

SUCCESS STORY: FORT WORTH, TEXAS

The potency, resilience and agency of Fort Worth residents to define what “inclusive community” looks like in the Panther City has been a stabilizing force for our local civil and human rights.

The City of Fort Worth boasts one of the Texas’ oldest local non-discrimination ordinances on record adopted July 3, 1967, almost a year in advance of the June 28, 1968 New York Stonewall Riots. The power of Fort Worth residents organizes to maintain and strengthen LGBTQ rights.

Resident feedback helped establish the City’s ordinance amendment in 2000 to protect all individuals from discrimination based on sexual orientation, and again for an additional ordinance amendment, which expanded protections for individuals on the basis of gender identity in 2009.

In that moment, our journey toward the 100-point MEI rating truly accelerated in response to the June 2009 Rainbow Lounge incident. The City Manager promptly thereafter created a Diversity Task Force to study issues affecting LGBT residents and the task force in due course produced a series of 20 recommendations, all of which have now been implemented.



FORT WORTH DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

The voice of our residents continues to inform city department responses through the passage of ordinances, policy-making and work on the ground, evidenced by the ongoing work in Neighborhood Services Department and the Diversity and Inclusion’s support of the Fort Worth Human Relations Commission (HRC). The City’s Neighborhood Services Department is a direct service provider for HOPWA funding to the AIDS Outreach Center (AOC) and Tarrant County Samaritan Housing. The City of Fort Worth Neighborhood Services Department established itself in the community in 2019 with this new program, addressing the housing needs of people living with HIV/AIDS. In its third year, it is still considered a new program in the community. The Neighborhood Services Department provides housing assistance to individuals and families residing in scatter-site units throughout the City of Fort Worth and surrounding counties.

The Diversity and Inclusion Department supports the work of the HRC. The HRC is comprised of eleven local residents appointed to “advise and consult with the City Council and the City Manager on matters involving racial, religious, or ethnic discrimination; (b) to recommend to the City Council and the City Manager measures designed to eliminate prejudice and discrimination; and (c) to promote and encourage communications between and cooperation of all groups interested in bettering community relations.”

From Fort Worth’s earliest known LGBTQ resident advocacy organizations like AURA (Awareness, Unity and Research Association) founded April 6, 1973, to current local organizations like LGBTQ S.A.V.E.S., our grassroots support continues with educational outreach workshops that keep residents up to speed on current challenges facing our LGBTQ community. Fort Worth’s recent LGBTQ educational workshops have focused on the economic importance of eliminating homelessness, especially among LGBTQ Youth, to achieve and maintain an equitable and thriving Fort Worth of the future.

Whatever the challenges faced by our local LGBTQ community, the voice and action of our residents will lead the charge for change.