

Community Resources and Human Affairs

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http://www.tampagov.net/dept_community_human_affairs/

Key Public Service Areas

Community Resources and Human Affairs includes Community Affairs, Neighborhood Liaison, and the Women and Minority Business Enterprise Program. These sections work to plan, administer, and coordinate programs, projects and activities to promote & maintain good relations among citizens of Tampa.

Scope of Department Operations

The Community Resources and Human Affairs Department has 33 employees and an annual budget of \$2 million. Community Affairs investigates discrimination complaints in the areas of employment, housing, and public accommodations. It also organized the Mayor's Youth Advisory Group and the Community Awareness and Action Team. WMBE Program facilitates access to City contracts by women and minority businesses. The Neighborhood Liaison Office works with neighborhood groups, promotes neighborhood programs and handles citizen complaints and inquiries.

Current Initiatives

- Conducting Law Enforcement/Community Relations Workshops
- Managing the Fair Housing Audit Program
- Handling Discrimination Complaints
- Publishing the Neighborhood Newsletter
- Maintaining the WMBE/SBE Directory

Critical Issues and Areas of Concern

- EEOC Program Improvements
- Public Accommodations Discrimination
- Assistant City Attorney Travel/Training
- Referral Clearinghouse for Citizen Complaints
- Interdepartmental Coordination
- Comprehensive Disparity Study
- Computer Software Development
- Solicitation of WMBEs and SBEs
- Implementation of Executive Orders
- Interdepartmental Coordination
- City Sponsored Bond Program
- Neighborhood Grants Program
- Neighborhood Liaison - Police Protection
- More Proactive Neighborhood Approach
- Code Enforcement
- Transportation
- Neighborhood Team Approach
- Improve Departmental Coordination

Status Report

EEO Program Expansion. The Department currently offers Fair Housing Testing (1990) and Education & Outreach for the City's Fair Housing Program. In order to bring the Equal Employment Opportunity Program in concert with the activities of the Fair Housing Program, the Department would like to initiate both an EEO testing program and an education and outreach campaign. No additional resources would be necessary, however, funds may need to be earmarked in order to identify dedicated funding from the current budget.

Public Accommodations Discrimination. The Office of Human Rights only has the authority to "secure for all individuals within the city the freedom from discrimination . . . in connection with public accommodations, and thereby to promote the interests, rights and privileges of individuals within the city." The office has no public accommodations discrimination complaint enforcement power. Therefore, citizens who feel their rights have been violated under this ordinance must seek remedy, "instituted by the person aggrieved in a court of competent jurisdiction." After which, "the city attorney may intervene in such civil action." The Department of Community Affairs' Office of Human Rights requests that the City's Human Rights Ordinance, Article III. Discrimination in Public Accommodations (No. 92-147,1, Adopted September 10, 1992, as amended) be amended to give the Department with enforcement powers for public accommodations discrimination.

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Assistant City Attorney Travel/Training. Per the City's contract with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Fair Housing Division, the City's legal representation is required to attend quarterly training. The training is paid for by either EEOC or HUD and currently attended by administrative and investigative staff of the Department of Community Affairs. Therefore, the Department is requesting that the City's legal department, require the Assistant City Attorney assigned to the Department of Community Affairs be made available

Referral Clearinghouse for Citizens Complaints. The Department of Community Affairs could better serve residents of the City of Tampa by being part of a Referral Clearinghouse for citizen complaints. The Community Services Office could coordinate with MIS, the Neighborhood Improvement Division, and other City offices to make appropriate referrals to citizens who may have a variety of needs. Currently, there is no mechanism to serve this need.

Interdepartmental Coordination. Overseeing Fair Housing, American's with Disabilities, and Equal Employment Opportunity the Department of Community Affairs houses information that is relevant to numerous department throughout the City. In an effort to better implement these programs, disseminate information throughout the City, and provide training on critical program issues, the Department feels there is a need for greater interdepartmental coordination. As there are changes in the laws governing these programs, the Department needs to coordinate with staff throughout the City to better articulate these changes and improve overall program administration throughout the City of Tampa.

Comprehensive Disparity Study. The WMBE current participation goals are 25% Construction; 14% Professional Services; and 4% Goods And Non-Professional Services. These goals have not changed since March 1991. Therefore, a "Comprehensive Disparity Study" should be conducted immediately to determine whether the existing goals (12 years old) are appropriate. Furthermore, it is important to establish whether a race and gender conscious program is still warranted in its present form. The study should be done in a deliberate and timely manner to understand the status of the WMBE Program. Executive Order 98-2 should continue in its current form until a comprehensive disparity study is completed.

Computer Software Development. Executive Order 98-2 requires WMBE participation figures, as recorded in the City's financial system, be included in the WMBE "Annual Report" to the Mayor and City Council. The City should continue development of the necessary software to ensure the WMBE Program will have the ability to access the City's financial system and confirm the statistical validity of the data on WMBE participation. Additionally, the City should continue development of computer software promised by consultant, D.J. Miller & Associates, that gives the City the ability to measure potential disparity in procurement and construction activities; thus, alleviating future disparity studies.

Solicitation of WMBEs and SBEs. The monthly WMBE/SBE Directory lists those companies who have met the City's certification requirements. These firms spend an abundant amount of time and effort preparing and submitting required paperwork to become certified, illustrating their desire to do business with the City. In an effort to coordinate certified firms with business opportunities, the City should create a solicitation process for notifying firms of procurement and construction opportunities that fall within the scope of their operations.

