 2024-25 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program Accomplishments and review of the draft Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER), (September 2025). Commission members served as liaison to the following organizations and committees: Palo Alto Police Department, Avenidas, Palo Alto Mediation Program, Project Safety Net, and the R.V. Dweller Collaborative.

Goal #2 – Inclusion & Belonging: Conducted a Listening Session with local faith leaders to better understand their needs and the communities they serve (June 2024). Approved HRC support of the Solidarity Celebration Picnic to Commemorate Juneteenth and Eid-UI-Adha (June 2024). Made recommendations for actions stemming from the 2023 Older Adults Learning Series (September 2024). Reviewed and discussed the City Clerk’s Office proposed 2025 City Council Regular Meeting Schedule and the draft citywide list of holidays and dates of significance (October 2024). Approved support for the Palo Alto Annual Community Ramadan Iftar dinner (February 2025). Adopted a policy on public requests for HRC support (June 2025). Reviewed the training overview for the religious tolerance training to be offered to City staff, boards/commissions, and the City Council (July 2025). Reviewed and discussed the City Clerk’s Office proposed 2026 City Council Regular Meeting Schedule and the citywide dates of significance list (October 2025). Approved support for the Mitchell Park Library “Know Your Rights: Information for the Immigrant Community” program (November 2025). Approved a procedure for city staff to request HRC support for internal city events (November 2025).

Goal #3 - Public Safety: Conducted the “Creating a Safer Community: Understanding and Defining Hate Crimes” event for the public (October 2024). Approved a resolution stating that the HRC condemns all hate crimes and hate incidents (November 2024). Conducted a “Fraud Prevention” event for the public (April 2025). Conducted a luncheon for local faith leaders to discuss safety concerns and ask questions to the Palo Alto Police Department Chief and Assistant Chief (May 2025).

Goal #4 – Public Health: Provided feedback on the draft Safe Streets for All (SS4A) Safety Action Plan from the Office of Transportation (January 2025).

Goal #5 – Housing, Economic Justice and Development: Hosted the Planning and Development Department’s public hearing for the initial public discussion of Fair Change Housing Policy approaches regarding use of criminal history information in Palo Alto rental housing decisions (October 2024). Conducted the “Know Your Rights: Information for Palo Alto’s Immigrant Community” event for the public (February 2025). Conducted a learning session to hear from Early Childhood Education (ECE) providers and professionals on the current childcare landscape locally and regionally (May 2025). Presentation by the City Manager’s Office on the Local Housing and Homelessness Services Gap Analysis Report. Provided input relating to housing and services for the unhoused as feedback to the City Council (June 2025). Conducted a Learning Session on alternative pathways to home ownership (September 2025). Presentation by the Utilities Department on City of Palo Alto Utilities (CPAU) residential programs and service offerings (October 2025). Presentation by Amy Everitt, President of the Golden State Opportunity and Sally Lieber, Vice Chair of the California State Board of Equalization on the Federal and California Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and how it may provide cash support to qualifying unhoused, low-income, or seniors (November 2025). Presentation by the Palo Alto Mediation Program staff and Mediation Board co-chairs on their programs and services (November 2025).

Goal #6 – Climate Change: Presentation by Heart and Home Collaborative and City staff on City services and resources for the unhoused during periods of inclement and cold weather, including warming centers (November 2024).

Goal #7 – Learning Sessions (items are also listed under the goals above): Conducted a learning session to hear from Early Childhood Education (ECE) providers and professionals on the current childcare landscape locally and regionally (HEJD, May 2025). Conducted a learning session on alternative pathways to home ownership (HEJD, September 2025).

Goal #8 – Emerging Issues: Received an update on the Public Art Program King Artist Residency (May 2025). Presentation by the Palo Alto Library staff on library services for the community (September 2025). Presentation from local providers on programs and services addressing food insecurity in Palo Alto (December 2025)

