

# What We Heard Report

## Corporate Accessibility Plan Public Engagement

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**Edmonton**

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>3</b>
Summary of Key Themes	4
<b>Project Overview</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Public Engagement</b>	<b>6</b>
How We Engaged (ADVISE)	6
Who Was Engaged	8
What We Asked	10
<b>What We Heard</b>	<b>12</b>
Phase One engagement: Key themes	12
Phase Two engagement: Key themes	14
Recreation and Culture draft Actions	16
Infrastructure draft Actions	18
Transit draft Actions	22
Education draft Actions	25
Communications draft Actions	26
Waste Collection draft Actions	29
Workplace Culture draft Actions	30
Community Engagement draft Actions	32
Edmonton Elections draft Actions	34
Hiring Process for People with Disabilities	36
<b>What Happens Next</b>	<b>37</b>

“Accessibility is fundamental to the quality of life, well-being, and engagement of individuals with disabilities in the social, cultural, spiritual and political aspects of society.” - City of Edmonton Policy C602

## **Executive Summary**

The City of Edmonton’s Accessibility for People with Disabilities Policy C602 is our commitment to ensure Edmontonians with disabilities are treated with respect and have equitable access and opportunities to participate in the city.

The creation of the first three-year Corporate Accessibility Plan is the next phase in the implementation of the Policy. The City of Edmonton’s Corporate Accessibility Plan will list actions that are planned to be implemented between 2021 and 2024 to support the City’s commitment of making Edmonton a more accessible city.

By honouring the principle “Nothing About Us Without Us”, the Corporate Accessibility Plan will take into account the insights, wisdom, and lived experiences of people with disabilities to achieve our vision of a more accessible city. We asked participants for their thoughts on draft Accessibility Actions intended to reduce accessibility barriers in the city. This public engagement report contains feedback received from the accessibility community, including people with disabilities and their caregivers, as well as Edmontonians as a whole.

There was general support and appreciation for the proposed Actions and the steps the City of Edmonton is taking to improve accessibility. Participants encouraged the City to understand all perspectives of the full spectrum of disabilities while striving to achieve accessibility for all. Accessible language (including disability and language barriers) was frequently mentioned with reminders to consider the diversity of the audience.

## Summary of Key Themes

- Inclusivity is key. Embrace people with different disabilities and treat everyone equally and with respect.
- Need for ongoing engagement/consultation with people with disabilities and encouragement for the City to continue to strive for accessibility for all.
- Require accessibility awareness training for all City staff with a focus on invisible disabilities, attitude and customer service.
- Concerns regarding snow and ice, inaccessible buildings, access during construction, and accessibility of sidewalks, streets, elevators etc.
- Need for more accessible programs, clear communication, consolidated guides, and accessible formats.
- Appreciation for accommodations, Leisure Access Program, and apps such as 311, ETS, and EPL Mobile.
- Desire for safe access to transit for people with disabilities and audible street crossings.
- Concerns with how long the actions will take to be implemented.

## Project Overview

The City of Edmonton’s Accessibility for People with Disabilities Policy C602 is our commitment to ensure Edmontonians with disabilities are treated with respect and have equitable access and opportunities to participate in the city.

The creation of the first three-year Corporate Accessibility Plan is the next phase in the implementation of the Policy. The Plan will include prioritized Accessibility Actions that are planned to be implemented over the next three years from 2021 to 2024.



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## Public Engagement

People with disabilities face barriers to equal participation in the community. The public engagement activities conducted were designed to gather lived experiences of Edmontonians with disabilities, their caregivers, and the organizations who work with them.

Through two phases of public engagement in 2020, we have heard from many people with disabilities, their caregivers and the organizations who support them.

In Phase One of the public engagement, we asked questions about barriers to accessibility in the city. What we heard supported the development of draft Accessibility Actions.

In Phase Two, we asked citizens to review the draft Accessibility Actions and to tell us what they liked. We asked what could be better and how the actions might impact people with disabilities.

This report summarizes the findings of both phases of the public engagement.

### How We Engaged (ADVISE)



The “Spectrum of Public Engagement” defines the role of the public in the public engagement process. In this case, the public played an **“Advise”** role. This means that the City

consulted with the public to gather feedback and perspectives that are considered in finalizing the Plan.

