



**WORK SESSION MEETING
OF THE
CITY COUNCIL
City of Maplewood, Missouri**

City Council Chambers, City Hall
7601 Manchester Road, Maplewood, MO 63143

**Tuesday, June 10, 2025
6:30 PM**

AGENDA

1. Call to Order
2. Roll Call
3. Non-Discrimination Policy Update Discussion
4. Adjournment

Accessibility Notice

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Virtual Access

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Posted on June 6, 2025, at Maplewood City Hall and maplewoodmo.gov



To: City Manager Amber Withycombe

From: Ward 3 Council Member Nick Homa; Ward 1 Council Member C. Wiley

Cc: Assistant City Manager Anthony Traxler

Date: May 19, 2025

Re: Addition to 05/27/2025 Work Session – Non-Discrimination Policy Update

As rights for the queer and trans community are eroded at the state and federal level, local protections for LGBTQIA+ community members are necessary to continue fostering a safe and inclusive environment in Maplewood. While the city’s municipal code currently prohibits discrimination in housing and public accommodations, it lacks such a policy in private employment, leaving queer and trans community members, as well as other protected classes, vulnerable to discriminatory practices in their places of work. As the City of Maplewood continues to enact its 5-year DEIB strategic plan, which highlights the role of inclusivity in promoting a strong community and diverse workforce, implementing local protections in the hiring and employing of community members in Maplewood will further the city’s efforts to support a thriving local economy and welcoming community for all.

Local municipalities such as University City and others throughout the state already offer non-discrimination protections in employment. The state of Missouri has no law prohibiting municipalities from implementing such protections, and since 2020 local municipalities with such protections have been aligned with federal law which prohibits employment discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity, along with other protected classes. Adding an employment non-discrimination policy to the municipal code will align with Maplewood’s existing non-discrimination policies in housing and public accommodations as well as protection practices in neighboring cities and at the federal level.

University City, MO’s [employment non-discrimination policy](#) reads in part as follows:

For an employer, because of the race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, ancestry, age or disability of an individual:

- a. *To fail or refuse to hire or to discharge any individual, or otherwise discriminate against any individual with respect to his/her compensation, terms, conditions or privileges of employment, because of such individual’s race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, ancestry, age or disability, or*

- b. *To limit, segregate or classify his/her employees or his/her employment applicants in any way which would deprive or tend to deprive any individual of employment opportunities or otherwise adversely affect his/her status as an employee because of such individual's race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, ancestry, age or disability.*

Columbia, MO's [employment non-discrimination policy](#) reads in part as follows:

It shall be unlawful: (1) For an employer, because of any individual's protected category or familial status:

- a. *To fail or refuse to hire or to discharge any individual, or otherwise to discriminate against any individual with respect to the individual's compensation, terms, conditions, or privileges of employment.*
- b. *To limit, segregate or classify employees in any way which would deprive or tend to deprive any individual of employment opportunities or otherwise adversely affect the individual's status as an employee.*

Additional considerations:

(1) Sec. [38-8.d](#) prohibits discrimination in hiring and employment within the city government, but does not currently include a reference to gender identity as a protected class.

(2) The city should additionally explore explicit non-discrimination protections in the contracting of services by the city government.

(3) The city should additionally explore updating the definition of "sexual orientation" in Sec. [30-19](#), which currently omits additional sexual orientations and related inclusive language.

Pending additional review by legal and city staff, please cause this item to be added to the May 27, 2025 City Council Work Session.

Memorandum



To: Mayor and City Council
From: Amber Withycombe, City Manager
Date: June 5, 2025
Re: **Non-Discrimination Policy Additions and Updates**

In response to Council Members Homa and Wiley’s request to add employment non-discrimination protections to the city’s code, City Attorney Graves and I have analyzed implementation options ranging from comprehensive investigation models to symbolic policy statements. This analysis provides Council with information to evaluate approaches based on community priorities, available resources, and administrative feasibility.