<p>GOAL 1: Core Responsibilities</p>	<p>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 FY28 funding cycle.</p> <p>Liaison with partner agencies. Each commissioner is assigned to at least one agency to promote learning and engagement. The partner agencies are Avenidas, Palo Alto Police Department, Project Safety Net, Project Sentinel (Palo Alto Mediation Program), and the R.V. Dweller Service Provider Meeting.</p> <p>Rapid Response – Commission will identify emerging issues in the community, prioritize those that need further attention and elevate 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.</p>			
BENEFICIAL IMPACTS	TIMELINE	RESOURCES NEEDED	MEASURE OF SUCCESS	STATE MANDATED / LOCAL LAW / COUNCIL-APPROVED
<p>The funding programs provide human services organizations with essential monetary support to serve vulnerable and underserved residents of Palo Alto.</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Ad hoc HRC subcommittee and staff time for the funding decisions.</p> <p>Moderate level of staff and ad hoc subcommittee time.</p>	<p>During each applicable funding cycle, HRC produces funding recommendations to City Council for HSRAP, CDBG, and the Emerging Needs Fund.</p> <p>Liaisons to a partner agency provide at least one update quarterly to the Commission summarizing engagement with the assigned agency, including identified needs, challenges, and opportunities relevant to the Commission’s work.</p> <p>When emergent human relations concerns arise, HRC leadership initiates timely outreach, as appropriate, to impacted community leaders or organizations for the purpose of listening, expressing support, and understanding community-identified concerns. Information gathered is used to inform Commission awareness and, when appropriate, future agenda items or referrals.</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>HIGH PRIORITY</p>		<p>LOWER PRIORITY</p>		<p>COUNCIL-DIRECTED POLICY UPDATE</p>
<p>Provide funding recommendations for HSRAP, CDBG and the Emerging Needs Fund as needed.</p> <p>Meet with partner agencies on a regular and ongoing basis.</p> <p>Respond to emerging issues.</p>	<p>Review and provide feedback on the HSRAP application, award process, and metrics of success.</p>		<p>N/A</p>	

GOAL 2: Community Mental Health	Support current efforts to address mental health issues in the community with a focus on youth, LGBTQ+, veterans and unhoused individuals. Learning session on youth mental health and suicide prevention by Project Safety Net, allcove Palo Alto, and other pertinent agencies.			
BENEFICIAL IMPACTS	TIMELINE	RESOURCES NEEDED	MEASURE OF SUCCESS	STATE MANDATED / LOCAL LAW / COUNCIL-APPROVED
Increase community awareness of the mental health challenges faced by youth, adults and veterans; and the services available to them and their families. Foster an ongoing community dialogue on how to prevent suicides and overdoses.	Spring-Summer 2026	Ad hoc HRC subcommittee and staff time Moderate level of staff and ad hoc subcommittee time.	Coordinate with city stakeholders and other non-government organizations to amplify their workshops, outreach, and messaging.	N/A
HIGH PRIORITY		LOWER PRIORITY		COUNCIL-DIRECTED POLICY UPDATE
Conduct the learning session with Project Safety Net, allcove Palo Alto, and other youth mental health service providers.		Identify objectives to address mental health issues for LGBTQ+, veterans, and unhoused individuals.		N/A

<p>GOAL 3: Community Safety</p>	<p>Explore and implement avenues to decrease incidences of crimes in the community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to convene community presentations on fraud prevention. • Continue to convene faith leader meetings on community safety. <p>Provide a space for residents to voice their concerns about the safety conditions in their neighborhood, with an emphasis on areas around schools, and identify ways the HRC can address those concerns.</p> <p>Explore ways in which climate change may disproportionately affect specific populations in the community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning session from the Palo Alto Fire Department, and other relevant city departments, about current environmental disaster mitigation workshops. • Identify ways to mitigate the impacts of environmental disasters on vulnerable populations. <p>AI for Belonging - a 'transparency baseline' for city-used algorithms, and a 'Procurement Guardrail' policy to ensure city vendors meet our equity standards.</p>			
BENEFICIAL IMPACTS	TIMELINE	RESOURCES NEEDED	MEASURE OF SUCCESS	STATE MANDATED / LOCAL LAW / COUNCIL-APPROVED
<p>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.</p> <p>Climate awareness and changes in habits help everyone thrive and special attention should be paid to vulnerable populations.</p>	<p>Summer-Fall 2026</p>	<p>Ad hoc subcommittee and staff time. Space, marketing, and event budget for educational programming.</p> <p>High level of staff and ad hoc subcommittee time.</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>HIGH PRIORITY</p>		<p>LOWER PRIORITY</p>		<p>COUNCIL-DIRECTED POLICY UPDATE</p>
<p>Convene community presentations on fraud prevention.</p> <p>Convene faith leader meetings on community safety.</p> <p>Learning session about current environmental disaster mitigation workshops.</p>		<p>Providing a space for residents to voice concerns about safety conditions in their neighborhoods.</p> <p>AI for Belonging</p>		<p>N/A</p>

