

# What We Heard Report: Beyond Belonging: Building a 2SLGBTQIA+ Safe Spaces Action Plan

Safe and Healthy Communities,  
Social Development Branch,  
Community Services Department

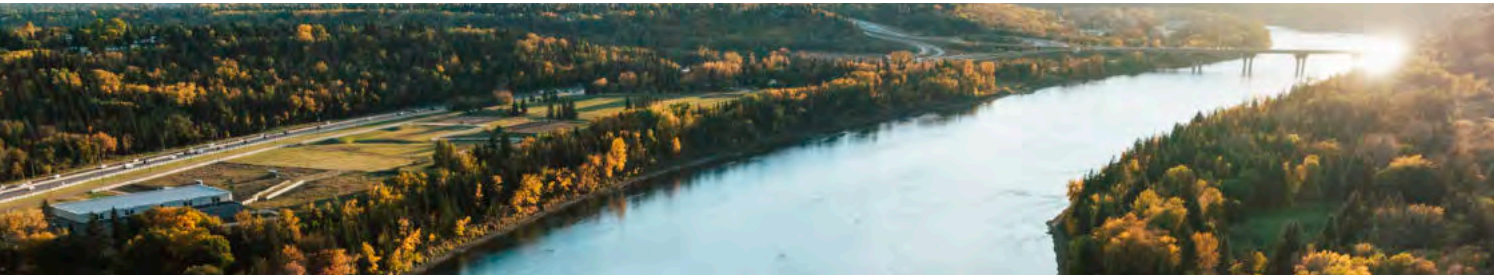
June 2025

Edmonton.ca/[beyondbelonging](https://edmonton.ca/beyondbelonging)

**SHARE** YOUR VOICE  
**SHAPE** OUR CITY

**Edmonton**

# Acknowledgements



## Land Acknowledgement

The City of Edmonton respectfully acknowledges that we are on Treaty 6 territory — the traditional lands of many Indigenous Nations, including the nêhiyawak (Cree), Dene, Anishinaabe (Saulteaux), Nakota Isga (Nakota Sioux), and Niitsitapi (Blackfoot). We also recognize this as the homeland of the Métis Nation and home to one of the largest Inuit communities south of the 60th parallel.

It is a welcoming place for all peoples who come from around the world to share Edmonton as a home. Together we call upon all of our collective, honoured traditions and spirits to work in building a great city for today and future generations.

The Beyond Belonging project follows in the footsteps of Indigenous, Two-Spirit, and Indigiqueer leaders whose work has long challenged exclusion and built frameworks of safety and belonging. Their leadership continues to guide how we understand inclusion in Edmonton today.

We recognize that conversations about safety and visibility must also reckon with colonialism and its lasting harms. This work is one part of a longer journey — shaped by those who came before us and carried forward through shared responsibility, care, and commitment.

## A note for reporting

Abiding by the Code of Ethics of the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2), the project team has aimed to reflect themes and summarize participant input from the community engagement activities in a manner that captures the essence of what was shared. Any errors or omissions made in this summary report are based solely on our interpretation and analysis of that input.

## Acknowledgement and thanks to the 2SLGBTQIA+ community of Edmonton

The City of Edmonton would like to extend our thanks to the members of 2SLGBTQIA+ communities who generously shared their time, experiences, and voices as part of this project.

We recognize the emotional labour and vulnerability it can take to speak about personal experiences, especially when those experiences relate to identity, safety and inclusion. Your willingness to engage with these sensitive issues created space for deeper understanding of your lived experiences and will contribute to meaningful change in the City of Edmonton.

This report exists because of your openness and we hold your contributions with the utmost care and respect.

*Thank you for trusting us with your stories.*

### A note on language

Language around gender identity, sexual orientation, and romantic expression is always evolving. The acronym 2SLGBTQIA+ is used in this report to align with the terminology included in the City Council motions that initiated this Action Plan.

This acronym includes—but is not limited to—Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual identities. The "+" represents the many other identities, expressions, and experiences not explicitly named.

We recognize that no single acronym can fully capture the complexity and diversity of people's lives. For more on evolving terminology and inclusive language, the Community-Based Research Centre offers [helpful resources](#).

# Executive Summary

In recent years, Edmonton has seen a rise in hate-motivated incidents targeting 2SLGBTQIA+ community members, challenging the city's commitment to being a place where everyone feels safe, valued, and included. In response, City Council made a series of related motions and the City of Edmonton launched the Beyond Belonging public engagement initiative—a project designed to inform the creation of a 2SLGBTQIA+ Safe Spaces Action Plan.

