

CHARLOTTE MECKLENBURG COMMUNITY RELATIONS

2017 ANNUAL REPORT

Executive Summary

Our Staff and the Committee

The focus of Community Relations staff is on building relationships and solving problems in four main areas: Dispute Settlement Program (DSP); Fairness in Housing; Training & Education; and Police-Community Relations.

Staff relies on counsel from 45 volunteers comprising the Community Relations Committee. Appointed by Charlotte City Council and the Mecklenburg County Board of Commissioners, they are an integral part of the human relations support system and help promote quality of opportunity for all citizens/residents, and understanding, respect and goodwill among the many diverse groups who call Charlotte-Mecklenburg home.

As a resident of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg community, you have rights. Community Relations remains steadfast in its commitment to ensure those rights are protected.

It was 1961 when then Mayor Stanford R. Brookshire appointed a group of citizens to address race relations in Charlotte. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Community Relations (C-MCR) now serves as an integral part of the human relations support system for the City of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County and is a statutory agency of the City of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County, authorized by Chapter 12 of the Code of the City of Charlotte and a Memorandum of Understanding between the City and County dated July 7, 1969.

The City of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County depend on C-MCR to monitor and improve the quality of human relations within the community by interpreting the social inclinations and frustrations of citizens. C-MCR's work is divided into four core service areas: Intergroup Relations, Conflict Management, Fair Housing and Public Accommodations, and Police Review.

CRC Message

Our team of professionals and volunteers serve as civil rights and human relations advocates. We believe that we have an obligation to ensure fairness and help remove barriers that impede the community from living in harmony and equally experiencing all that Charlotte-Mecklenburg has to offer.

The word community is more than just a part of our name. It represents an inclusive group of friends and neighbors of different races, colors, faiths, ethnicities, ages, incomes, disabilities, sexual/gender orientations and nationalities. For half a decade, we were known as the Community Relations Committee. As a result of the progress we've made, coupled with the relationships we've built with our community partners, we can now say we've grown into Charlotte-Mecklenburg Community Relations.

For the next 50 years and beyond, we plan to continue building a Charlotte-Mecklenburg known for its tolerance, understanding, bridge-building and harmony for all residents, including immigrants.

Key Goals:

C-MCR provides customers with services that are designed to enhance human relations within the City of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County and accomplish the following goals:

- Ensure fair housing practices and access to public accommodations
- Assist in settling disputes and group conflicts
- Improve interracial, interethnic and community relations
- Prevent discrimination
- Improve communications among various community groups and individuals
- Promote equitable opportunity, understanding, respect and goodwill among all citizens
- Provide channels of communication among the various racial, religious and ethnic groups in Charlotte-Mecklenburg

Serve the Customer by Strengthening Neighborhoods:

Annually, approximately 18,000 citizens of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County participate in, or are impacted by the various programs and activities of Community Relations. These neighborhood strengthening activities include:

- Recognizing outstanding community service
- Honoring police officers for exemplary service
- Mediating community disputes
- Providing training on conflict resolution, diversity, communication and fair housing law
- Promoting community harmony, understanding, respect and good will
- Preventing housing discrimination
- Removing barriers to accessibility

Key Issues and Challenges

C-MCR is prepared to continue its long standing tradition of promoting community harmony and addressing and preventing discrimination in Charlotte and Mecklenburg County. The following key issues will have an impact on Community Relations' work during FY2019/FY2020 and call for continued efforts to "develop collaborative solutions." These key issues align with the City Council's Letter to the Community pledging its energy and focus on

- Safety, Trust & Accountability
- Engagement
- Access to safe, quality and affordable housing
- Good paying jobs

Community Relations 2017 Key Accomplishments

➤ Events of September 2016 – Peer Perspectives

Following the shooting and the protests that erupted, City employees were tasked with providing seamless and professional services to the residents of Charlotte Mecklenburg while fielding community complaints and an outcry of some to replace the Police Chief and Mayor, being asked questions about the status of the investigation and listening to angry residents who found themselves very angry, confused and frustrated and needed an ear to vent their concerns. City employees worked very hard to ensure that the community was able to address their concerns but questions arose about how City employees were able to address their own personal and professional concerns in this chaotic environment. C-MCR developed Peer Perspectives to provide City employees a safe place to have an honest discussion about what they were feeling as a result of the events of September 2016, the current status of the City and how City officials were addressing the current concerns and how the City could heal and move forward. C-MCR

has provided 18 such opportunities to engage employees in this discussion and will continue to provide those opportunities in 2017/2018. The responses from these discussions are captured and will be synthesized and shared with City Council and participants.