Phase One Highlights	Phase Two Highlights
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 7 focus groups and in-depth interviews (different disabilities such as sensory (blind/deaf), developmental, cognitive, and physical).</li> <li>● 7 one-on-one discussions</li> <li>● Online survey</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Online engagement through City's Engaged Edmonton website</li> <li>● Engagement handbook</li> <li>● Telephone</li> <li>● Canada Video Relay Service (VRS)</li> <li>● Zoom meeting</li> </ul>

### Engagement Goals

Phase One: February 11 to March 5, 2020

- Identify experiences regarding accessibility barriers in the city and potential solutions to remove and/or prevent.
- Identify what is working to achieve accessibility in the City.
- Identify what needs to be improved to enhance accessibility.

Phase Two: November 23 to December 9, 2020

- Gather feedback on the draft Accessibility Actions developed by City Departments, based on participant inputs in Phase One.

- To inform about Actions the City has already taken and implemented.

### **Promotion**

- Email invitations to stakeholders
- Public Service Announcement
- Social media including Twitter and Facebook
- Website
- Stakeholder promotion e.g. Accessibility Advisory Committee sharing among their networks

## **Who Was Engaged**

### **External Audiences**

- General public (this includes people who support or are caregivers of a person with a disability)
- People with disabilities who live and/or work in the City of Edmonton. This means:
  - Physical disability or mobility impairment
  - Sensory disabilities (Blind, deaf, hard of hearing)
  - Developmental disabilities such as Autism, cognitive or intellectual/learning
- Non-profit organizations such as sports and recreation, arts, music and disability-specific groups and special interest groups that advocate for and/or provide services or programs to people with disabilities. Some include but not limited to: Voices of Albertans with Disabilities, Excel Society, Skills Society, Inclusion Alberta, CNIB, Spinal Cord Injury Alberta,



Edmonton Association of the Deaf, Chrysalis, Centre for Autism, Edmonton Seniors Coordinating Council.

- Organizations, special interest groups and shelters that provide support and services to the most vulnerable communities such as Boyle Street, YWCA, Hope Mission, WIN House, Pride Centre of Edmonton.
- First Nations and Indigenous groups and organizations such as Canadian Native Friendship Centre, Enoch Cree First Nations, Métis Nation of Alberta.

### **Internal Audiences**

- City of Edmonton staff
- Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC)

### **Engagement Participation**

#### **Phase One:**

- 628 total participants engaged
- 582 respondents to the online survey
- 46 stakeholders participated in focus groups and interviews
- 59 organizations that serve people with disabilities were engaged

#### **Phase Two:**

- 976 visitors to Engaged Edmonton web page
- 540 email and phone interactions with stakeholders and organizations
- 9 organizations shared the engagement opportunity within their networks
- 200 Engagement Handbooks distributed

- 81 total participants engaged
  - o 58 respondents to Engaged Edmonton website
  - o 23 stakeholder conversations via Canada Video Relay Service, phone, email, or Zoom
    - 2 in-depth interviews
    - 1 virtual engagement workshop with Edmonton Association of the Deaf

## **What We Asked**

### **Phase One engagement**

We wanted to hear about what accessibility barriers people with disabilities and their caregivers face and what the City could do to make their lives better. This information was collected to support the development of Accessibility Actions.

We asked the following questions:

- What could the City improve in its infrastructure and services to ensure that people with disabilities can participate fully in City life?
- What is working and what could be done to improve accessibility?
- What are the top barriers to accessibility for citizens with disabilities?
- What are the three most essential accessibility options that would improve your quality of life?

### **Phase Two engagement**

We wanted to hear feedback on the draft Accessibility Actions that will make up the Corporate Accessibility Plan.

We asked:

- Please rate the level of impact these draft actions will have in improving accessibility in Edmonton.
- How will these draft actions impact people with disabilities?
- What do you think about these actions?

“Accessibility changes to the City benefit all citizens, not just people with disabilities.” - Participant, Focus Group

## What We Heard

### Phase One engagement: Key themes

#### Communication

- Clear, easy to understand communication methods and accessible formats are important.
- Better communication, awareness and education about DATS changes, services, rules, features and customer tools for users, caregivers and agencies servicing DATS users.
- Explore the option of having a recreation guide for all programs including programs for people with disabilities.

#### Training

- Accessibility awareness training for City of Edmonton employees including: invisible disabilities and customer service.
- Disability awareness training for transit operators to encourage more compassionate and helpful attitudes towards transit users with disabilities.

