



City of Terre Haute
Human Relations Commission

2024 ANNUAL REPORT

Prepared By :

Anne-Therese Ryan

Photo by: Brendan Kearns

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About Us

The Terre Haute Human Relations Commission is comprised of seven (7) appointed individuals. The Mayor has also appointed two individuals to serve in an advisory capacity to bring additional perspectives to the council. The Commission also employs an Executive Director to help carry out the duties of the Commission.

The Commission



Sandy Mutchler
Chair



Dana Simons
Vice-Chair



Uzziah Hutchinson
Secretary



Mike Reed
Commissioner



Nichelle Campbell-Miller
Commissioner



Jeff Trotter
Commissioner



Dee Reed
Commissioner



Katie Lugar
Advisory Member



Justin Sears
Advisory Member



Anne-Therese Ryan
Executive Director

Our Mission

To promote better human relations in Terre Haute and help build a vibrant, thriving, and unified community by working to transform injustice into equity, inaccessibility into opportunity, and intolerance into acceptance and belonging.

Our Vision

We envision a vibrant and safe Terre Haute community where all people have equitable access to opportunities and a strong sense of belonging.



Photo by: Matthew Yonker

Our Values

Strengthening Community: We work against apathy and indifference in our community. We assume responsibility for our collective strength by developing relationships, building diverse and inclusive coalitions, and challenging one another to be our best. We will work to elevate all voices and strengthen voices that are underrepresented.

Fairness and Equity: We value actions that are consistent, impartial and fair. We work against implicit and explicit bias to ensure our community is free from prejudices. We also recognize that we must make appropriate and reasonable accommodations and modifications to ensure all people have equitable and fair experiences.

Accessibility and Opportunity: We believe all people should be able to experience a community where accessibility is at the forefront of all decisions which will enable everyone to have access to what they need. We recognize that we must remove barriers and obstacles that inhibit individuals from enjoying our community. We know that when people have access, they are afforded more opportunities.

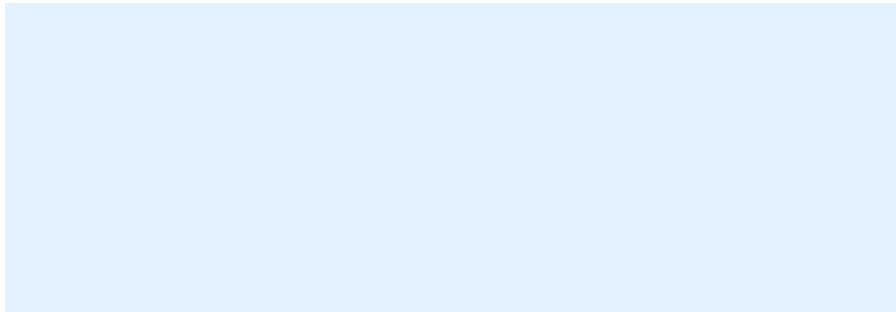
Acceptance and Belonging: We must continue to move beyond tolerance as a goal. We celebrate the splendid diversity of human cultures, identities, and expressions. We seek mutual understanding and the full acceptance and inclusion of everyone in the essential aspects of community life.

Commitment to Learning: We seek to improve ourselves and our work to reflect our ever evolving and changing world. We acknowledge the limitations of our perspectives. We seek different points of view and historical context to evolve our thinking. We operate with curiosity embrace new ideas to innovate and constantly improve.

Respect and Dignity: We value and respect the dignity of all people. We know that if we seek to understand the perspective of others, if we listen intently, try to “walk in their shoes”, our compassion for others will grow.

Practice and Promote Resiliency: We see every challenge as an opportunity to think expansively about solutions. When faced with obstacles, we deepen our resolve, adapt, and persist with optimism. We also help our community and neighbors overcome obstacles when challenges arise.

Letter from the Mayor



Greetings,

The Human Relations Commission is an important asset to our city government. In 2024, they provided valuable services through outreach and educational program, and leading a variety of projects and initiatives aimed at promoting equity in our community.

When I came into office, I promised to create a more transparent government and create new lines of communication to ensure our citizens voices were heard. The Human Relations Commission played an important role in furthering those goals. Led by their Director, the commission held a variety of community engagement and listening sessions which helped my administration learn more about the needs of our community.

