



PURPOSES AND ROLES OF THE NORWALK FAIR HOUSING ADVISORY COMMISSION and FAIR HOUSING OFFICER

The Norwalk Fair Housing Advisory Commission (FHAC) and the position of Fair Housing Officer were established pursuant to court order and by municipal ordinance in 1986 upon the settlement of a lawsuit brought by the Norwalk chapter of the NAACP against the City of Norwalk, alleging housing discrimination. The court order was amended in 2004 and the municipal ordinance was amended in 2005.

The FHAC is responsible for monitoring private and public housing practices for compatibility with fair housing laws and objectives, identifying problem areas, making recommendations to the Mayor, Common Council and Housing Site Development Agency and other appropriate City agencies and Commissions. In addition, it develops policy statements, internal and external communication techniques and recommends housing programs. The Fair Housing Officer acts as the FHAC's staff in these endeavors.

The Fair Housing Officer (FHO) provides assistance to individuals and groups. The FHO provides fair housing trainings and programs, investigates complaints regarding housing discrimination, and assists residents in filing complaints for the purpose of enforcing fair housing laws. In addition, the Fair Housing Officer is a primary source of landlord/tenant information for city residents, and educates the public through the distribution of pamphlets, conducting educational seminars, writing a newspaper column, and being available by phone or during office hours to meet with residents of Norwalk experiencing landlord/tenant and housing discrimination matters.

The FHO assists residents with disabilities in seeking reasonable accommodations (changes in rules, policies or practices needed by a person with a disability, because of their disability – ex: an assigned parking space near the apartment) and reasonable modifications (ex: permission to install a wheelchair ramp, grab bars in a bathroom, or other physical changes to the apartment).

The FHO is the primary source of education and assistance for residents regarding predatory lending, and assists residents in finding reliable foreclosure resources. Finally, the FHO works with multifamily residential developers for the inclusion of affordable housing in market rate developments in Norwalk, and the processes associated with new housing opportunities, from design and construction for people with disabilities, to marketing and tenant selection for low-moderate income housing.

The FHO publishes an annual report on the state of housing discrimination in Norwalk, including her activities and findings, as well as enforcement and compliance in the city of Norwalk with federal, state and local fair housing laws.