Guided by City Council motions from July 2023<sup>1</sup> and April 2024<sup>2</sup>, this engagement was grounded in equity, trauma-informed practices, and human-centred design. Its aim was to listen deeply to the experiences of 2SLGBTQIA+ Edmontonians and gather insights into how public spaces, services, and programs can become safer, more inclusive, and more affirming for everyone.

## The goals of this engagement were to

- + Understand what contributes to safety and inclusion for 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals in Edmonton
- + Identify what needs to change within City spaces, services, and programs to improve these experiences
- + Explore how existing supports can be strengthened to increase inclusion for all
- + Generate ideas for addressing the rise in hate against 2SLGBTQIA+ community members
- + Gather input on the composition and structure of an advisory committee to City Council
- + See the future through the eyes of 2SLGBTQIA+ community members

## The project was carried out in two phases

- + **Phase 1 – February 2025:** focused on consultation with 2SLGBTQIA+ organizations and service providers. These early conversations surfaced valuable insights that helped shape an inclusive and responsive engagement strategy.
- + **Phase 2 – March and May 2025:** invited members of 2SLGBTQIA+ communities to share their experiences, ideas, and recommendations about how to create spaces, places, services and programs that are safe, inclusive and welcoming to all.

The engagement specifically prioritized hearing from people who live at the intersections of multiple forms of marginalization—including Indigenous community members, youth, seniors, newcomers, racialized individuals, and those experiencing housing insecurity.

To meet people where they were, the City used a flexible engagement approach that offered a range of ways to participate—from informal conversations to in-depth discussions and community-led conversations. This created space for a wide range of voices to be heard, and for a rich array of topics to be explored, each contributing to a deeper understanding of how safety and inclusion are experienced by 2SLGBTQIA+ Edmontonians.

<sup>1</sup>[July 4, 2023 City Council minutes](#)

<sup>2</sup>[April 3, 2024 City Council minutes](#)

## Throughout the engagement, we heard a few things over and over.

While perspectives varied, a number of themes stood out as shared and consistent across the engagement activities. Summarized below are key themes and considerations identified in the engagement to support the City of Edmonton as they take steps towards creating a safe and more inclusive city for all residents.

They include:

### Public spaces that are designed to feel actively safe

- + Participants spoke about feeling exposed, vulnerable, or outright unsafe when using transit, attending events, or accessing services—particularly if they were visibly queer, trans, or racialized. There were calls for proactive safety protocols, training for public-facing staff, and accountability measures to ensure harm is addressed in real time.

### The City takes a bold, clear stance against hate

- + The City should act with courage, clarity, and consistency in the face of growing hate. They asked for a strong public stance affirming 2SLGBTQIA+ rights—not a neutral position, but one grounded in equity and human rights.

### Visible support is matched by meaningful action

- + Consistent, visible leadership from the City that moves beyond symbolism through public affirmations, to clear stances against discrimination, and year-round actions that show 2SLGBTQIA+ communities are seen, valued, and protected.

### The need is not equal

- + Safety and inclusion efforts in Edmonton must center the unique, intersecting needs of marginalized groups—especially those furthest from access, including Indigenous peoples, racialized communities, disabled individuals, and those navigating multiple identities. Equity requires intentional focus on those with the most complex and compounded vulnerabilities.

### A focus on education, training and public understanding

- + There is a need for public campaigns, education-based programs, and messaging that counters stigma and misinformation. Safety was described not only as a matter of physical space, but also as something shaped by cultural norms.

### Queer and trans inclusion is normalized

- + Participants highlighted the need for inclusion that is integrated into everyday life—not confined to Pride season or special projects. Safety was tied to the ability to show up fully in public life without being othered or spotlighted. We heard that meaningful progress doesn't happen in isolation—it requires collaboration across communities, organizations, businesses, and all levels of government.

### 2SLGBTQIA+ voices are embedded in leadership

- + Participants asked that the City not only consult with queer and trans communities, but involve them directly in shaping policies, programs, and the 2SLGBTQIA+ Safe Spaces Action Plan itself. The emphasis was on power-sharing, not tokenism, and on building systems that are designed with, not just for, the communities they serve.