➤ Community Relations and CMPD



Community Relations works closely with the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department (CMPD) to develop trust and communication between officers and citizens.

The work of our CRC/CMPD Community Coordinators involves specialized community relation services who respond to families of crime victims in conjunction with CMPD's homicide support teams, individuals and groups. They support the activities of CMPD, maintain contact with special interest and community groups, identify community needs and provide resources to meet those needs. Additionally they assist in the resolution to citizen's complaints relating to inadequate services or unfair treatment by police.

Additionally, they handle the police complaint review program, where assistance is provided in making allegations of officer misconduct and alternatives are given to registering complaints directly to the police department's internal affairs division.

➤ CMPD Chain of Command Hearings

CRC works to improve community relations between citizens and police officers and to **enhance community trust in the process for receiving, investigating, and adjudicating complaints of police misconduct**. Since 1968 a staff member of the CRC has set in on chain of command hearings where officers are given due process for citizen complaints against them. CRC's role in this work is to assure that the rights of citizens who have filed complaints are protected, and just as importantly to assure that the rights of officers who may be wrongly accused are also protected. CRC's involvement since 1968 adds a level of citizen review to the process – **one of the first in the country**. One of the interesting things about complaints filed against officers in Charlotte is that approximately **70% of such complaints are filed by other police officers and not citizens**. While this is an important indicator that police do a good job of policing themselves, any citizen who does not feel comfortable filing an officer complaint with CMPD may file that

complaint with CRC and staff will follow the complaint from beginning to end to make sure that it is properly addressed.

The annual police community relations awards honors officers who have made outstanding contributions to neighborhoods and communities in the area. Monies are raised from the private sector to cover the costs associated with this event.

PCR Trends – FY13 to FY17

- * **Chain of command hearings attended – 381**
- * **Appeals processed – 23**
- * **Complaints processed – 459**
- * **Police community dialogues – 30**
- * **PCRA Programs – 5**
- * **Officers Nominated – 2000+**
- * **Private sector dollars raised to cover costs - \$100,000+**

Dispute Settlement Program

Since 1983, the CRC has been providing mediation and conciliation services to Charlotte-Mecklenburg residents.

- * Private Warrant Court
- * Landlord Tenant
- * Juvenile Offender
- * Medicaid
- * Misdemeanor Cases
- * Truancy/School Issues
- * Charlotte Housing Authority Hearings
- * Civil Court – 50C Orders

➤ **DSP Private Warrant Court**

Private Warrant Court was established in 2009 to more efficiently and effectively manage court dockets for citizen initiated complaints. The process allows mediations to take place immediately, thereby providing greater accessibility for our clients to receive our services. Private Warrant Court is designated in courtroom 4330 and is currently in session every Monday. Private Warrant Court is supervised by Judge Karen Eady-Williams. In addition to Judge Eady-Williams, other District Court Judges preside over the court on a rotational basis. Court personnel include the Judge, Assistant District Attorneys, Court Clerk, Sheriff's Deputy's, Public Defender's and Private Attorneys. The court runs as any other with the exception that clients are asked to try mediation before having their case addressed by the presiding Judge. Most cases are between individuals who have some type of relationship with one another such as neighbors, co-workers, friends and family members. For these types of relationship cases, mediation is a preferred method of reducing the conflict while allowing the parties the opportunity to discuss their issues in a confidential setting where they can work on reestablishing their relationships and have a better understanding on how to address issues in the future.

