

UNION CITY, CA
Mayor Carol Dutra-Vernaci

UNION CITY'S COMPASSIONATE CITY STATUS

Union City's Human Relations Commission wanted to establish safeguards for the community against fears of post-election discrimination and anti-immigration federal policies that were heightened during and after the 2016 Presidential election. The Commission formed a subcommittee to carry out a community-driven process that ultimately resulted in the City Council's May 9, 2017 unanimous adoption of a resolution designating Union City as a Compassionate City. Excerpts of the resolve clauses in the resolution include the following:

- Union City shall not engage in activities solely for the purpose of enforcing federal immigration law. The Union City Police Department does not independently conduct sweeps or other organized efforts for the purpose of detaining suspected undocumented aliens....
- Union City shall not enter into any partnerships or written agreement with federal authorities for the sake of enforcing federal civil immigration law....
- Unless immigration status is relevant to another criminal offense or investigation, suspicion or knowledge of an undocumented alien shall not be the sole basis for contact, detention, or arrest....
- To encourage crime reporting and cooperation in the investigation of criminal activity, all individuals, regardless of their immigration status, must feel secure that contacting or being addressed by members of law enforcement will not automatically lead to immigration inquiry and /or deportation.
- Individuals should not be held in custody solely for a civil immigration hold.
- A detainer will be acted upon only for arrestees with pending criminal cases who would normally be held for further criminal proceedings, provided the ICE immigration detainer is accompanied with an arrest warrant signed by a judge.
- No city employee or service provider shall ask or use knowledge of an individual's immigration status as a basis for providing services, unless it is material to the service being sought (i.e., immigration services). No city service shall be denied based upon race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, ethnicity, national origin, or immigration status.
- City resources shall not be used to create, assist in the creation, or maintain a registry based on race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, ethnicity, or national origin for the purpose of reporting any immigration-related data to federal law enforcement.

The complete resolution is [HERE](#). The report on the Commission's process is [HERE](#).

Obviously, working with the Police Department is key to reaching agreement on a resolution such as this one. One of the trickiest challenges to navigate when dealing with "sanctuary city" status involves assurance that the role of local law enforcement in dealing with criminals – immigrant or non-immigrant – is not minimized or debilitated.

While City resources are extremely limited, since adoption of the resolution, 22 large welcoming signs identifying Union City as a Compassionate City have been erected on roadways entering the City. A handout on the City's Compassionate City designation has been produced for use by commissioners in community events held to discuss the initiative.

Adoption of the resolution was supported by the majority of the community, and officials believe it has been helpful in simmering down temperaments in the community when cultural and racial issues have arisen. It's anticipated that the next step for the City may involve the Commission's development of a Compassionate City Plan to increase the resolution's impact on the ground; this could include an outreach campaign involving events such as community forums and know-your-rights seminars.

Additional information is available from Lauren Sugayan, Communications and Marketing Manager, City of Union City, at LaurenS@UnionCity.org, or 510-675-5400.