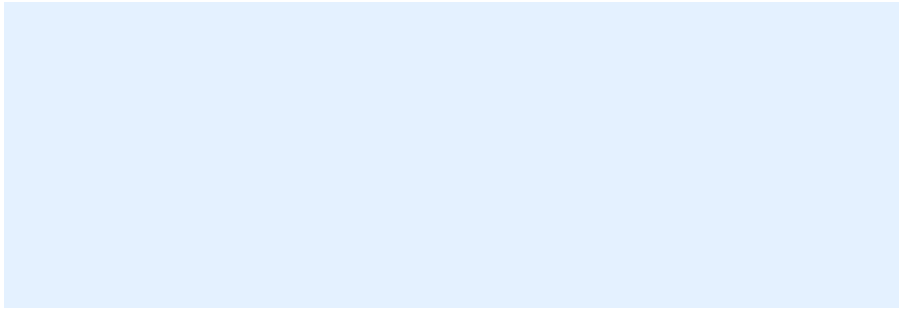
I commend the Human Relations Commission for all of their work outlined in this report. Their focus on building partnerships with the community, celebrating our diverse community, and promoting equity, accessibility, and inclusion are admirable. I will continue to support their work as they help us to build up Terre Haute into a vibrant and thriving community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'BS' or similar initials.

Brandon Sakbun
Mayor of Terre Haute

Letter from the Director



Dear Friends,

As the Executive Director of the Terre Haute Human Relations Commission, I am pleased to share this report outlining the work the commission has been able to accomplish this year. 2024 marks 25 years of the Human Relations Commission, and I have been honored to serve as the Executive Director as we have reached this important milestone.

After several years of inconsistent staffing, the commission focused heavily on redefining our role in the community. We did this through reigniting previous partnerships, listening to the community, and building coalition with individuals and organizations also focused on promoting equity, accessibility, and inclusion in Terre Haute.

We have accomplished much in just one year and I am honored to have a wonderful group of commissioners who have helped lead and support the projects outlined in this report. I am proud of the work we have done so far and I am excited to continue building a more vibrant, thriving, and unified Terre Haute.

Respectfully,

Anne-Therese Ryan
Executive Director of the Human Relations Commission

Commission History

In January, Director AT Ryan took a trip to the Vigo County Public Library Archives to learn a bit more about the Commission's history. Below is an overview of the commission's history based on the archives available documents.

The Terre Haute City Council created the Human Relations Commission in April of 1968. Mayor Leland Larrison approved the creation of the commission. The commission consisted of 15 appointed individuals, six from the mayor, three from the council, and six named by specific organizations such as the local school district, the Terre Haute Police, and the NAACP. No funds were made available to the commission in its first year.

For the first full year of operations, the commission faced many challenges. One of its main challenges was acquiring the financial assistance needed to operate. The commission requested a modest budget of \$18,802 to hire an Executive Director, a secretary, and pay for general office supplies. The commission was allocated only \$800. To ensure the commission could operate, Reverend Elmer Arnold served as a volunteer Executive Director for the commission. It struggled to conduct its regular meetings due to a lack of quorum. Rev. Arnold stated in the 1969 annual report that the one of the biggest obstacles was lack of community awareness and apathy around the commission.

The City's Office of Redevelopment had long been a supporter of the commission through providing secretarial support and office supplies to the group. Rev. Arnold continued to serve as volunteer Executive Director until the end of 1971. Upon his resignation, the Office of Redevelopment took on operations for the group.

The group continued to operate throughout the early and mid 1970s, but records of its activity waned. It is unknown to the current leadership when the group dissolved, but it is estimated that the group ceased operations in the late 1970s due to its continued struggles to establish quorum.

In the late 1990s, several community members and groups, including the local NAACP decided to revive the commission. The Common Council formed a new Human Relations Commission in April 1999 and approved by Mayor Judy Anderson. Since 1999, the commission has had six directors and dozens of commissioners.

A Year in Review

2024 was a year of many new beginnings and significant progress for the Human Relations Commission. With a new director, four new commissioners, and a new mayoral administration this year was seen as an opportunity to start fresh. The commission got to work right away writing a strategic plan, proposing ordinance changes, and implementing programs to support the community.

