

City of Sweetwater, Minnesota Fair Housing Policy

1. Purpose/Vision

Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act establishes federal policy for providing fair housing throughout the United States. The intent of Title VIII is to assure equal housing opportunities for all citizens. Furthermore, the City of Sweetwater, as a recipient of federal community development funds under Title I of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, is obligated to certify that it will affirmatively further fair housing. The Minnesota Human Rights Act (MHRA) of 1973 further broadens anti-discrimination scope and pertains to enforcing the rights of residents to fair housing in the state of Minnesota.

The City of Sweetwater is committed to meeting this obligation and has developed this Fair Housing Policy to further that goal.

2. Fair Housing Policy Statement

It is the policy and commitment of the City of Sweetwater to ensure that fair and equal housing opportunities are granted to all persons in all housing opportunities and development activities funded by the city regardless of race, color, sex, religion, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, familial status, national origin, creed or disability [ENTER ADDITIONAL PROTECTED CLASSES FROM CITY HUMAN RIGHTS ORDINANCE IF APPLICABLE]. This shall be done through strong external policies that provide meaningful access to all residents and fair housing informational and referral services; and internal practices and procedures that do not discriminate and that affirmatively further fair housing.

3. External Practices

a. Fair Housing Specialist

The City of Sweetwater has designated the [staff title such as CD Director] as the Fair Housing Specialist for the City.

Name

Contact Information

The Fair Housing Specialist will be responsible for the intake, processing, and referral of all fair housing complaints. While not expected to be an “expert” in fair housing laws the Specialist will, at a minimum, be familiar with state and federal fair housing laws, the process for filing discrimination complaints, and the state and federal agencies that handle complaints.

Records showing the date, time, and nature of the fair housing complaint, as well as the decisions made regarding the complaint process (referrals, information given, etc.) and any follow-up action will be fully documented.

The Fair Housing Specialist will also monitor city activities affecting fair housing and raise issues and concerns where appropriate.

b. Meaningful Access

- i. Online Information. The City of Sweetwater will prominently display information about fair housing and its fair housing specialist on its website. The website will also have links to various fair housing resources, including the Department of Housing and Urban Development’s Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity, Minnesota Department of Human Rights, Minnesota Attorney General’s Office, Housing Justice Center, HOME Line Tenant Hotline, Southern Minnesota Regional Legal Services, Volunteer Lawyers Network (VLN), and others. The website will also link to city, state, and federal fair housing complaint forms. In addition, the City will post the following policies:
 - ii. Reasonable Accommodation Policy
 - iii. Limited English Proficiency Policy
 - iv. Americans with Disabilities Act Policy regarding access to city services
 - v. The State of Minnesota’s Olmstead Plan

vi. Housing resources for American Indians and Tribal citizens

c. In -Person Information. The City of Sweetwater will provide fair housing information to anyone requesting such information at the city offices.

Information provided will include:

- i. A list of fair housing enforcement agencies
- ii. A FAQ of fair housing law
- iii. Fair housing complaint forms
- iv. Housing resources for American Indians and Tribal citizens

d. Languages. The City of Sweetwater is committed to providing information in the native language of its residents. The City of Sweetwater will list information in 4b in languages determined by the federal Safe Harbor threshold standard under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act. This includes full translation of materials for a specific non-English language group with 1,000 or more individuals or more than 5% of the eligible service population as determined by the Census or American Community Survey. Material in other languages can be requested and handled on an individual basis.

4. Internal Practices

The City of Sweetwater commits to the following steps to promote awareness and sensitivity to fair housing issues in all of its government functions.

- a. Staff Training** - The City will regularly train its staff and elected officials on fair housing considerations, including working with people with disabilities and limited English proficiency constituents. The following departments will receive annual training: front desk/reception, police and fire, housing and community development, inspections, public health, and elected officials.
- b. Housing Analysis** - The City will review its housing inventory every ten years to examine the affordability of both rental and owner-occupied housing and whether all reasonable actions have been taken to remove barriers to ensure adequate housing choice for all city residents.

- c. **Code Analysis** - The City will review its municipal code every ten years, with specific focus on ordinances related to zoning and building and occupancy standards to identify any potential for disparate impact or disparate treatment.
- d. **Project Planning and Analysis** - The City will make determinations in project planning with an eye to fair housing issues, including whether potential projects may perpetuate segregation or lead to displacement of protected classes.
- e. **Community Engagement** - The City commits to ongoing community engagement. Specifically, the City commits to robust conversations with community regarding potential housing projects, zoning changes, and other land use planning decisions, with a particular focus on engaging those most impacted by discrimination.
- f. **Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing** - The City agrees to participate in the Regional Fair Housing Plan, as organized by the regional Fair Housing Implementation Council. The City will integrate the recommendations and action plan into local planning documents, including the Comprehensive Plan, and, when applicable, the Consolidated Plan and documents.
- g. **Consult with Tribal Nations on Planning, Development, and Housing** – The City will commit to government-to-government relationships and engagement with Tribal Nations for planning decisions that have potential to impact housing choice, housing stock, and fair housing rights of Tribal citizens and/or are in close proximity to Tribal lands.
- h. **Additional Policies** - The City adopts the following policies to inform its work:
 - 1. Limited English Proficiency Policy (attached)

2. Americans with Disabilities Act Policy (attached)

The City of Sweetwater will review, revise if necessary, and adopt annually the Fair Housing Statement and the Fair Housing Plan.