

HUMAN RIGHTS CITIES RESOURCES

This resource document lists major treaties along with the list of U.S. cities that have adopted a formal commitment to becoming a human rights city or to implementing specific treaties.

Why A Human Rights City?

- Many aspects of human rights are best realized at the local level where local government has direct impact on their daily lives and can take local context into account
- The US federal government has not fulfilled its obligation to create a national human rights institution or other mechanism to coordinate implementation of human rights standards across levels of government, so cities must take this implementation into their own hands – this also puts the city in a position to understand and address what it needs from the federal government in order to promote human rights
- There are federal and private grant funding opportunities that could be applied to human rights standard implementation
- Progressive realization of human rights standards takes place over time through evaluation of laws, programs and policies, and training for both city officials and the public
- Promotes understanding on the part of city employees that their daily decisions and actions have a human rights impact
- Providing a human rights framework for the evaluation of city decision-making can help to avoid unintended consequences when actions are taken in response to specific facts
- National and international trade and cultural exchange and networking opportunities can be built around cooperation on human rights
- Human rights education and implementation activities provide a foundation for robust civil engagement and an organizing principle to bring diverse actors together in finding solutions to city issues – opportunity to build social cohesion
- Residents gain more confidence in city officials' sincere commitment to their needs and more faith in the system
- Even where state legislatures are not inclined to promote civil or human rights, cities can still effect positive change for the residents of their cities and surrounding regions through incorporating human rights principles in city operations

International Standards and Treaties

The human rights framework helps orient public conversations around the needs and well-being of people and community. It helps groups identify key priorities for communities amid complex conversations about, e.g., urban development, job creation, “innovation,” and “smart cities,” etc., which should be tools for realizing people-centered goals and objectives rather than ends in themselves.

- [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#)
- US Ratified Treaties:
 - [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#)

- [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination](#)
 - CERD [2022 recommendations](#) to the US
- [Convention Against Torture](#)
- Other Relevant Treaties:
 - [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#)
 - [Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women](#)
 - [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)
 - [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#)

Existing City Commitments to Human Rights

Last updated June 2023

- US Human Rights City declarations:
 - Washington, DC (2008) – resolution. Declares Washington the first Human Rights City in the US and commits to supporting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). ([2019 10 year milestone blog](#))
 - Carrboro, NC (2008) – [resolution](#). Adopts the UDHR as guiding principles.
 - Chapel Hill, NC (2009) – [resolution](#) was adopted upon [petition](#) from residents but I can't find a copy.
 - Richmond, CA (2009) – [resolution](#). Adopts the UDHR as guiding principles.
 - Eugene, OR (2011) – [ordinance](#). Expanded its existing Human Rights commission and explicitly charged it with promoting human rights as enumerated in the UDHR. A 2011 [publication](#) by the Mayor contains a full history and details of the city's process.
 - Boston, MA (2011) – [resolution](#). Declares Boston a Human Rights City and commemorates the UDHR. A Commission was later established to investigate and establish a variety of human rights issues in the city. Its goals were discussed in a [presentation](#) commemorating Human Rights Day in 2020.
 - Pittsburgh, PA (2011) – [proclamation](#). Declares Pittsburgh a Human Rights City. Pittsburgh's city council later [declared](#) housing a human right. Activists are now working with the City to [strengthen its human rights city legislation](#), building from language in Atlanta's resolution.
 - Seattle, WA (2012) – [resolution](#). Proclaims Seattle a Human Rights City, endorses the UDHR, and commits to realization of the rights declared in the UDHR.
 - Jackson, MS (2014) – [resolution](#). Declares support for human rights and commits to explore Human Rights Cities around the world to identify appropriate legislation.
 - Edina, Minnesota (2016) – [passed a resolution](#) declaring Edina a Human Rights City.
 - Mountain View, California (2016) – [passed a resolution](#) adopting the UDHR as guiding principles and later voted to establish a human rights impact assessment of city projects in partnership with the Santa Clara Law School's International Human Rights Clinic.
 - Wilmington, DE (2018) – [resolution](#). Declares Wilmington a Human Rights City and commits to supporting implementation of UDHR.