➤ **New Civil 50C Court Mediation Program**

Due to the success of the Private Warrant Court, CRC has partnered with Civil Small Claims court to handle no-contact ordered cases as well as summary ejectment and landlord tenant issues. **In cases where no-contact issues are desired, the parties must prove that they are being harassed or stalked by another in which they do not have an intimate relationship.** For example, neighbors who are having difficulty with their neighbors standing in their own driveways looking over the fence into their yard. According to the Judge in courtroom 6330, the statute is very defined and many of the cases such as these do not meet the standard of having a no-contact order but there are obviously issues that need to be addressed. Mediation is the method of addressing those concerns, **allowing the parties to come up with options of how they are going to co-exist with the other and act civilly with one another.**

DSP Trends – FY13 to FY17

- * **Cases mediated – 9266**
- * **Court hours saved – 18,532**
- * **Court dollars saved – 185,320**
- * **Mediation trainings – 67**
- * **People trained - 1700**

➤ **Education & Outreach Strategies in Fair Housing**

Fairness In Housing & Public Accommodations

The mission of the CRC is driven by the fact that equal access in housing and public accommodations is a right and not a privilege.

Formal complaints are accepted from anyone who feels discriminated against in a public place or in housing because of their race, color, religion, national origin, gender, familial status or disability.

Staff members document and investigate complaints and conduct standardized testing of alleged violators facilities/properties.

CRC will conduct education and outreach campaigns and training which will be designed to inform Charlotte-Mecklenburg's disabled and international residents of their rights and obligations under the Fair Housing Act. To achieve this, CRC will work closely with its partners that serve and have a foundation of trust within the disabled and international communities. CRC will reach out to all the groups covered under disability in the Act, including persons who are HIV positive and recovering addicts. The following activities will be undertaken:

Education and outreach campaign will include trainings and seminars to groups of disabled individuals and/or those who serve them, including the housing industry;

The use of audio, video and print mediums to educate the public and particularly disabled residents about identifying when their housing rights are violated and the avenues of relief available to them;

Reviewing and revising, or creating fair housing materials that focus on the rights of persons with disabilities; and participation in conferences or events sponsored by housing related organizations or non-profits that serve the disabled.

CRC will partner with the City of Charlotte's Office of International Relations, Refugee Support Services, Latin American Coalition, Project 658 and Catholic Charities Dioceses of Charlotte as well as other leading International Organizations and agencies to provide a series of Fair Housing

Educational Workshops to newly arrived and current immigrants and refugees living in Charlotte. These agencies for several years have provided Charlotte's immigrant and refugee population with critically needed information on such topics as: financial literacy, law enforcement, social services, healthcare, housing, legal services, and employment resources.

CRC partnered with Disability Rights and Resources and the NC Department of Vocational Rehabilitation, as well as other leading organizations and agencies that provide services to the Charlotte's disabled community. This work includes education and material development for the engagement of the disabled community around fair housing and their rights.

Finally, CRC partnered with the City of Charlotte's Corporate Communications Office to develop, market and distribute one Public Service Announcement (PSA) that targets Charlotte's International community; and a second PSA which will target Charlotte's disabled community. These PSAs will be submitted to HUD for final approval before production and distribution. Corporate Communications will also be instrumental in the printing of fair housing brochures in the following languages:

French
Arabic
Hmong
Vietnamese

The format and design of these brochures have already been approved by HUD.

FH & PA Trends – FY13 to FY17

- * **Fair housing cases investigated – 169**
- * **Public accommodations complaints investigated – 65**
- * **Education and outreach trainings – 276**
- * **People trained – 3367**
- * **Case settlement dollars - \$200K+**

➤ ADA Outreach

Americans With Disabilities Act

The ADA guarantees equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities in public accommodations, employment, transportation, State and local government services, and telecommunications. The purpose of the law is to ensure that people with disabilities have the same rights and opportunities as everyone else.

The ADA is divided into five titles that relate to different areas of public life;

- Title I - Employment
- Title II - Public Service
- Title III - Public Accommodations
- Title IV - Telecommunication
- Title V - Miscellaneous

If a grievant believes he or she has been discriminated against on the basis of a disability, the grievant should submit a written complaint containing information about the alleged discrimination, including the name, address and phone number of the grievant and location, date and description of the problem.