**This What We Heard Report summarizes our approach to engagement: how we listened, who we heard from and what we learned.**

The insights included in these pages will be presented to City Council and inform the development of a 2SLGBTQIA+ Safe Spaces Action Plan –helping to guide meaningful steps toward an Edmonton where everyone feels they truly belong.

**PROJECT NAME**

**BEYOND BELONGING: BUILDING A 2SLGBTQIA+ SAFE SPACES ACTION PLAN**

**Engagement Opportunities & Information Shared**

The [project webpage](#) went live on March 20, 2025, and included the following project information and input opportunities:

- + Project overview and key documents
- + Project team contact information
- + From March 25 2025 to April 21, 2025 links to:
  - + Online survey
  - + [Engaged Edmonton](#) online engagement space

Additionally, online and in-person community conversations were hosted between February and May 2025.

**Webpage**

[edmonton.ca/city\\_government/initiatives\\_innovation/safe-spaces-action-plan](https://edmonton.ca/city_government/initiatives_innovation/safe-spaces-action-plan)



**You are the expert in your own experience & life.**

**Edmonton wouldn't be the same without you.**

*– Host Your Own Conversation attendee*



Photo taken at a Pre-Engagement event.

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# Why this? Why now?



## Project context

The City of Edmonton strives to be a safe and welcoming place for everyone who calls it home. In recent years, however, there has been a noticeable rise in hate-motivated crimes, incidents, and anti-2SLGBTQIA+ sentiment<sup>3</sup>. This growing trend affects not only the approximately 2,000 residents who identify as trans women, trans men, Two-Spirit, non-binary, or gender-diverse<sup>4</sup>—and the nearly 40,000 residents who identify as part of broader 2SLGBTQIA+ communities<sup>5</sup>—but also the city's overall sense of inclusion and civic trust. These realities challenge Edmonton's vision of itself as a welcoming city and reinforce the urgent need for action that fosters safety, belonging, and respect for all.

What's happening in Edmonton is not unique—it reflects broader national and global trends. This rise in hate-motivated violence and discrimination is unfolding alongside a shifting political climate, where issues affecting 2SLGBTQIA+ communities are increasingly the subject of public and political debate. In Canada, reports of hate crimes motivated by sexual orientation nearly doubled between 2020 and 2022, reaching their highest level since national data collection began<sup>6</sup>, and then increased another 69% in 2023. While these trends have brought greater visibility to 2SLGBTQIA+ issues, it has also contributed to growing vulnerability for many individuals. This rapidly shifting landscape highlights the urgent need for initiatives that foster inclusion, promote understanding, and ensure the safety of 2SLGBTQIA+ people in every community.

It is important to acknowledge that this engagement project took place during a period of heightened social tension and public concern around 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion in Edmonton. There is a broader climate in which questions of visibility, representation, and institutional accountability are actively being debated. While the timing of these matters and the launch of Beyond Belonging was coincidental, their overlap underscores just how timely and necessary conversations about safety, inclusion, and visibility are for 2SLGBTQIA+ communities in Edmonton.

## City Plan and Council motions guiding this work

The City of Edmonton's commitment to advancing 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion and safety is rooted in the direction set by Edmonton's City Council, as well as by direction from the City Plan<sup>7</sup>. Two key motions provided the mandate and initial resources to guide and support this work.

<sup>3</sup> In 2023, [the most recent year national data is available](#), there were 860 hate crimes reported to police across Canada where motivation was hatred based on sexual orientation. This is a 69% increase from the previous year, which was previously the highest recorded year for hate crimes committed against people based on their sexual orientation. In 2024, Edmonton Police Service shared that there were 24 reported hate crimes and 26 hate incidents targeting 2SLGBTQIA+ people in Edmonton, with 6 hate crimes and 8 hate incidents targeting 2SLGBTQIA+ people in 2025 as of May 12, 2025.

<sup>4</sup> Retrieved May 2025 from: [Edmonton Municipal Census](#)

<sup>5</sup> This number is based on an [estimate from the 2019–2021 Canadian Community Health Survey](#) that 4.4% of the Canadian population over the age of 15 is 2SLGBTQIA+.

<sup>6</sup> Uniform Crime Reporting Survey, July 27, 2023 – Retrieved May 2025 from: <https://www.statcan.gc.ca/en/survey/business/3302>

<sup>7</sup> Including, but not limited to [City Plan Policy 1.1.3](#): Promote opportunity, equality, and personal safety for women, girls, and gender minorities in Edmonton.