Columbia Investigation Model

Columbia, Missouri, operates a [Human Rights Commission](#) that investigates employment discrimination complaints through their Law Department. Their process includes a Human Rights Investigator who serves as a neutral factfinder, with cases handled by a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Administrator. The Commission reviews investigation findings to determine probable cause, and if conciliation fails, cases may be forwarded to the municipal prosecutor.

For Maplewood, implementing this model would require establishing investigative expertise, formal commission procedures, and coordination with prosecution that exceeds our current administrative structure. The specific budgetary requirements require further research.

University City Referral Model

University City’s [Commission on Human Relations](#) consists of seven members who serve in an advisory capacity to City Council. Their approach focuses on education, community dialogue, and referral services rather than formal complaint investigation. The Commission’s stated goals include advising the City Council on legislation and policies, educating about discrimination and prejudice, conducting focus groups, and facilitating conversations between community groups.

University City explicitly does not investigate discrimination complaints, instead maintaining a referral system directing individuals to appropriate enforcement agencies including the Metropolitan St. Louis Equal Housing Opportunity Council and the Missouri Commission on Human Rights. This approach acknowledges that effective discrimination investigation requires specialized expertise while still maintaining community commitment to non-discrimination values.

Maplewood currently has an established Commission on Human Relations under Chapter 30 of the code, which has authority to administer housing discrimination matters. However, this commission has been inactive for many years after the dissolution of the city’s Housing Development Corporation. The existing ordinance structure provides a foundation that could potentially be revitalized or modified to address employment discrimination, though this would require consideration of staffing resources and commission scope.

Symbolic Policy Framework

Council may wish to consider a more symbolic approach, which would establish clear non-discrimination policy language in our code without investigative or prosecutorial functions. The policy would serve as a community values statement while directing individuals to appropriate state and federal enforcement agencies. This option requires minimal administrative infrastructure while still providing policy framework and clear guidance for residents seeking assistance.

The city currently supports multiple volunteer commissions, each requiring staff liaison time, meeting coordination, and ongoing administrative support. Recent creation of the Human Services Commission and the planned FY26 creation of a Police Advisory Board may limit capacity for additional volunteer body support without reallocating existing responsibilities.

Legal and Policy Considerations

All implementation options presented above align with federal employment discrimination law while avoiding conflicts with state legislation. Missouri law permits municipal non-discrimination protections, and federal law has prohibited employment discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity since 2020.

Investigation models require greater legal oversight and present higher liability exposure, while referral and symbolic approaches minimize legal risk by directing cases to agencies with specialized expertise. Each option relates differently to the city's DEIB strategic plan, with more comprehensive approaches providing stronger implementation but requiring resources that compete with other initiatives.

Immediate Implementation Items

Regardless of the broader implementation approach selected, staff can prepare proposed ordinance language for a future Council meeting addressing the three specific updates mentioned in the Council memo for consideration:

- **Section 38-8. (d) Amendment:** Adding gender identity as a protected class in city government employment, ensuring comprehensive protection for employees and job applicants.
- **Contracting Non-Discrimination Protections:** Developing language requiring contractors to maintain non-discrimination employment policies as a condition of city contracts, leveraging the City's purchasing power to promote inclusive practices.
- **Sexual Orientation Definition Update:** Modernizing Section 30-19 language to reflect current understanding of sexual orientation and gender identity with contemporary, inclusive terminology.

Considerations for Council Deliberation

Council may wish to evaluate the following factors when considering implementation approaches:

- The city's current capacity for supporting additional administrative functions without compromising existing services or requiring significant organizational restructuring.

- The availability of state and federal resources for complaint processing and technical assistance.
- Whether immediate symbolic commitment is preferred over more comprehensive but resource-intensive approaches that require longer development periods.

The three immediate updates identified in the Council request can be prepared regardless of broader implementation approach. These updates strengthen existing city employment protections and contracting standards while modernizing policy language for protected categories.