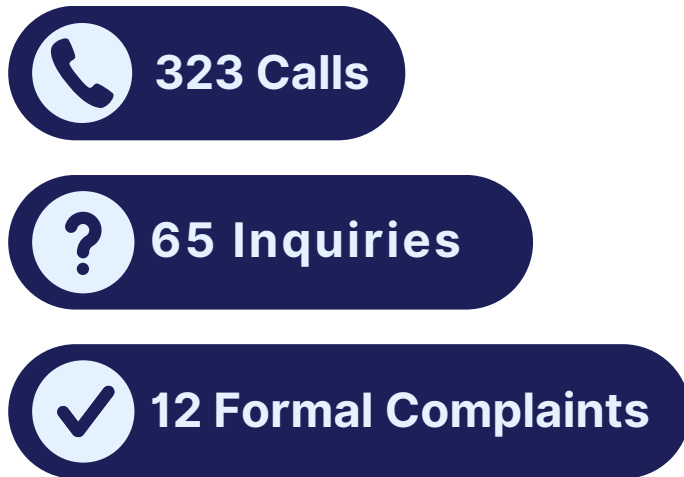


The commission was proud to partner with many wonderful organizations in hosting and collaborating on programs for our community. Through building a strong coalition with community members and organizations, we believe we can work together to build a more vibrant, thriving, and unified Terre Haute.

2024 Data and Numbers

CALLS, INQUIRIES, AND COMPLAINTS

Since January 1, 2024, the Human Relations Commission has received 323 call from the public, of those calls 65 were inquiries about discrimination, housing concerns, or about our services. 12 of those inquiries were formalized into complaints of unlawful discrimination with a government agency.



Call vs. Inquiry

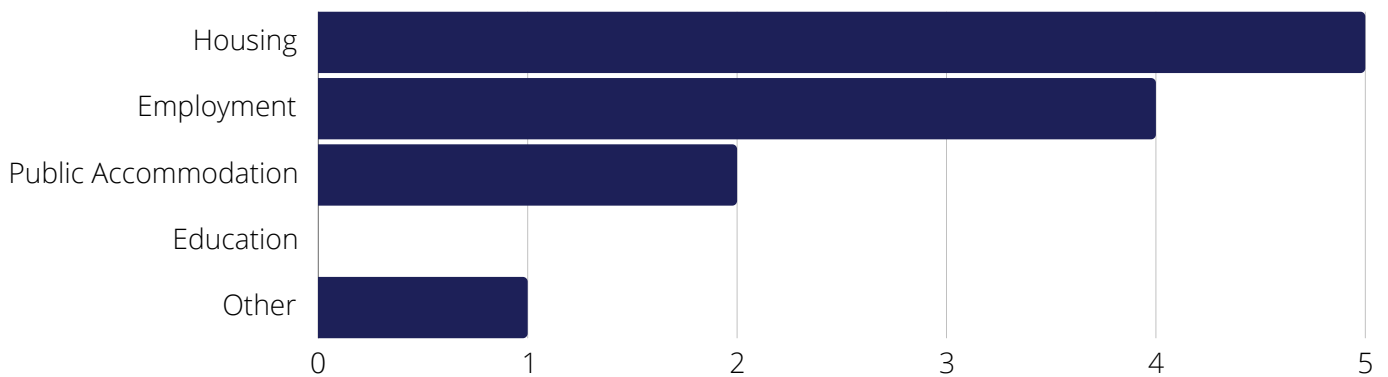
The Human Relations Commission receives a variety of calls from citizens. Many calls are general questions about the City of Terre Haute, requests meant for other departments, or reports that need to be directed to 311. The commission always strives to always provide the best customer service and assist any citizen with their concerns.

Some calls are questions related to the services of the commission which we call inquiries. Not all inquiries result in a formal complaint of discrimination. Many are landlord-tenant disputes or issues with an employer. We work with these individuals to find solutions whether that be involving our building inspectors, connecting folks to legal services, or working with our City’s social worker.

