

HIGHLAND PARK, IL
Mayor Nancy R. Rotering

INITIATIVES FOCUSING ON COMPASSION AND INCLUSION FOR ALL

The City of Highland Park, a north suburban Chicagoland municipality, has implemented multiple public-facing initiatives promoting inclusivity and reinforcing the message that hate and bigotry have no place in the community and will not be tolerated. Mayor Nancy Rotering wants her city to take a vocal stance against discrimination and harassment and to be recognized as a welcoming and inclusive community that embraces diversity, gender equality, and religious freedoms.

Law Enforcement

Highland Park has taken steps to strengthen the partnership between law enforcement and the public through adoption of the Illinois NAACP and Illinois Association of Chiefs of Police Shared Principles of Public Safety. The principles include treating every person with respect and dignity, rejecting discrimination, building trust, endorsing the pillars of procedural justice, developing strong relationships with communities of color, supporting diversity, and endorsing de-escalation tactics to reduce confrontations that endanger community members and law enforcement officers. Every officer in the Highland Park Police Department voluntarily signed onto the Shared Principles. In cooperation with Highland Park High School, the NAACP, and the Illinois Association of Chiefs of Police, the City coordinated a January 2020 program that focused on open, candid conversations about bridging the gap of mistrust between police and individuals of color, and on how to grow trust, improve relationships, and keep communities safe.

Gender Equality

In 2016, Highland Park was recognized as a municipal leader in gender equality in Illinois with its establishment of gender neutral public restrooms. The City adopted a policy requiring all single-occupancy bathrooms to be designated gender neutral; all single-occupancy restrooms within City facilities also were designated gender neutral. In support of the LGBTQ+ community, Mayor Rotering signed onto Inclusion for All, a bipartisan coalition of municipal leaders dedicated to securing inclusive nondiscrimination protections for all residents. This action was intended to signal that efforts to undermine or exempt businesses from LGBTQ+ inclusive policies are bad for business and bad for communities. In 2019, the City flew the LGBTQ+ rainbow flag in front of City Hall throughout the month of June – Gay Pride Month – as a further show of solidarity with the LGBTQ+ community.

Housing

The City has an inclusionary housing program which serves as a tool to help create housing opportunities for people at a variety of income levels. The Inclusionary Housing Program makes available affordable housing within market-priced development properties. The City's affordable housing program implements a longstanding policy of preserving and promoting economic diversity. Making the community available to families of all income levels supports the city's business community by attracting and retaining a workforce able to live close to the available jobs.

Sexual Harassment

As an employer, Highland Park has a clear zero tolerance policy towards sexual harassment, and every City employee must acknowledge in writing their receipt and understanding of the policy. The City also provides sexual harassment sensitivity training for all employees, as well as a mechanism for confidential reporting of complaints. The sexual harassment policy also extends to all elected and appointed officials.

Bullying

The City has launched various campaigns aimed at discouraging bigotry, discrimination, and bullying. In 2015, in support of the U.S. Conference of Mayors call to action against bullying, the City, School Districts, Park District, and not-for-profit community agencies joined together to promote a unified message aimed at bullying awareness, prevention, and intervention. Efforts to combat cyberbullying were included in the initiative, and proactive events included trained counselors, educators, and national experts.

Anti-Hate Campaign

The City's "Hate Has No Home Here" campaign was designed to make it visibly clear that hatred in any form is unwelcome. Signs were posted at every City building, school and Park District facility. When providing residents with free yard signs promoting the campaign, the City quickly ran out of signs – a reflection, the Mayor believes, of how eagerly residents embraced the message.

Legal Aid

Five years ago, using seed money and space provided by the City, Mayor Rotering founded a legal aid clinic that provides free legal services in the areas of immigration, housing, and domestic violence. The clinic is now independent and located in new space, with a budget of over \$800,000 and a caseload nearing 1,000 clients per year. As a result, the Mayor says, domestic violence calls, per Police Department data, have diminished, and immigrant families, no longer living in the shadows, feel welcome. With attorneys providing pro bono help to neighbors, she says, there is an increased sense of community and compassion within her city.

Additional information is available from Mayor Nancy Rotering at nrotering@cityhpil.com or 847-926-1000.