#### Programs and Services

- Require more accessible recreation programs and increased staff awareness to enable better communication with people with disabilities.
- Appreciation for ASL interpretation at City events and subsidy programs i.e. Leisure Access Pass and Ride Transit.

"A child with disabilities often spends hours being taught how to interact with others but why don't we spend time teaching those without disability how to interact with them?" – Participant, Focus Group

- Positive interactions were reported with City staff, especially at recreation centres and libraries.

#### Technology

- Appreciation for City apps i.e. 311, Edmonton Public Library (EPL Mobile), and ETS.

#### Infrastructure

- The buildings should consider the needs of people with all types of abilities as there are still many places and programs that are not accessible or are difficult to access.
- More consideration for safety, barrier-free movement and communication is needed for people with disabilities during construction projects.
- Snow and ice pose significant barriers to movement through communities.
- Keep sidewalks, streets, escalators, elevators, and city facilities accessible and maintained for safe and comfortable movement.

#### Transit

- Safe access to transit services for people with physical disabilities and those using mobility equipment.
- Better consultation about vehicle and infrastructure features affecting the transit experience of users with a range of disabilities.

- Where available, the audible and vibrating street crossing technology, LRT crossing arms for pedestrians made respondents feel safe.

#### Consultation

- Desire for more consultation with people who have lived experiences around disability when making changes, developing programs and services, and in designing infrastructure.

#### Other/General

- General support and appreciation for steps the City is taking to improve accessibility.
- People affirmed that an accessibility lens should be applied to City programs, services, and infrastructure.
- Accessible parking should be prioritized and enforced.

### **Phase Two engagement: Key themes**

- General support and appreciation for proposed actions. Participants appreciated being engaged and encouraged the City to understand all perspectives of the full spectrum of disabilities.
- Clear communication, accessible formats and disability awareness training for all City staff.
- Inclusivity is key. Embrace people with different disabilities.
- Some respondents thought draft actions could be more specific and clear.
- Need for more engagement with people with disabilities.

“A good first step.” –  
Survey Participant

- Treat people equally and with respect.
- Many respondents reiterated the UN Convention of Persons with Disabilities which states “that all persons with all types of disabilities must enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms.” They emphasized that Canada ratified and agreed to follow the convention in 2006 and encouraged the City to continue to strive for accessibility for all.
- Concerns with how long the actions will take to complete.
- Accessible language (including disability and language barriers) was frequently mentioned with reminders to consider the diversity of the audience.
- Allow enough time for people to participate in engagement activities.



## Recreation and Culture draft Actions

These draft Actions relate to fun and interesting things to do in Edmonton.

1. Review existing recreation publications, programs, and supports to assess how accessibility is included (examples include Rec Facility Guides, Leisure Access Program, etc.).
2. Engage the Interagency Committee on Inclusive Recreation to consider the possibility of expanding their scope to address general accessibility issues, programs, services and potential partnerships.
3. Explore accessible programs that could be done with community organizations serving people with disabilities.

### **What we heard regarding the draft Recreation and Culture Actions**

- Improve accessibility of recreation and culture infrastructure and services.
- Many people did not know about the Interagency Committee on Inclusive Recreation.

On inclusion, some respondents:

- noted that segregating people with disabilities into separate programs away from able bodied people is not true inclusion.
- wanted to see the City strive for inclusion in all programs so anyone may participate in any programs.
- encouraged a policy of diversity on the Interagency Committee to ensure it reflects the disability community.



" ... I would love to see more information on how to utilize accessible recreation. If I need to use a lift to get into a pool, is there staff to assist? Do I need to phone and book this ahead of time? Are there additional costs?"  
– Survey Participant

On collaboration, some respondents:

- agreed that there are many opportunities to explore and support collaborative programming.
- felt skeptical of this intention given that, in the past, collaborative initiatives had been cancelled or defunded.
- hoped that City collaboration with community organizations comes with dedicated funding as many organizations are already over-stretched.
- wanted collaborations to reflect the full scope of diversity.



### Infrastructure draft Actions

These draft Actions relate to the City's built environment, such as roads and recreation centres.

