



**TO:** Elizabeth Pauli, City Manager  
**FROM:** Council Member Sarah Rumbaugh  
**COPY:** City Council and City Clerk  
**SUBJECT:** **Resolution - International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance Working Definition of Antisemitism - December 20, 2020**  
**DATE:** December 14, 2022

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**SUMMARY AND PURPOSE:**

A resolution directing the City Manager to have the City of Tacoma’s Office of Equity and Human Rights adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance Working Definition of Antisemitism for the City of Tacoma.  
[Council Member Rumbaugh]

**COUNCIL SPONSORS:**

Mayor Woodards, Council Member Diaz, and Council Member Rumbaugh

**BACKGROUND:**

**The Council Member’s Recommendation is Based On:**

On 26 May 2016, the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Plenary decided to adopt the following nonlegally binding working definition of antisemitism<sup>1</sup>:

Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities.

The IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism is a crucial first step in addressing the horrific rise in antisemitism, especially in Europe and the United States. The Working Definition is a clear and compact description of antisemitism in its various forms, including Holocaust denial, prejudices against Jews, and the denial of Israel’s right to exist. The Definition sends a message that governments understand the threat, which is the obvious first step in addressing it. American Jewish Committee (AJC) was involved in the original drafting of the definition 14 years ago and continues to urge governments to adopt it.

AJC is encouraging local, state, regional and national bodies to endorse the use of the Working Definition as a valuable educational tool to identify and combat antisemitism. As of November 2022, 30 states and the District of Columbia, either through proclamation, executive order, or legislation, are using or have recognized the importance of the IHRA definition. On Oct. 3, 2022, The City of Bellevue officially recognized the definition of antisemitism<sup>2</sup>. Bellevue is the first city in the Pacific Northwest to adopt this type of proclamation, which is used in many other cities around the globe.

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT/ CUSTOMER RESEARCH:**

Representatives from the American Jewish Committee (AJC) requested the City of Tacoma adopt the IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism. On January 26, 2021, at the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, 51 Major American Jewish Organizations Across the Political and Religious Spectrum adopted this

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ajc.org/the-working-definition-of-antisemitism>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/bellevue-adopts-proclamation-defining-antisemitism/ZPIZF6W7LVCKXAPJQIOGHYNU7I/>



definition of antisemitism<sup>3</sup>. Locally, CM Rumbaugh shared the proposal with leaders at Temple Beth El and other leaders in the Tacoma Jewish community in advance of bringing forward the resolution.

**2025 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:**

**Equity and Accessibility: (Mandatory)**

Each year, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) Center on Extremism tracks incidents of antisemitic harassment, vandalism and assault in the United States. Since 1979 they have published this information in an annual Audit of Antisemitic Incidents. In 2021, ADL tabulated 2,717 antisemitic incidents across the United States. This represents a 34% increase from the 2,026 incidents recorded in 2020 and is the highest number on record since ADL began tracking antisemitic incidents in 1979. This report highlights the high rates of incidents in Washington state in both 2020 and 2021. Adopting the IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism provides a tool to identify and combat antisemitism in Tacoma.

**Civic Engagement: Equity Index Score: Moderate Opportunity**

Increase the percentage of residents who believe they are able to have a positive impact on the community and express trust in the public institutions in Tacoma.

**Livability: Equity Index Score: Moderate Opportunity**

Increase positive public perception of safety and overall quality of life.

Explain how your legislation will affect the selected indicator(s).

The Definition sends a message that governments understand the threat, which is the obvious first step in addressing it. Adopting this definition for the City of Tacoma shows our community that their public institutions are committed to addressing antisemitism and creating a welcoming environment for people of all faiths and backgrounds, including our Jewish community.

**ALTERNATIVES:**

Alternative(s)	Positive Impact(s)	Negative Impact(s)
1. Take no action		Does not acknowledge impacts of antisemitism on our community
2. Adopt a different definition	Provides local community the chance to engage with and own the definition	Would not be in alignment with the IHRA and leading American Jewish organizations

**EVALUATION AND FOLLOW UP:**

The City of Tacoma’s Office of Equity and Human Rights adopt the IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism for the City of Tacoma as a tool to identify and combat antisemitism.

**SPONSOR RECOMMENDATION:**

Sponsors recommend adopting this resolution to make it clear what the City means when it says Tacoma is opposed to antisemitism.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

No fiscal impact.

<sup>3</sup> <https://jewishinsider.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Conference-of-Presidents-Member-Organizations-Adopt-IHRA-Definition-of-Antisemitism.pdf>