



Legislation Text

File #: 23-1189, **Version:** 1

Meeting Date: May 24, 2023

To: Members of the Housing & Redevelopment Authority

From: Melissa Hanson, Housing Coordinator
Claudia Garcia, Spanish Interpreter, Human Rights Commission Staff Liaison

Consider the Fair Housing Statement as Recommended by the Joint Subcommittee of the Housing and Redevelopment Authority and Human Rights Commission for the City of Northfield.

Action Requested:

Staff recommends the Human Rights Commission motion approval and support for the recommended Fair Housing Statement for the City of Northfield.

Summary Report:

The Human Rights Commission (HRC) and Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) have declared, through resolution, April 2021 and April 2022 as Fair Housing Month, to align with National Fair Housing Month efforts. Staff recommends that the City of Northfield establish and adopt a Fair Housing Statement to affirmatively further fair housing in the City of Northfield. Adopting a Fair Housing Statement would replace the annual requirement to adopt a resolution stating that the city affirmatively furthers fair housing through its use of Federal Housing and Urban Development Department (HUD) Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds received through the Dakota County Community Development Agency (Dakota CDA). The first step to establishing a fair housing policy is to establish a Fair Housing Statement. Attached to this report is the recommended statement (Att. 1).

Staff is working with the City Communications Department to create a Fair Housing Page on the City website that will be readily accessible in addition to links and local resources. Att. 2 and Att. 3 are links to examples of how a Fair Housing Page could look like. Att. 4 is the proposed webpage content.

On April 11, 1968, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1968, which was meant as a follow-up to the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The 1968 Act expanded on previous acts and prohibited discrimination concerning the sale, rental, and financing of housing based on race, religion, national origin, sex, (and as amended) handicap and family status. Title VIII of the Act is also known as the Fair Housing Act (of 1968).

The Federal Fair Housing Act prohibits discrimination in housing because of:

- Race
- Color
- National Origin
- Religion

- Sex (including gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, and sexual harassment)
- Familial Status (marital status)
- Disability

The Minnesota Human Rights Act, or MHRA, is the state’s civil rights statute. Analogous to the federal Fair Housing Act, it has protections against discrimination in public and private housing, as well as lending and public accommodations. However, the MHRA adds additional protections for residents of Minnesota in a number of important ways. First, it adds the following additional protected classes:

- Status with Regard to Public Assistance
- Creed

It also extends the reach of the law to housing providers of properties not covered by the Federal Fair Housing Act, such as owner-occupied fourplexes and, in some cases, those who rent out rooms in their home.

Over the course of 54 years, the law has made a difference in the lives of countless families and communities. However, the truth of the matter is that we have not fully achieved the goals of the Federal Fair Housing Act.

Many of our neighborhoods remain as segregated today as they were in the middle of the 20th century, and the racial wealth gap is wider now than it was when the Federal Fair Housing Act was passed. It is our shared duty to work together to ensure that every person has equitable access to all of the opportunities our community provides and that no one faces barriers to getting a good education, having quality health care, eating healthy food, or finding stable employment that allows their family to thrive solely because of where they live. The COVID-19 pandemic has further highlighted and exacerbated the lack of safe, affordable places to live for far too many people in America. In fact, unsheltered homelessness increased by 1.5 percent between 2020 and 2022, nationwide.

As a community, we have committed to doing all we can to end unlawful housing discrimination and advance equity for all underserved populations, and fulfill the full promise of the Federal Fair Housing Act.

Alternative Options:

The HRA could choose not to review and recommend a Fair Housing Policy for adoption by the Northfield City Council. The City Council will then be required to continue to affirm through annual resolution support for furthering fair housing in order to maintain eligibility to receive CDBG funds from HUD through the CDA.

Financial Impacts:

N/A

Tentative Timeline:

March 14, 2023- subcommittee met, determined one meeting sufficed

April 6, 2023- HRA meeting, recommend approval to Council

May 24, 2023- HRC meeting, recommend approval to Council

June 6, 2023- City Council Meeting