1. Develop a process to ensure accessibility and Universal Design lenses are applied throughout all stages and phases of projects.
2. Use the City of Edmonton Access Design Guide as a reference tool.
3. Accessibility in a Winter City: Review frequency and prioritization of snow, ice, and windrow clearance in residential areas, at crosswalks and transit zones to facilitate safe movement through the community and access to basic transportation for people with physical disabilities.
4. Explore policy changes that would prioritize snow clearance enforcement.
5. Develop requirements to ensure barrier-free access is maintained during construction. This will include improving communication, safe access, and movement around construction zones considering people with varying abilities.
6. Assess City-owned and operated spaces (e.g., buildings, transit centres, streets, parks) to understand the current state and inform prioritization of accessibility improvements (e.g., short, medium, long term). This will include exploring the feasibility and cost implications of an accessibility certification.
7. Review and update accessible parking design and maintenance practices. This will include exploring policy changes that would prioritize enforcement of accessible parking.

“It should be an incredibly high bar to grant a permit to block the sidewalk. If sidewalks are blocked, there should be a standard approach to an alternative path. Because it's never the same, it's very hard for a blind person to independently navigate these situations.” – Survey Participant.

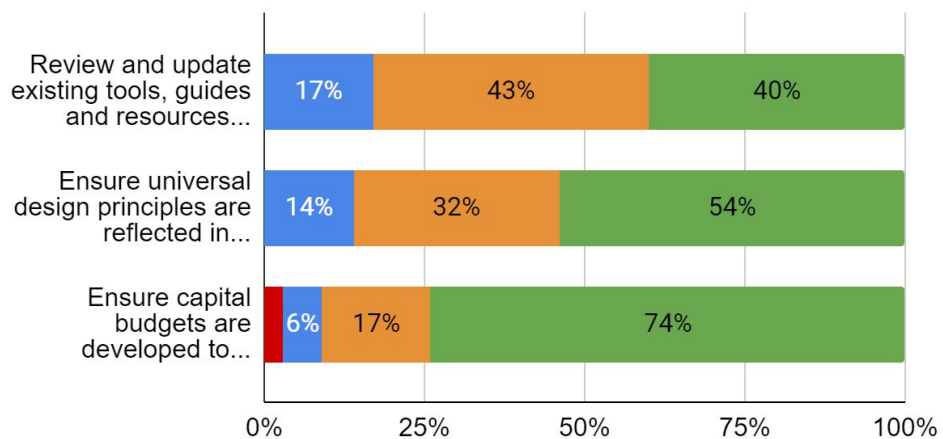
For the following draft Actions participants were asked to rate the level of impact they thought the draft Actions would have in improving accessibility in Edmonton (ranking from positive to negative).

8. Review and update existing tools, guides, and resources to align with the City's commitments towards accessibility as per Policy C602, Administrative Directive, and Procedure.
9. Ensure Universal Design principles are reflected in documents and processes used to deliver City Streetscape furniture and landscaping elements.
10. Ensure capital budgets are developed to enable the planning and delivery of quality, universally accessible infrastructure.

**What we heard regarding the draft Infrastructure Actions**

Please rate the level impact you think the actions will have in improving accessibility in Edmonton (Number of respondents = 35)

■ Moderate negative impact ■ No impact ■ Moderate positive impact ■ Big positive impacts



On consulting with people with disabilities, recommendations include:

- consulting with people with disabilities to ensure infrastructure design is accessible for all abilities.

On designing accessible spaces, recommendations include:

- using Universal Design as the minimum standard and striving to go above and beyond.
- considering retrofitting existing buildings and having accessible designs for residences.
- better enforcement of the Access Design Guide. (Participants weren't always aware of the City of Edmonton Access Design Guide and wanted to know more. Participants who were aware of the Guide, supported it.)
- continuing to consult and involve people with disabilities in the Access Design Guide. They encouraged the City to continuously improve the guide by reviewing and updating it regularly.
- communicating more detailed information about how the City plans to assess city-owned spaces and how it will prioritize improvements.

On maintaining accessible spaces, recommendations include:

- clearing snow in a timely and efficient manner and taking over snow clearance versus contracting it out.
- accessibility training for contractors ploughing streets to respect cut outs and other accessibility features.
- making it easier for people to report accessibility violations or areas of concern to the City. Some respondents encouraged the City to take immediate action when receiving these reports.

- ensuring accessible parking design includes safe travel from the vehicle to various locations around the parking lot. This includes proper snow removal, room for vehicle doors to open safely, a person being able to exit and enter the vehicle safely, etc.

On construction site practices, recommendations include:

- ensuring all construction companies, including private ones, follow barrier-free access requirements.
- exploring all methods of notification to provide information regarding construction areas. For example: people should be able to receive push notifications based on location services being enabled on a smartphone.



