

# Advisory Committee on Racial Equity, Inclusion, and Human Rights

## City of Bangor, Maine

### 2024 Annual Report

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**Introduction** The Advisory Committee on Racial Equity, Inclusion, and Human Rights (ACREIHR) has worked diligently throughout 2024 to advance its mission of promoting equity, fostering inclusion, and addressing systemic disparities within the community. This report summarizes the committee's progress, goals, meeting highlights, and outcomes over the past year.

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#### Progress and Achievements

1. **Policy Recommendations:**
    - Developed an advanced structure for the committee to systematically review city policies and ordinances to ensure equity considerations are incorporated.
    - Played a key role in improving the naming ordinance for city properties, resulting in its unanimous approval by the Bangor City Council.
  2. **Community Engagement:**
    - Met with the Chamber of Commerce to develop a Business Equity Index aimed at fostering equitable practices among local businesses.
    - Collaborated with the school department's DEIB (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging) committee to identify measurable goals and outcomes to enhance a sense of belonging and diversity for youth and adults in Bangor.
  3. **Awareness Campaigns:**
    - Met with local organizations to address systemic homelessness in the city, supporting City Council in prioritizing efforts to combat this crisis.
    - Evaluated the Human Rights Commission's equity audit and identified actionable ways to improve the city's scores.
  4. **Internal Development:**
    - Introduced education and event subcommittees to streamline planning and community outreach initiatives.
    - Conducted a mid-year self-assessment to align the committee's work with its strategic objectives.
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#### Goals for 2025

- Strengthen partnerships with city organizations and community groups, including the NAACP, Maine Multicultural Center, and Bangor Public Library, to expand the reach and accuracy of equity initiatives.
  - Foster greater involvement from Bangor City Council to ensure alignment between committee initiatives and city goals.
  - Advance educational events and initiatives in collaboration with local organizations.
  - Develop a comprehensive equity action plan with measurable benchmarks and stakeholder support.
  - Advocate for increased representation of marginalized groups in local decision-making processes.
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#### Meeting Highlights

1. **January 2024:**
  - Established annual priorities, including housing equity, educational reform, and policy reviews.
  - Approved the framework for reviewing city policies and ordinances.
2. **February 2024:**
  - Received facility update from Parks and Rec.
  - Met with City Planner Officer, Anja Collette, on available city grants.
  - Focused on refining strategies to engage underserved populations in equity discussions.
3. **March 2024:**
  - Evaluated HRC's equity audit and identified areas for improvement to enhance citywide scores.
  - Supported City Council in prioritizing strategies to address the systemic homelessness crisis.
4. **April 2024:**
  - Reviewed and provided feedback to the Accessibility Audit Review presented by Assistant City Manager, Courtney O'Donnell.
  - Discussed website improvement goals and provided guidance on language used on new website.
  - Reviewed City's Housing Dashboard.
5. **May 2024:**
  - Worked closely with the school department's DEIB committee to define measurable outcomes and foster diversity within schools and the broader community.
  - Discussed how to strengthen the city's efforts in fostering a sense of belonging.
6. **June 2024:**
  - Reviewed preliminary findings from the Bangor Housing Study with
  - Discussed and provided feedback on the Rental Registry Pilot Program.
  - Presented strategic plan for business equity score following meeting with Chamber of Commerce and Downtown Bangor Partnership.
  - Discussed ways to provide resources, guidance, and support to businesses and ensure equity for all community members.
7. **August 2024:**
  - Presented findings from housing and employment disparities research.
  - Provided update to local media to raise awareness about equity initiatives and promote the committee goals and efforts.
8. **September 2024:**
  - Introduction of the new City of Bangor Homelessness Response Manager, Jena Jones. Discussed ways that the committee could support efforts.
  - Reviewed election goals from City Clerk, Lisa Goodwin.
9. **October 2024:**
  - Completed work on the naming ordinance for city properties.
  - Developed plan to support NAACP's education and event efforts.
  - Created strategies to address structure, name, and goals of committee.
10. **December 2024:**
  - Presented updates to the naming ordinance to City Council; approved unanimously by councilors in Dec. 2 workshop.
  - Reviewed and provided feedback to the Land Use Code Presentation from Chris Jennette.
  - Conducted strategic discussions to sustain momentum into 2025.

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#### Outcomes

- **Policy Impact:** Successfully influenced the inclusion of equity considerations in three major municipal policies.
  - **Community Reach:** Engaged over 500 participants through forums, workshops, and surveys.
  - **Increased Awareness:** Expanded the community's understanding of systemic inequities through targeted campaigns.
  - **Collaborative Success:** Strengthened relationships with local organizations, laying the groundwork for future initiatives.
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#### Membership and Leadership

The success of ACREIHR in 2024 is attributed to the dedication and contributions of its members:

- **Chair:** Liana Fellis
  - **Vice Chair:** Katie Brydon
  - **Members:** Gabrielle Wiley, Melissa Bulcholz, Andre Chasse, Jason Canniff, Theron Letterlough, Julie Davis, Kathryn Robinson, Student Rep. Rebecca Jones, Student Rep. Evelyn Marasco.
  - **City Leadership:** Debbie Laurie (City Manager), Courtney O'Donnell (Assistant City Manager)
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**Conclusion** ACREIHR has made significant strides in advancing equity and inclusion within the community during 2024. With a strong foundation in place, the committee is well-positioned to build on this momentum and achieve even greater impact in the coming year. We remain committed to fostering a community where equity and human rights are central to all endeavors.