**At the July 4/5, 2023 Edmonton City Council meeting<sup>8</sup>, the following motion was passed:**

*That Administration: Draft a report on what would be needed to work with 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals, groups, employees, and organizations to develop a 2SLGBTQIA+ community advisory committee and a 2SLGBTQIA+ Action Plan for the City to enhance support and services for the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, address rising hate, and create safe and inclusive public spaces.*

**At the April 3, 2024 City Council meeting<sup>9</sup>, the following motion was passed:**

*That the 2024 operating budget for the Social Development branch be increased by \$155,000 on a one-time basis, with funding from Council Contingency, to fund 2SLGBTQIA+ engagement contract work and support FTE as outlined in Attachment 3 of the March 18, 2024, Community Services report CS01972.*

These Council motions provided the foundation and resources necessary to move this work forward. They reflect a clear commitment from the City to engage meaningfully with 2SLGBTQIA+ communities and take concrete steps toward building a safer, more inclusive Edmonton for all.

## **Including 2SLGBTQIA+ voices in this decision**

For the 2SLGBTQIA+ Safe Spaces Action Plan that we will develop to respond to the community's needs, we worked hard to have complex and meaningful conversations with 2SLGBTQIA+ people in Edmonton about what it takes to create truly safe and inclusive spaces.

The City of Edmonton recognizes that creating safe(r)<sup>10</sup> spaces for 2SLGBTQIA+ communities is a significant and ongoing, shared responsibility. These decisions impact not only those who are most directly affected, but the broader community as well.

That's why it was so important to hear directly from members of 2SLGBTQIA+ communities –to understand what matters most, what needs to be considered, and how we can move forward in ways that reflect the lived realities and priorities of 2SLGBTQIA+ Edmontonians.

We heard from a wide range of voices: including 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals, advocates, service providers, allies and the general public. Each voice offered unique perspectives, lived experiences, and ideas for change.

The participation of 2SLGBTQIA+ communities and organizations is helping the City of Edmonton move forward in a way that reflects the realities and priorities of the communities we serve.

## **Understanding the role of public engagement**

Public engagement is rooted in listening. It aims to understand lived experiences, amplify diverse voices, and surface insights that may not be captured through traditional research methods. Through activities like community conversations, group discussions, and open consultations, public engagement helps surface the stories behind the data.

While engagement findings do not represent every voice or experience, they offer meaningful, real-life insights into what matters most to people and how they navigate the world. This kind of input helps the City better understand complex social issues and make decisions that are more responsive to the needs of the communities we serve.

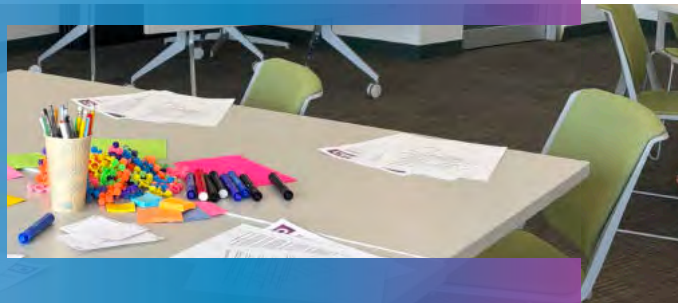
<sup>8</sup> [July 4, 2023 City Council minutes](#)

<sup>9</sup> [April 3, 2024 City Council minutes](#)

<sup>10</sup> Many 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals shared with us that complete safety might be unattainable but emphasized the importance of working towards safer spaces. The report uses 'safe spaces' to align with the wording of City Council motions directing this engagement and the upcoming Action Plan.

The Beyond Belonging project was a public engagement initiative, not a statistically valid research study.

The insights shared in these pages reflect the lived experiences and perspectives of those who chose to participate, and are intended to inform understanding and support inclusive decision-making—not to represent the views of all Edmontonians.



## Our approach to meaningful engagement

Throughout Beyond Belonging, we were committed to creating a process that centred the voices of 2SLGBTQIA+ people in Edmonton. This meant using an approach that was equity-centred, human-centred, trauma-informed, and both adaptive and responsive to the diverse realities of 2SLGBTQIA+ communities in Edmonton.<sup>11</sup>

Recognizing the historical and ongoing marginalization and discrimination faced by 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals, each step of the engagement was designed to foster trust, prioritize lived experience, and ensure participants had meaningful control over their involvement.