### Transit draft Actions

These draft Actions will improve accessibility in transit.

1. Conduct inclusive customer communications, public education, and outreach to prepare transit customers of all ages and abilities for the Bus Network Redesign.
2. Review transit fleet specifications before purchase commitments or implementing changes to the current fleet (vehicles) to ensure that the needs of transit users with disabilities are considered.
3. Continuous improvement of the Ride Transit program to address customer feedback on complexity and ease of use.
4. Improve Paratransit [Disabled Adult Transit Service (DATS)] operator training, including training for contract service providers.
5. Improve Paratransit self-serve information and booking options.
6. Paratransit service enhancements such as: appointment time-based booking, distance-based ride times.
7. Improve communication with Paratransit users about DATS changes services, rules, features, customer tools, etc.
8. Utilize the DATS Advisory Group to assess signage, pick-up locations, doors, facilities, loading and unloading zones, and bike lanes to ensure paratransit access and sites are accessible for both clients and DATS service providers.
9. Explore the possibility of a centralized booking system for Vehicle for Hire (accessible taxis) and DATS.

“Consult with a wide variety of users of Ride Transit program before making any changes and listen to them. The program is created for a population of vulnerable citizens so make it as easy to use as possible.”  
– Survey Participant

### What we heard regarding the draft Transit Actions

On Bus Network Redesign, some respondents:

- did not feel adequately consulted in the development of the Bus Network Redesign.
- believe the redesign has resulted in less routes and service which equals less inclusion.
- are not aware of the Bus Network Redesign.

On communications, recommendations include:

- keeping it simple and clear.
- considering the impact of changes on non-neurotypical individuals who depend on routine. Communicate to them specifically.
- consider the diversity of the audience and use all communication channels and methods to ensure all people have access to information.
- communicating information about the DATS Advisory Group. Not all respondents were aware of its existence.
- improving safety on transit.

On inclusion, recommendations include:

- ensuring buses and LRT's are not overcrowded and noisy.
- testing buses and transit vehicles with people with lived experiences.
- looking at how vehicles could allow people with service dogs to board the bus without issues.

"It's very important to communicate changes clearly and simply, with plain language, diagrams that are easy to understand." – Survey Participant

- exploring the possibility of making Wi-Fi available and installing a Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) device in all transit vehicles.
- training should include sensitivity and cultural awareness, and how to handle support/assistance dogs. Ensure training includes all contractors including taxi services.

On DATS, paratransit user experience, recommendations include:

- ensuring service or booking enhancements are accessible for all and not onerous for the user.
- exploring technological options and looking at other municipalities like the City of Toronto with their TTC and WheelsTrans service.
- improving wait times and reducing time spent on the bus.
- exploring a better booking system.
- collecting data on places that need improvements for their DATS pick up/drop off locations and prioritize for follow up.
- considering the possible need for so many individuals with disabilities who need a support person to travel with them.





“Embrace people with lived experience to your training and ensure refresher courses so employees are trained in current standards and best practices in their customer service delivery. We are only as good as the way we treat our most vulnerable.” - Survey Participant

## Education draft Actions

These draft Actions address how we support other community partners to become more accessible.

1. Update the Measuring Up initiative to current standards and best practices and promote awareness.
2. Advocate for the creation of buildings and public realm (surrounding built environment which includes streets, public squares, parks, walkways, etc.) that are not only well-designed, attractive, and safe but also accommodate people of all ages and abilities.
3. Promote accessible services and programs already available for Edmontonians.

## **What we heard regarding the draft Education Actions**

- Generally, many participants did not know about the Measuring Up initiative and wanted to learn more.

Recommendations include:

- finding ways to update infrastructure for professional health services like doctor’s offices.
- focusing on the use of accessible language.
- converting some programs to online learning for added accessibility and in response to the Pandemic.



### Communications draft Actions

These draft Actions deal with how the City shares information with people that live here or want to visit.

1. Improve information resources on public washrooms by including locations of barrier-free washrooms in various communication methods.
2. Reinforce and enhance safety and security measures that are in place throughout the transit system with continuous public communications.
3. Provide accessible communications products and services (ex. how to do a live stream that is accessible for everyone or how to create accessible Facebook posts and tweets).
4. Provide sign-language interpreters for significant City of Edmonton news conferences.
5. Improve information/signage (e.g. posters/pamphlets) to ensure communication material is highly visible, interpretive and uses plain language.
6. Build a process to incorporate accessibility standards in web pages, social media, design guides, and brand guidelines.

