

## Doraville's Non-Discrimination Ordinance

Doraville is a dynamic, incredibly diverse spot in metro Atlanta. People from all types of backgrounds and nationalities live here. "Diversity" is such an important part of our city's identity that it is even part of the city's Motto ("Diversity, Vitality, Community").

We take our city's identity as a diverse community seriously, as does our mayor, fellow council members and city staff. We also strongly feel that it's important to push the needle from tolerance to inclusion. Because of this, we supported the city's participation in both Welcoming America and the One Region Initiative – committing the city to taking actions that reach out to immigrant and refugee populations within our community. Our next step in this process is the introduction of a Non-Discrimination Ordinance at the November 5<sup>th</sup> council work session and meeting.

This ordinance will provide a level of protection for employees and consumers of Doraville businesses against discrimination based on race, religion, color, sex, disability, national origin, ancestry, sexual orientation, gender identity, or military status. Doraville would be just the second city in Georgia (after Atlanta) to adopt such an ordinance. It is a little known fact that Georgia does not have any protections for discrimination based on the statuses mentioned above – if someone is a member of a protected class and wants to file a complaint, they are required to file a federal lawsuit, which is a challenge for many people who might have been wronged. Most LGBTQ people are not covered as a Federal protected class and have no recourse to discrimination.

The goal for Doraville's Non-Discrimination Ordinance is to provide realistic, reasonable protections locally, and to discourage anyone operating a business or offering public accommodations here in Doraville from discriminating. Our research shows that Non-Discrimination ordinances are tied to economic development for the cities that adopt them. Corporations that are looking for a new location are frequently drawn to municipalities that have protections in place for their employees. Plus, it's just the right thing to do.

In talking with nearby cities, we think this is an opportunity for Doraville to lead the way on diversity and inclusion in our region. Council Member Koontz has crafted a non-discrimination ordinance that will be a model for other small cities that do not have the same level of resources as City of Atlanta. It was created with input from lawyers from all over the country, and has been vetted by lawyers and judges in the state of Georgia as being legal and defensible. We have talked with other elected officials in neighboring cities and believe that several of them will follow our lead and pass similar ordinances soon after we pass ours.

While being one of the first to do something is a leap, we also know that the rewards can be great, if you have the courage to step up. We are both excited about the story this ordinance will tell people in Metro Atlanta and beyond about Doraville's commitment to diversity and inclusion. We will be sending a strong message that Doraville is ready for change, and that we welcome all to join us as we grow.

Sincerely,

Stephe Koontz, Doraville City Council District 3  
Joseph Geierman, Doraville City Council District 2