This engagement process was designed and delivered in alignment with the City of Edmonton's Public Engagement Policy<sup>12</sup> and Framework<sup>13</sup>.



The engagement was divided into two phases, using what we heard during the first phase to directly shape the approach and tools used in the second phase.

### Phase 1: Listen and learn (February 2025)

During this initial phase, our commitment to the public was at the CREATE level on the Public Engagement Spectrum. This meant working in collaboration with representatives from 2SLGBTQIA+ communities to develop the tools and approaches that would shape the next phase of engagement.

For a detailed description of the engagement and communications tools used, check out Appendix A and Appendix B.

<sup>11</sup> For additional details on how equity-centred; trauma-informed; human-centred; and adaptive and responsive approaches were incorporated into the engagement, see Appendix A.

<sup>12</sup> [Council Policy C593D – Public Engagement](#)

<sup>13</sup> [City of Edmonton Public Engagement Framework](#)

## Phase 2: Explore and engage (March – April 2025)

During the second phase, our commitment to the public was at the ADVISE level. This means that we listened, acknowledged and documented participants' concerns and aspirations related to the development of a 2SLGBTQIA+ Safe Spaces Action Plan. We will also share with City Council how this input informed the recommendations brought forward by City Administration.

For a detailed description of the engagement and communications tools used, check out Appendix A and Appendix B.

### Outcomes of this engagement

The key findings and themes identified through this engagement, along with practical and financial considerations, will directly shape the City of Edmonton's next steps towards driving real change in how the City plans, acts and builds a more inclusive Edmonton.



### What we heard

We received a wide range of insights and experiences from members of 2SLGBTQIA+ communities, service providers, and allies. In the coming pages, we highlight the many specific suggestions, insights and suggested changes. However, this engagement was more than gathering a list of “to-dos”—it was about understanding the why behind the change. Our sincere hope is that this report will share with you what we heard in terms of change, action, intention and need.

### Throughout the engagement, we heard a few things over and over.

They include:

- + Public spaces that are designed to feel actively safe
- + The City takes a bold, clear stance against hate
- + Visible support is matched by meaningful action
- + The need is not equal
- + A focus on education, training and public understanding
- + Queer and trans inclusion is normalized
- + 2SLGBTQIA+ voices are embedded in leadership

**We invite you to read this summary of our conversations with open minds, kindness, empathy and care—appreciating that everyone in these communities are valued, deserve respect and may come from very different perspectives and experiences.**

**Thank you to everyone who participated in the engagement activities.  
Your contributions are greatly appreciated, and we hope you see your ideas,  
comments and input reflected in these pages.**

# Theme 1:

## Public spaces that are designed to feel actively safe

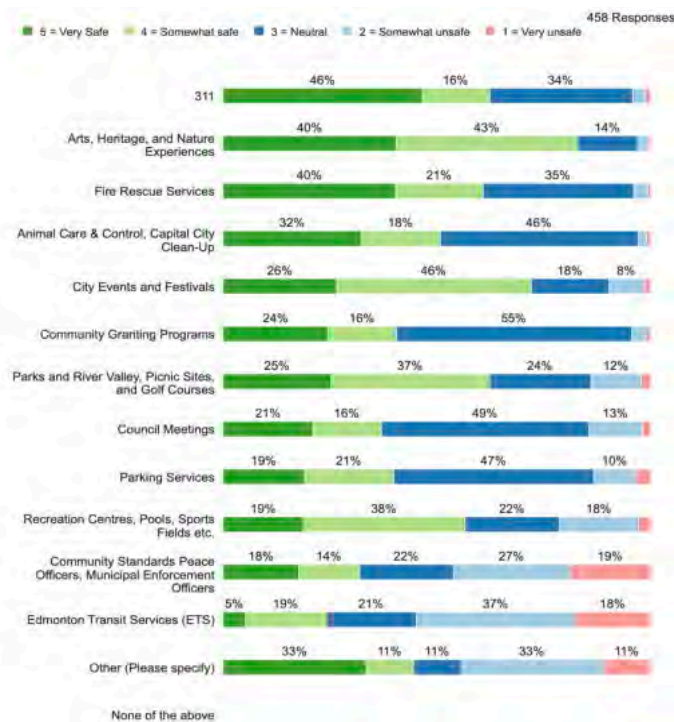
Participants spoke about feeling exposed, vulnerable, or outright unsafe when using transit, attending events, or accessing services—particularly if they were visibly queer, trans, or racialized. There were calls for proactive safety protocols, training for public-facing staff, and accountability measures to ensure harm is addressed in real time.