For the following draft Actions participants were asked to rate the level of impact they thought the draft Actions would have in improving accessibility in Edmonton (ranking from positive to negative).

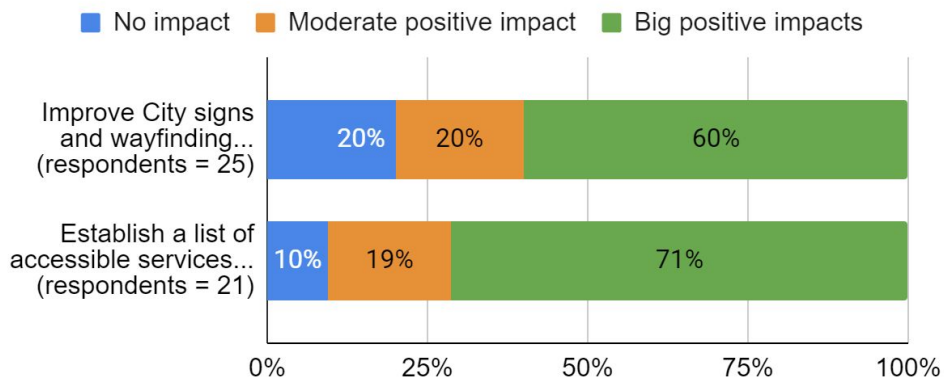
7. Improve City signs and wayfinding signage by developing a Sign Design Guide which ensures accessible signs.
8. Establish a list of accessible services and programs by creating a centralized online location for all accessibility information on the

“Consider audible services for digital pamphlets and posters. Ensure that captioning is enabled and accurate.” - Survey Participant

City website including a listing of the publications, adaptive recreation, programs, and services available to citizens (Edmonton.ca).

### What we heard regarding the draft Communications Actions

Please rate the level impact you think the actions will have in improving accessibility in Edmonton



- Very strong support for the creation of an online list of accessible services and programs with 90% of respondents indicating big to moderate positive impacts.
- Many emphasized that information caters to all disabilities including deaf-blind, deaf, etc.
- Some weren't clear on how "continuous" communication could enhance safety.
- Safety is very important to respondents; many do not feel safe taking transit.

On inclusive communications, recommendations include:

- finding opportunities to communicate to those who do not have access to technology. One respondent suggested working with the libraries. ASL and VRI on demand for the deaf community cited as an example.

“Add more signage so the accessible stalls are only used by people who NEED them.” – Survey Participant

- ensuring sign language and closed captioning is available for ALL news events.
- ensuring information/signage caters to different types of disabilities. Include using braille and induction loops with proper signage showing location of these services/materials.
- conducting ongoing consultation with people with disabilities for input during the development of web content, messaging and accessible formats.
- including more people with disabilities in the City’s branding.



“Have garbage bins available for people in wheelchairs. Large bins are difficult to wheel or open.” - Survey Participant

## Waste Collection draft Actions

These draft Actions are about garbage pick-up in the City. We have an assisted waste collection service where garbage and recycling get picked from outside the front or back door of the home.

1. Implement an update of the Assisted Waste Collection program during the Edmonton Cart Rollout project in 2021 and associated public awareness tools to prepare current and potential customers with mobility-related disabilities program details before and after the implementation of the Edmonton Cart Rollout project and the updated Assisted Waste collection program.
2. Signage and education materials used and/or displayed for waste collection programs and services need to ensure material is highly visual, interpretive and inclusive of other languages.

## **What we heard regarding the draft Waste Collection Actions**

- Many participants were not aware of the Assisted Waste Collection program and wanted to know more.
- Among participants who were aware of the Assisted Waste Collection program, some wanted information to also include braille and audio formats and some indicated that the City should expand the service to people living in apartments, townhouses and condos.



### Workplace Culture draft Actions

These draft Actions are about how people that work at the City can think about and consider accessibility when they do their work.

1. Provide training to City staff on Universal Design involving citizens with lived experience of disability, to support staff to use an accessibility lens in their work.
2. Ensure customer service standards, practices and procedures consider the needs of people with disabilities.