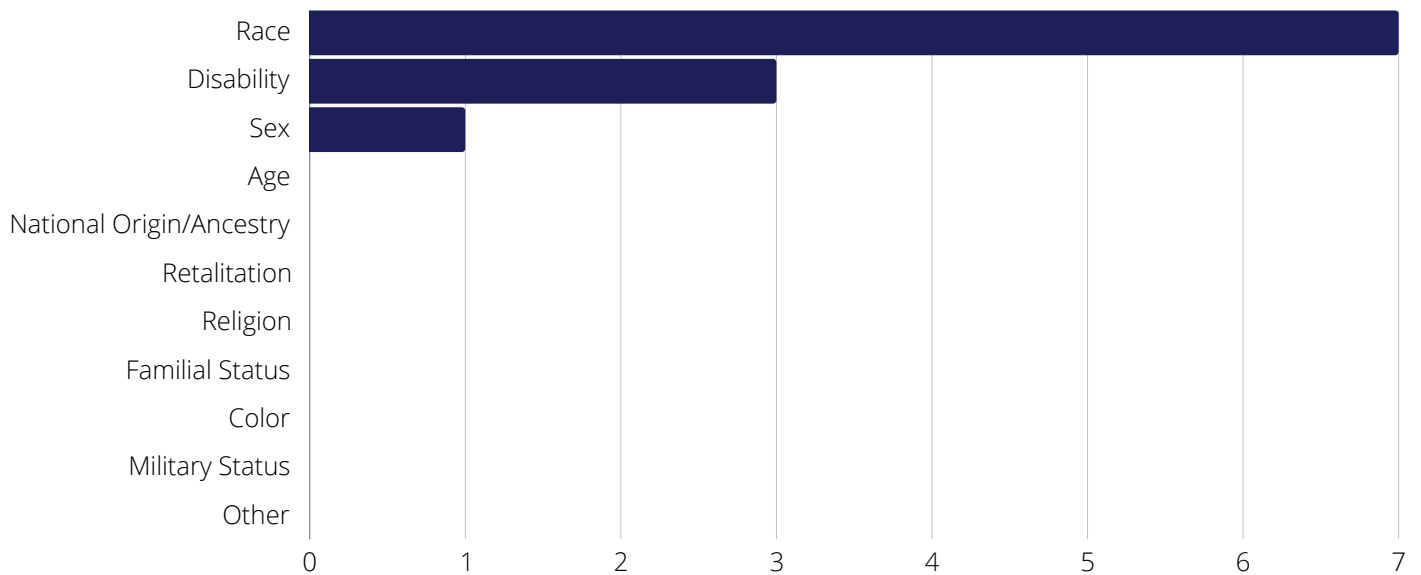
FORMALIZED COMPLAINTS

The Human Relations Commission assisted 12 individuals file formalized complaints with State and Federal Agencies including the Indiana Civil Rights Commission, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, and the Department of Justice. When an individual experiences unlawful discrimination, we ask if they would like to formalize their inquiry into complaint with a government agency and assist them with the process.

Complaints by Enforcement Area



Complaints by Protected Class



Intiatives and Partnerships

In 2024, the Commission focused heavily on building new and reigniting old partnerships. We hosted a variety of events, attended community programs, and collaborated on a wide variety of projects and initiatives. We are thankful to our many community partners who worked alongside us this year.

2024-2026 STRATEGIC PLAN

The Commission has faced several years of disruption due to staff and commissioner turnover. With the intersection of many new beginnings, the commission set out to develop a series of goals to provide a clear direction for the next three years. The plan outlines six goals and a series of objectives for the commission to focus on over the next few years.



COMMUNITY LISTENING SESSIONS

The Commission and the Terre Haute 10 partnered to host a series of community conversations to gather information about our community's challenges, develop strategies to address those challenges, and provide recommendations to our community leaders and partners for improving our community.



Following the conversations, the groups released a community report summarizing the findings from those listening sessions. The report shares the major challenges identified and the recommended strategies to solve them.



DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY 2024

For Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, the Commission partnered with the Terre Haute Boys and Girls Club and the Terre Haute Children’s Museum to provide educational programming about Dr. King and the Civil Rights Movement.