<p>GOAL 4: Community Engagement</p>	<p>Foster a sense of inclusion, belonging, and civic engagement in the community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite Palo Alto youth advocates to present to the Human Relations Commission regarding their proposed initiative to lower the voting age to 16 in City of Palo Alto elections. • Host an LGBTQ+ youth and allies leadership day at City Hall showing LGBTQ+ youth and allies not only different resources, but different paths in public service they can take. • Convene one public input/brainstorming session with local LGBTQ+ nonprofits and advocates to assess what type of pride event the community is interested in, what nonprofits would have capacity to support, what would be needed to make that a reality. • Implement an annual community nonprofit service provider convening. • Identify ways to increase community engagement with the HRC, both during and between meetings. • Respond to the referral from the Policy and Services Committee (12/9/25) to the HRC for consideration of strategies and policies to implement the City's CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women) ordinance, contingent upon Council's adoption of the ordinance. The Policy and Services Committee requests both immediate and long-term recommendations. 			
BENEFICIAL IMPACTS	TIMELINE	RESOURCES NEEDED	MEASURE OF SUCCESS	STATE MANDATED / LOCAL LAW / COUNCIL-APPROVED
<p>All individuals who live, work or worship in Palo Alto have the right to feel included and valued as members of the community.</p> <p>By adopting a CEDAW ordinance, the City provides a legal framework for the protection and support of women in the community.</p>	<p>Summer-Fall CEDAW: Spring-Summer 2026. Present recommendations by November 2026.</p>	<p>Ad hoc subcommittee and staff time. Space and marketing for programming.</p> <p>Moderate level of staff and ad hoc subcommittee time.</p>	<p>Increased community awareness and communications, both online and offline; increased workshops, and learning sessions.</p> <p>CEDAW: Forward recommendations to the City Council.</p>	<p>N/A</p>
HIGH PRIORITY		LOWER PRIORITY		COUNCIL-DIRECTED POLICY UPDATE
<p>CEDAW: Develop strategies and policies to present to Council.</p> <p>Invite Palo Alto youth advocates to present to the Human Relations Commission regarding their proposed initiative to lower the voting age to 16 in City of Palo Alto elections.</p> <p>Host an LGBTQ+ youth and allies leadership day at City Hall showing LGBTQ+ youth and allies not only different resources, but different paths in public service they can take.</p> <p>Convene one public input/brainstorming session with local LGBTQ+ nonprofits and advocates to assess what type of pride event the community is interested in, what nonprofits would have capacity to support, what would be needed to make that a reality.</p> <p>Implement an annual community nonprofit service provider convening.</p>		<p>Identify ways to increase community engagement with the HRC, both during and between meetings.</p>		<p>CEDAW: Council-Directed</p>

GOAL 5: Housing, Economic Recovery and Development (HERD)	Housing, Economic Recovery and Development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to identify roles the HRC can play to provide an equity perspective in ongoing housing initiatives such as meeting housing element goals, Stanford GUP, and the potential shift from the downtown housing advisory group to an SB79 advisory group. • Hold a joint meeting with the Planning and Transportation Commission (PTC) if ADU “condoization” comes forward. • Continue to support efforts for increased renter protections and access to affordable housing, with a particular focus on seniors. 			
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.	HRC gives input on relevant housing initiatives that arise.	N/A
HIGH PRIORITY		LOWER PRIORITY		COUNCIL-DIRECTED POLICY UPDATE
Research and identify housing programs that could best address equity and access needs in the community (cross sectional senior, families, low income.). Continue to support efforts for increase renter protections and access to affordable housing, with a focus on seniors.		Joint meeting with the Planning and Transportation Commission (PTC)		N/A

2026 HRC Liaisons and Subcommittees

Agency	Commissioner	Commissioner
Avenidas	Barr	Hsieh
Palo Alto Mediation Program/Project Sentinel	Stimmler	Causey
Police Department	Causey	Kraus
Project Safety Net	Ansari	Karnam
R.V. Dweller Meeting	Kraus	Barr

Core Responsibilities	Commissioner	Commissioner	Commissioner
HSRAP	Ansari	Karnam	Kraus
CDBG	Barr	Causey	
Emerging Needs Fund	Hsieh	Stimmler	Kraus

Council Member	Commissioner
Burt	Ansari
Lauing	Stimmler
Lu	Karnam
Lythcott-Haims	Hsieh
Reckdahl	Barr
Stone, Vice Mayor	Causey
Veenker, Mayor	Kraus

Subcommittees	Commissioner	Commissioner	Commissioner
Community Mental Health	Karnam	Ansari	
Community Safety	Kraus	Barr	Karnam
Community Engagement	Ansari	Stimmler	
Housing, Economic Recovery and Development (HERD)	Barr	Causey	Kraus
CEDAW	Causey	Stimmler	