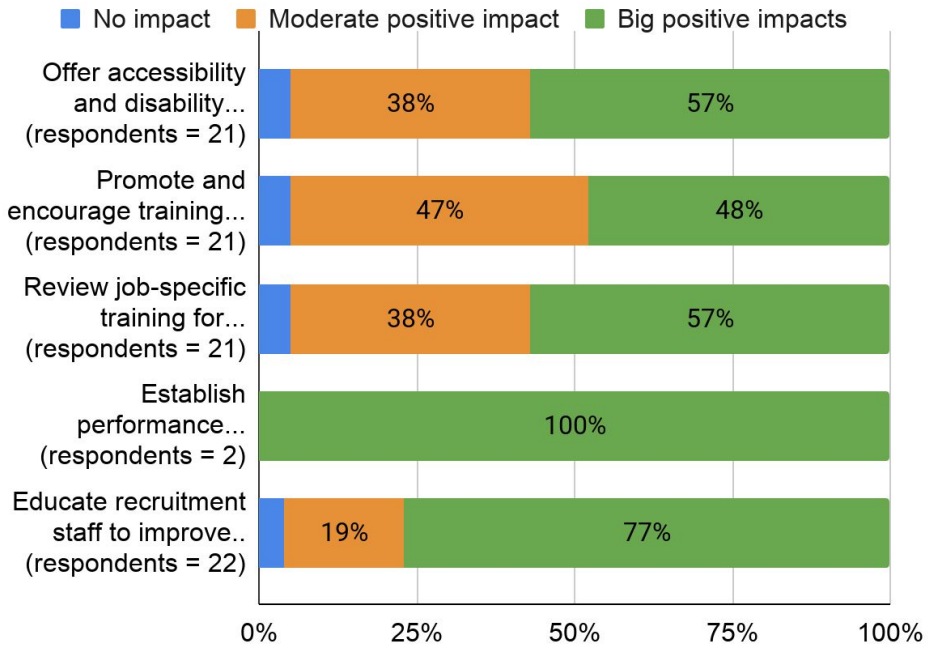
For the following draft Actions, participants were asked to rate the level of impact they thought the draft Actions would have in improving accessibility in Edmonton (ranking from positive to negative).

3. Offer disability and accessibility awareness training to all City staff to support them in identifying barriers and working towards preventing and/or removing them.
4. Promote and encourage training about physical and mental disabilities across the City of Edmonton.
5. Review job-specific training for front line staff to ensure that training includes content on disability awareness.
6. Establish performance measures for ongoing evaluation/evolution of accessibility standards to improve City programs and services.
7. Educate recruitment staff to improve accessibility of the recruitment process.

"I do not think the City performs at all as an inclusive workplace, based on my personal experience and from what I know from friends who are employed at the city. This applies to both persons with disabilities and also others. The culture of the City is not yet inclusive. I hope this Corporate Accessibility Project has a tremendous opportunity to move the needle to a more positive position, but I have to be cautiously optimistic." – Survey Participant

### What we heard regarding the draft Workplace Culture Actions

Please rate the level impact you think the actions will have in improving accessibility in Edmonton



- Respondents indicated strong support for the training of City staff, where 95% of participants said this would have a big to moderate positive impact.
- There were questions as to why the City does not use the Rick Hanson certification.

Recommendations include:

- ensuring diversity of perspectives from people who experience disability is included. Do not rely solely on Universal design.
- hiring more people with disabilities.



### **Community Engagement draft Actions**

These draft Actions are to improve the way we ask people for input on projects and plans.

1. Create a checklist of elements/best practices that support the planning and facilitating of a public engagement event to ensure that it is accessible to all users. It would include:
  - i. availability of appropriate accommodations/services providers (e.g., sign language interpreters, translators),
  - ii. content boards with large text, appropriate documentation, and materials, accessible locations (e.g. site and the venue),
  - iii. ensuring any documentation that is sent to the invitees and/or supplied during the event is accessible,
  - iv. ongoing engagement with persons with disabilities (staff and citizens) and front-line staff to capture barriers and opportunities for improvement.
2. Increased options to provide feedback on accessibility concerns through 311.
3. Initiate citizen user panels of residents with a range of disabilities to provide feedback and guidance regarding accessibility for current and proposed transit services, programs, and features.

### **What we heard regarding the draft Community Engagement Actions**

Recommendations include:

- Ensuring venues are accessible for engagement events.
- Providing materials in both digital and paper. Ensure all people have access to information and location.



- Ensuring representation of all disabilities
- 311 needs a Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) account so they can interact with Deaf people in their first language and not through TTY (teletypewriter) or just Video Relay Service (VRS).