The complaint should be submitted as soon as possible but no later than 60 days after the alleged violation to: CharlotteADA@charlottenc.gov

The City has a long-standing and on-going relationship with the Mecklenburg Advocacy Council for People with Disabilities (MACPD). The City has not only consulted with MACPD on matters related to the transition plan updates, but city staff routinely attends MACPD meetings to provide status with respect to correcting immediate ADA issues within the City.

As the City continues its Transition Plan update efforts, additional outreach activity will be scheduled to obtain input from the public outlined in its ADA Communications Strategy.

The City is currently going through a Request for Proposal to have all City facilities, programs, services and activities accessed for ADA compliance.

Martin Luther King Celebration

For many years the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Community Relations Committee (CRC) and staff, and the Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation Department have partnered to coordinate activities in the County to celebrate the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Mecklenburg Ministries, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools are among the organizations that provide support, planning, and implementation of the Celebration.

While in the past the chair of Celebration Planning Committee has usually come from the CRC, the Park and Recreation Department has been an equal partner in planning and implementing the celebration. Members of the planning committee who have worked on the planning over the years have suggested that a process be developed for appointment of the chair and vice chair. This would provide experienced, dedicated, and committed persons would always be in place to take the Celebration to another level of accomplishment. We agree with that suggestion.

The chair of the Annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday Observance Committee has the overall responsibility for the planning and implementation of the Annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday Observance, including the Memorial Service, the Dr. King Memorial Parade, the Dr. King Student Writing and Art Contests, the Annual Community Wide Celebration on the King Holiday, and relevant service projects/activities deemed appropriate.

Training and Education



Community Relations develops and delivers free training to Charlotte-area neighborhood associations, civic organizations, schools and other groups.

Through conflict management training, skills are provided to residents and groups on how to handle conflict in an effective, nonviolent manner and where the emphasis is on assertive communication skills.

Diversity training focuses on cultural competency, the strengths of a diverse community, how to check out assumptions and the acceptance of differences.

Fair housing practices are taught by Community Relations to Realtors apartment management companies, tenants and others in the housing industry. By educating people on the Federal, City and County fair housing and public accommodations laws, discriminatory practices are curbed proactively.

Community Dialogues

Community Dialogues

Community Relations recognizes a key component to having a successful community is the ability of its residents to feel trust for those with whom they come into contact regularly; particularly those who may be perceived as being "different" - racially, ethnically, economically, geographically, politically or generationally.

To bridge gaps and open lines of communication, trust and understanding, Community Relations periodically holds community forums inviting residents and local officials to build relationships through conversation, discussion and even debate. Whether the topic revolves around schools, budgets, religion, or basic human rights. Community Relations, along with partnering agencies like the Community Building Initiative (CBI) and Mecklenburg Ministries (MM), feel strongly that community dialogue can pave the road to a better future in Charlotte-Mecklenburg.

Summary of Total Budget and Positions

The following table shows Community Relations funding level and positions, including FY2016-FY2017 actuals, FY2018 Budget, and the FY2019 request including SLC's:

	Actual	Actual	Budget	Request
	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19
Funding	\$963,670	\$972,440	\$1,036,500	\$1,257,159
Permanent Full Time Positions	10	10	10	12
Temporary Full Time Positions		3	3	3

**These figures do not include DSP, FH, Private and Grant Revenue Projections, which cover costs associated with the 3 temporary full time positions.*

Community Relations is able to accomplish its work through the utilization of community volunteers who serve on our board as City, County and Mayoral appointees as well as over 70 trained volunteer mediators who mediate cases referred from the court system, school system, neighborhood associations, private citizens, landlords and tenants, Medicaid appeals and city

and county departments. From FY13 to FY17, volunteers have provided 22,252 hours of service, a savings of \$547,275. During this same time period, \$3,862,212 taxpayer dollars have been saved through the use of volunteers, private and public sector monies as well as partnerships with Federal and State Grants.