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Status Report (continued)

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Implementation of Executive Orders. On December 18, 2002 the Mayor signed Executive Order 2002-48 enacting the Small Business Enterprise (SBE) Program. This program is race and gender neutral, allowing all small businesses that meet set criteria to participate in the City's procurement and construction activities. The Department is currently implementing the various components of this new program and a reasonable amount of time should be allowed for its full implementation and evaluation. In an effort to continue support for both the WMBE and SBE Programs, the administration should establish policy enforcing the full provisions of Executive Order 98-2 and Executive Order 2002-48 and further supporting the future success of these programs.

Interdepartmental Coordination. The WMBE Office seeks to disseminate relative information to interested parties in relation to CCNA, hard bids, or construction management. Currently, there is minimal departmental coordination to ensure the WMBE Office is informed of city projects that could be fulfilled by eligible WMBEs. Therefore, there is a need to establish a mechanism for better interdepartmental/interprogram coordination.

City Sponsored Bond Program. Section 255.05 (1)(a) of the Florida Statutes allows municipal governments to waive the payment and performance bond requirements on projects having an estimated value of \$200,000 or less. Currently, Hillsborough County has its own bond program based on the bond waiver provisions in the Florida Statutes. The County's SBE Department, together with the approval of the Board of County Commissioners has begun an initiative to persuade the Florida Legislature to raise the bond waiver provision to \$500,000. The City should adopt a City administered bond program to assist WMBEs and SBEs who are financially unable to post the required bond in order to do business with the City. The monies saved would be used towards the purchase of materials and to increase the WMBE and SBE labor forces.

Neighborhood Grants Program. The City should consider developing a Neighborhood Grants Program to support neighborhood activities. This grant is needed to ensure that more than 100-neighborhood organizations formed during Mayor Greco's administration will continue to function. Funding amounts should be developed along with program/eligibility guidelines. [\[CR-46\]](#)

Neighborhood Liaison - Police Protection. There is a need for better coordination between the Police Department and the Neighborhood Liaison's office in order to achieve reduction in response time to emergency calls from the residents. Generally, citizens voice concerns about slow response time from the police department for emergency calls. Some communities are resorting to hiring off duty police officers for better protection. The Neighborhood Liaison does not have a designated police officer that can be contacted to address safety issues affecting our neighborhoods. Improving the coordination between the two departments should help to reduce citizen complaints.

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Code Enforcement. One of the greatest concerns expressed by neighborhood organizations is the need for strong code enforcement and compliance. One option in which to increase the number of code enforcement inspectors is to consider hiring retired police and fire officers as Code Enforcement Officers since law enforcement background is an essential tool for providing efficient service delivery. [\[CR-11\]](#)

More Proactive Neighborhood Approach. Tampa's neighborhoods are becoming well organized and sophisticated in identifying the real issues confronting their communities. With the advent of the Internet, many of the city residents are more aware of the issues in their neighborhoods. Citizen's sometime complain that City Departments are reactionary focused and should be able to work with the neighborhoods in addressing their needs, rather than wait for emergencies. For their part, Department's work programs are most driven by the capital improvements program, state, federal or local mandates, city council requests, citizen complaints or directives from the Mayor's office. These directives leave little time or staff resources in which to provide proactive problem solving. A strategy or coordination mechanism should be developed whereby citizen issues can be effectively responded to by the appropriate department. Additional staffing, if necessary, should also be identified. [\[CR-45\]](#)

Transportation. There is a need to ensure adequate sidewalks and traffic signals are provided that will allow residents to get out of their neighborhoods safely. If careful consideration is given to transportation planning, the needs of the neighborhoods will be met.

Neighborhood Team Approach. Tampa community leaders are advocating for a neighborhood team with a measurable performance. In order for the neighborhood team approach to function, reorganization of the city departments should be taken into consideration. One way to do this is to form a new neighborhood department to carry out the functions related to community planning and neighborhood services. As part of the reorganization effort, city departments should assign a staff that will handle neighborhood issues. The staff assigned to handle this task should have the authority to make decisions. If the city decides to adopt a Neighborhood Team Approach, qualified staff is needed to articulate the needs and issues pertaining to each neighborhood. In addition, the staff must be ready to tackle the issues related to neighborhood plan. An organizational structure, personnel plan and budget should be developed. Thus far, one neighborhood has agreed on a plan (Tampa Heights) since the adoption of a neighborhood planning process. [\[CR- 45 & CR-46\]](#)

Improve Departmental Coordination. Lack of coordination and cooperation among the city departments with the Neighborhood Liaison causes confusion. City departments lack customer service when neighborhood issues are involved. They pass requests to the Neighborhood Liaison office. A clear process needs to be established with clearly defined roles so customer requests can be adequately tracked, responded to and followed upon.

Community Resources and Human Affairs Organization Chart

The Community Resources and Human Affairs Department consists of the Community Affairs, Neighborhood Liaison and Women and Minority Business Enterprise sections.

Community Affairs investigates discrimination complaints in housing, employment, public accommodations, and any other alleged unfair practices. It also conducts Police/Community Relations workshops, Tampa/Hillsborough County Youth Council meetings, Mayor's Youth Advisory Group activities, Community Development Block Grant advisory committee and civic association meetings, Vision and Dental screening and referrals, and related activities.

The **Women and Minority Business Enterprise (W/MBE) Program** facilitates contract opportunities in construction, professional services and goods, and non-professional services for W/MBE firms that are certified to do business with the City of Tampa.

Neighborhood Liaison serves as a point of contact between citizens and the Mayor and City departments and provides information on City services to neighborhoods. The Neighborhood Information Center maintains a list of neighborhood associations within the City and serves as a central information bank for associations by helping them keep informed on topics affecting their neighborhoods. This division also serves as a troubleshooter to resolve citizens concerns.