### Edmonton Elections draft Actions

These draft Actions are meant to improve accessibility for City Council and School Board elections. The next one is in October 2021.

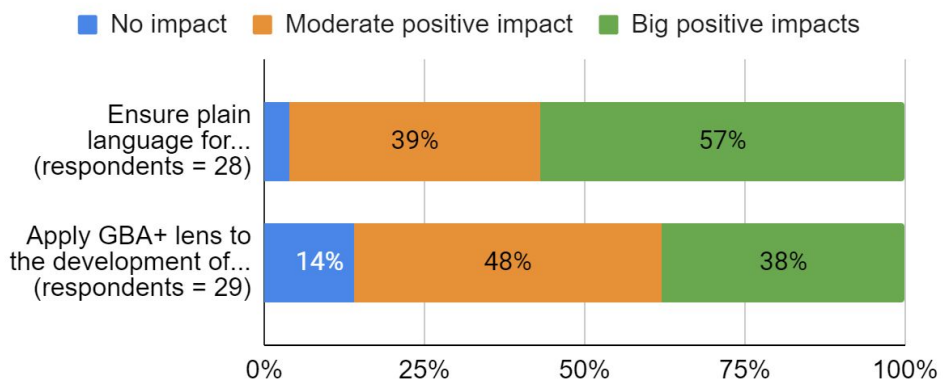
1. Edmonton General Elections information sessions will be offered virtually.
2. Partner with subject matter experts to support the development and delivery of accessible election participation opportunities - vote, work, run.

For the following draft Actions participants were asked to rate the level of impact they thought the draft Actions would have in improving accessibility in Edmonton (ranking from positive to negative).

3. Ensure plain language for Edmonton General Elections materials (unless legislatively prescribed).
4. Apply GBA+ lens to the development of Edmonton General Elections processes and procedure.

### **What we heard regarding the draft Edmonton General Elections Actions**

Please rate the level impact you think the actions will have in improving accessibility in Edmonton



“As someone who is blind, voting in municipal elections is always disheartening. I believe accessible machines are available prior to election day, but the number is limited and the location is less convenient. Voting on election day itself cannot be done independently. I don't think there's an easy solution here, but giving up your right to a secret ballot is always frustrating. Anything that could be done to increase the availability of accessible voting machines, or online voting, or telephone voting would make a huge difference.” – Survey Participant

- Respondents indicated strong support for the plain language Action with 96% of respondents saying it will have a big to moderate positive impact.
- Some respondents found the Action to “Partner with subject matter experts to support the development and delivery of accessible election participation opportunities - vote, work, run”, incomplete or unclear and wanted more information on what “subject matter experts” are and how they will support the development and delivery of accessible election participation.

Recommendations include:

- ensuring American Sign Language (ASL) and other options like Real Time Captioning (CART) are considered to communicate with people who are deaf.
- ensuring access to people who do not have a computer or technology.
- ensuring polling stations are accessible facilities.



## Hiring Process for People with Disabilities

In the Phase Two engagement we also wanted to hear from people with disabilities who had applied for jobs at the City of Edmonton. We asked about their experience applying to the City and their impressions of the availability of accessible hiring practices:

“... Instead create a test. Ask to see previous work we've done (if a portfolio is needed). Ask us to create something for you (if needed). Put us to the test and we'll come through with flying colors but assuming an interview is in any way appropriate for the non-neurotypical is ableist and rude.” – Survey Participant

- Most perceive it to be very difficult to get a job with the City.
- Some say they had a poor experience and felt their disability was a barrier while some others felt it was okay.
- The job portal has barriers, it is not accessible.
- Most found the language complicated, bureaucratic, and not inclusive.
- One respondent said they were granted an interview and were asked if they needed an accommodation ahead of time.
- Most respondents did not believe the City does a good job responding to the needs of people with disabilities throughout the hiring process.
- Some respondents would love an opportunity to work for the City.
- An employee of the City who responded did not see the City as an inclusive workplace.
- Neurotypical applicants may do poorly in a job interview - develop other methods to assess their suitability and qualifications.

## What Happens Next

Q1, 2021	Engagement feedback is used to refine and finalize the actions.
Q2, 2021	Accessibility Actions are incorporated into the first three-year Corporate Accessibility Plan.
Q2, 2021	The Corporate Accessibility Plan goes forward for City Manager's approval.

**For project updates, contact:**

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