



## **CITY OF CHARLOTTESVILLE**

*To be a place where everyone thrives*

Human Rights Commission  
P.O. Box 911  
Charlottesville, Virginia 22902  
Telephone: 434-970-3023  
[www.charlottesville.gov](http://www.charlottesville.gov)

December 23, 2024

Dear Mayor Wade and City Councilors,

Pursuant to Sec. 2-433.(c) of the Charlottesville Human Rights Ordinance, it is the role of the Human Rights Commission to “identify and review systemic issues, policies, and practices of the City of Charlottesville and advise its boards, commissions, and other public agencies within the City on issues related to human rights.” During our annual planning meeting on March 9, 2024, Commissioners identified housing as the primary focus of their work in 2024. Commissioners sought feedback from community members and subject matter experts regarding specific, city level priorities that may have both local and regional impacts on housing.

The Commission is deeply grateful for the budget recommendations that City Manager Sanders has put forth with regards to housing and we strongly encourage City Council to support and pass a budget that includes all of the housing recommendations, which we elaborate on in the letter below.

At its work session on November 7, 2024, the Commission unanimously voted to recommend and/or affirm the following housing-related City policy and practice priorities for your consideration as Council prepares its annual budget and priorities.

### **1. Equitable and Low-Barrier Year-Round Shelter**

We affirm City Council’s exploration of the establishment of a year-round shelter that is equitable and low-barrier, with a specific focus on addressing the needs of LGBTQ+ individuals and families, while upholding the protections provided in the City’s Human Rights Ordinance. The need for additional shelter for the unhoused population is critical and ensuring that services are provided equitably is equally important.

### **2. “Effective Right to Counsel” in Eviction Proceedings**

We recommend that City Council set funding for legal counsel for tenants facing evictions at a sufficient level to meet the needs of City residents facing evictions. Tenants with representation are far more likely to be able to raise legal defenses and remain housed. In 2021, our letter to City Council applauded the City’s initiative in providing tenants lawyers in eviction proceedings during

the COVID-19 pandemic, but we recognize that providing counsel to tenants in eviction proceedings is important and necessary at all times. We will be following up with a letter that further underscores our support for providing universal counsel to tenants in eviction proceedings as well as regional examples where this has been done effectively.

### **3. Supports for Homelessness**

We affirm the City Manager's recommendation to include in the budget a Homeless Services Coordinator and two Street Outreach positions. We furthermore affirm the policy recommendations discussed during the City Council Work Session on October 21st, including Pallet shelters, public bathrooms, continued annual funding for BRACH, and operational funding for a future low-barrier shelter.

The Commission welcomes questions, feedback, and dialogue with City Council about these recommendations. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me or the Office of Human Rights should you have any questions prior to making your recommendations or if you wish to schedule a time to meet.

Sincerely,

*Ernest S. Chambers*

Ernest S. Chambers  
Chair  
Human Rights Commission