- Atlanta, GA (2022) – [resolution](#). Declares Atlanta a Human Rights City.
- *Spartanburg, SC currently has Human Rights City declarations under consideration.
- *Dayton, Ohio is developing a coalition of activists and Human Rights Commission leaders to develop and introduce human rights city legislation.
- Global commitments: This [list](#) shows the status of commitments in cities and other local governments around the world.
- Other endorsements of international standards by US cities:

City resolutions affirming support for the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and committing to implement its principles:*

Austin, TX (1991) Cambridge, MA (1991) Chicago, IL (2009) Cleveland, OH Culver, City, CA (2020) (Background Information) Detroit, MI Kansas City, MO Los Angeles, CA (2006)	Minneapolis, MN (1990 and 2019) New York, NY (2011) Santa Clarita, CA (2010) San Diego, CA (1991) San Francisco (2019) Santa Monica, CA (2010) Savannah, GA (1991) West Hartford, CT (2019)
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**The South Carolina legislature also passed a resolution supporting the CRC in 1992. A number of other states outside the South did so as well.*

- New York, NY (2020) – [resolution](#) calling on US Senate to ratify the **International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)**.
- **Ordinances adopting the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)** – San Francisco, Berkeley, Los Angeles, San Jose, Santa Clara County, CA; Cincinnati, OH; Honolulu, HI; Miami-Dade County, FL; Pittsburgh, PA
- **Resolutions committing to implement CEDAW** – Contra Costa County, Daly, Laguna Woods, Long Beach, Pittsburg, Santa Monica, West Hollywood, CA (also state of CA); Ashland, Boulder (city and county), Greeley, Lafayette, Louisville, CO; Columbia, SC; Durham (city and county), NC; Edina, Richfield, Minneapolis, St. Paul, MN; Eugene, OR; Kansas City, University City, MO; Louisville, KY, Kentucky House of Representatives (no corresponding Senate resolution); Mount Vernon, NY; New Orleans, LA; Rapid City, SD; Sarasota, St. Petersburg, Tampa, FL; Salt Lake City, UT.
- Signatories to 2020 [statement](#) of **state and local leaders supporting the rights enumerated in the UDHR and later international human rights treaties, and committing to economic and social rights as well as civil and political rights:**
 - **Mayors:** Steve Adler, Mayor, City of Austin, Texas

- Jane Bolin, Mayor, City of Oakland Park, Florida
- David J. Berger, Mayor, City of Lima, Ohio
- Jack W. Bradley, Mayor, City of Lorain, Ohio
- Christopher L. Cabaldon, Mayor, City of West Sacramento, California
- Shari Cantor, Mayor, Town of West Hartford, Connecticut
- Breea Clark, Mayor, City of Norman, Oklahoma
- Joy Cooper, Mayor, City of Hallandale Beach, Florida
- John Cranley, Mayor, City of Cincinnati, Ohio
- John F. Dunbar, Mayor, Town of Yountville, California
- Ronald Filippelli, Mayor, Borough of State College, Pennsylvania
- James R. Fouts, Mayor, City of Warren, Michigan
- Pam Hemminger, Mayor, Town of Chapel Hill, North Carolina
- Geoff Kors, Mayor, City of Palm Springs, California
- Marcia A. Leclerc, Mayor, Town of East Hartford, Connecticut
- Bill McMurray, Mayor, St. Joseph, Missouri
- Jon Mitchell, Mayor, City of New Bedford, Massachusetts
- Bridget Donnell Newton, Mayor, City of Rockville, Maryland
- Mary Lou Pauly, Mayor, City of Issaquah, Washington
- The Honorable William Peduto, Mayor, City of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
- Will Reichelt, Mayor, Town of West Springfield, Massachusetts
- Mary Casillas Salas, Mayor, City of Chula Vista, California
- Stephen M. Schewel, Mayor, City of Durham, North Carolina
- Cheryl Selby, Mayor, City of Olympia, Washington
- Matt Shorraw, Mayor, City of Monessen, Pennsylvania
- Biff Traber, Mayor, City of Corvallis, Oregon
- Michael D. Tubbs, Mayor, City of Stockton, California
- Lovely A. Warren, Mayor, City of Rochester, New York
- Sam Weaver, Mayor, City of Boulder, Colorado
- Alan Webber, Mayor, City of Santa Fe, New Mexico
- Nan Whaley, Mayor, City of Dayton, Ohio
- Brandon Whipple, Mayor, City of Wichita, Kansas
- Steve Williams, Mayor, City of Huntington, West Virginia
- Patrick L. Wojahn, Mayor, College Park, Maryland