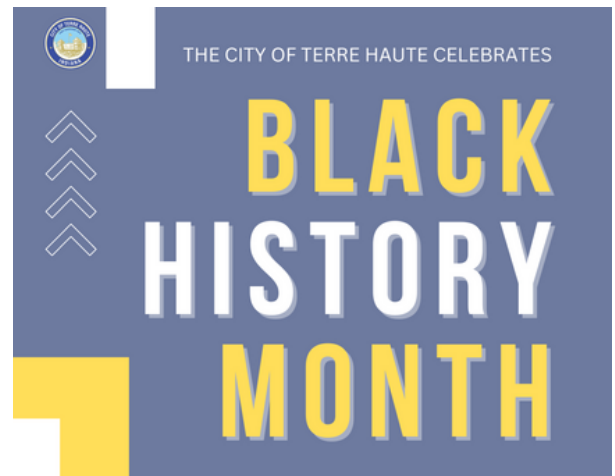


The Commission also collaborated with the Greater Terre Haute NAACP and the Vigo County history Center to host a panel to discussing the life and legacy of Dr. King. The theme of the conversation centered around the quote from Dr. King, “Life’s most persistent and urgent question is, ‘What are you doing for others?’”



BLACK HISTORY MONTH SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN

Throughout the month of February, the Commission highlighted Black Americans who have been trailblazers in the Terre Haute community on social media. Every Tuesday and Thursday, the story of an individual was shared with their photo.



ORDINANCE UPDATES

Thanks to successful collaboration with the Terre Haute City Council, the Human Relations Commission made several updates to their ordinance.

We updated the responsibilities of the commission to fit the modern-day focus of the commission. We also added specific responsibilities for the Director including duties to serve the City as the ADA coordinator and work alongside the Homeless Coalition.

TAJIMI VISIT

In July, the City of Terre Haute welcomed a delegation from our sister city, Tajimi, Japan. Director AT Ryan coordinated the welcome ceremony and reception at City Hall. The program included visits with state and local officials and musical performances from Japanese and American students.



FAIR HOUSING MONTH

The commission hosted a proclamation ceremony at their April meeting to recognize Fair Housing month. Individuals from various housing organizations around the community joined the commission to celebrate.



ADA COORDINATOR CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

In 2024, the City elected to have the HRC Director serve as their ADA Coordinator, and the council codified it into the City Code. In order to best serve in this role, Director AT Ryan completed over 40 hours of training and attended the National ADA Symposium to learn more about the ADA laws and requirements. In August, she received her certification through the University of Missouri's ADA Coordinator Certification Program.



ISU PARTNERSHIP

The Commission established a partnership with the ISU Department of Educational Leadership for a Summer project. A summer class cohort of PhD students took on the role of consultants in helping the commission to strengthen and develop new ideas for cultural and educational programming. The commission is partnering with fall class cohort for another project around measuring equitable outcomes in our community.

2ND GRADE DIVERSITY WRITING CONTEST

The Commission restarted its partnership with the Vigo County School Corporation to host the 2nd Grade Diversity Writing Contest. Every 2nd Grader in Terre Haute wrote an essay about the importance of diversity and a winning essay was selected from each class. Director AT Ryan and VCSC Chief DEI Officer, Matt McClendon traveled to every 2nd Grade class in March to deliver a medal, book, and certificate to every winner.



JUNETEENTH AND TERRE HAUTE DAY

The Commission was proud to support the Terre Haute Day event at the Booker T. Washington Center. The commission had a table at the event with resources and information about the City. Several commissioners and the Director also attended a Juneteenth program at the Vigo County History Center.

TABLESCAPES

The Human Relations Commission designed a table for ArtIlliana's annual TableScapes dinner. The table's theme was celebrating 60 years of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. The table featured a centerpiece of signs from the Civil Rights marches and rare color photos of Dr. King from his time in Chicago. The table won the award for Best Theme!



PRIDEFEST

The Commission was proud to support and sponsor the Pride Center of Terre Haute's annual PrideFest. The commission had a table at the event and Commissioner Uzziah Hutchinson was a featured performer.



Summary

The commission is proud of its work accomplished in 2024, and we look forward to the opportunities that lie ahead. This year was filled with new partnerships, programs, and initiatives. We are thankful for those community members, leaders, and organizations who worked alongside us in building new momentum.



What Next?

As we plan for the next few years, we are excited to strengthen the projects we unveiled in 2024, and build new programs. We believe this work can only be done when we work with our community. We invite all who read this to join us as we work together to build a more vibrant, thriving, and unified community.



Photo from CampSpot.Com

Stay in the know...

The Human Relations Commission hosts a variety of events and programs throughout the year. We post information on the City of Terre Haute Facebook and on our website.



Photo from Union Health



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CityofTerreHaute**



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