- **City Commissioners & Councilmembers**
- Matthew Sparks, Commissioner and Former Mayor, City of Oakland Park, Florida
- Kelly Takaya King, Councilmember, Maui County, Hawaii

- **Human Rights & Human Relations Agencies & Gender Equity Bodies**
- Anderson Human Relations Department, Indiana
- Cincinnati Gender Equality Task Force, Ohio
- Gary Human Relations Commission, Indiana
- Henderson-Henderson County Human Rights Commission, Kentucky
- Howard County Human Rights Commission, Maryland

- International Association of Official Human Rights Agencies
 - Kentucky Commission on Human Rights, Kentucky
 - Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations, California
 - Milwaukee County Human Rights Commission, Wisconsin
 - New York City Commission on Human Rights, New York
 - Pittsburgh Commission on Human Relations, Pennsylvania
 - Pittsburgh Gender Equity Commission, Pennsylvania
 - **State Senators & Representatives**
 - State Senator Stanley Chang, Hawaii
 - State Senator Les Ihara Jr., Hawaii
 - Representative Sara Innamorato, House of Representatives, Pennsylvania
 - State Senator Chris Lee, Hawaii
 - Representative Nadine K. Nakamura, House of Representatives, Hawaii
 - Representative Amy Perruso, House of Representatives, Hawaii
 - State Senator Karl Rhoads, Hawaii
 - Representative Roy Takumi, Hawaii House of Representatives, Hawaii
- US Conference of Mayors (2013) – [resolution](#) promoting and encouraging international human rights.
 - **Voluntary Local Reviews** – cities undertake to conduct their own local reviews of adherence to the **Sustainable Development Goals** in connection with the UN Universal Periodic Review.
 - New York, NY
 - Orlando FL
 - Los Angeles, CA
 - Rochester Hills, MI
 - Pittsburgh, PA

Local Implementation of International Treaties

Illustrations of how international treaties are being used in local human rights monitoring and advocacy at local and national levels

- [CERD Cities: Using the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination to fight racism at home](#) (Resource page for the [International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination](#))
 - [A Cross-City Report on Obstacles to U.S. Implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination & how Human Rights Cities Can be a Remedy](#) (U.S. Human Rights Cities Alliance shadow report to the CERD Committee)
 - [Summary of how CERD Committee's Recommendations apply to local jurisdictions](#) -This guide prepared by HRCA volunteers will help advocates identify relevant sections of the CERD Committee report to use in their work.

- **UPR Cities Project** – Cities undertake to submit stakeholder reports to the UN Human Rights Council for its Universal Periodic Review of the United States.
 - New Orleans, LA (2019) – established an Office of Human Rights and Equity, which submitted a [stakeholder report](#) to the UN Human Rights Council for its Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the United States. The report states that the city is committed to the UDHR.
 - This [statement in support of human rights in the United States](#) by state and local authorities was signed by fifty representatives of local and state governments and human rights agencies urging the U.S. government to participate fully in the Universal Periodic Review process and to implement its recommendations.

Additional Resources

- [Human Rights Cities Alliance](#) website.
- Local Implementation Workbook (for implementation of CEDAW, but is generally informative): <http://citiesforcedaw.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/wild-booklet-13mar14.pdf>
- Role of local commissions: <https://hrlr.law.columbia.edu/files/2018/01/JoAnnKamufWardChallenging.pdf>
- Localizing human rights: <https://gould.usc.edu/students/journals/rlsj/issues/assets/docs/volume31/winter2022/ezer.pdf>
- Sustainable Development Goals: <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2020/01/30/the-sdg-effect-the-emerging-pittsburgh-platform-to-deliver-the-global-goals-locally/>