To create an Edmonton where 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals feel a sense of safety and belonging, we heard that there is a need to design public spaces differently; to intentionally plan for inclusion and safety. Participants expressed that this shift in planning will result in welcoming spaces that create safety not only for the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, but for all Edmontonians.

### Here is what we asked and what you told us

We wanted to know how safe and included you perceived these City of Edmonton services, programs, spaces and places to be.

Respondents of the online survey rated each of the services, programs, spaces and places below on a scale of 1 to 5. The results are presented in the image below.

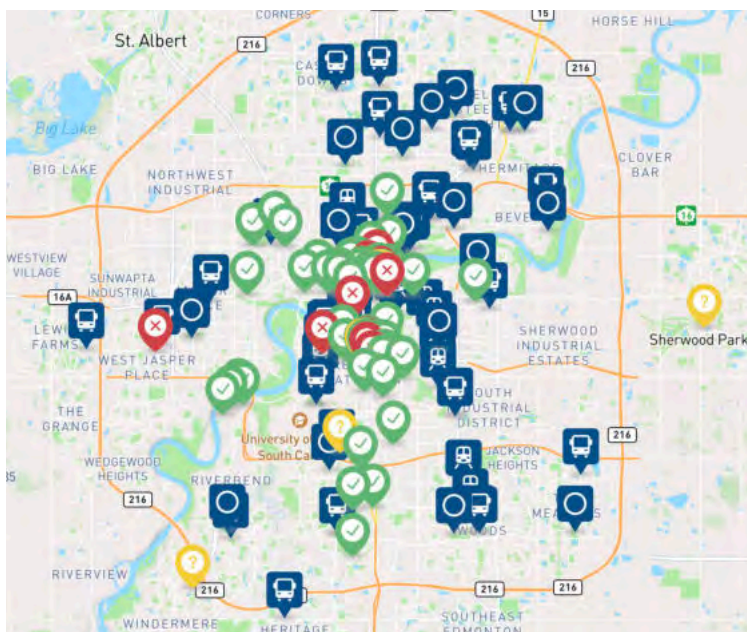





Additionally, using the 2SLGBTQIA+ Experience Map on the [engaged.edmonton.ca/BeyondBelonging](https://engaged.edmonton.ca/BeyondBelonging) website, we asked:

Where in Edmonton do you currently feel safe and included, and what is it about those places that creates that feeling for you?

Where would you like to feel safer in the future and what suggestions do you have for how the City can help make that a reality?

Participants shared their experiences by selecting existing City of Edmonton facilities like recreation centers, transit centers, and LRT stations and stops (indicated with blue markers) or adding their own marker. Through colour-coded pins, they helped illustrate how different places across Edmonton made them feel, and added comments where they'd like to see change.



-  Green Safe Space/Place markers: "I feel safe and included here."
-  Yellow Maybe Safe markers: "This is an ambiguous space/place. I feel uncomfortable but not unsafe here."
-  Red Would Like Safety markers: "I would like to feel safe/included here, but haven't in the past."

If you would like to learn more about what participants shared about the various locations, please visit Appendix D.

## Here is what we heard

+ **To design well you need to understand the complexity of safety** — Participants expressed that safety is not experienced the same way by everyone, and that inclusion does not always mean a space feels safe. While inclusive environments are often designed to promote belonging, they were not always perceived that way; in some instances, gender-segregated spaces offered more comfort and protection. Others shared that aspects of their identity beyond gender or sexuality (such as being of a specific faith) presented different or greater barriers to participation. These reflections highlight that safety is shaped by multiple intersecting factors and must be understood through the lens of individual experience.

Safety was also described as connected to broader social and structural issues, including housing insecurity, substance use, and systemic exclusion. These are not specific to 2SLGBTQIA+ communities, but they intersect in ways that can heighten feelings of vulnerability and disconnection.

*"What is safe for some folks in 2SLGBTQIA+ community is not safe for others. We need to understand intersections of race and gender identity and how perceptions of police and safety differ. What makes white gay men feel safe won't be the same for other people who are 2SLGBTQIA+..."*

- + **Infrastructure and design must signal belonging** — Participants highlighted the importance of gender-inclusive and accessible facilities—especially washrooms and changerooms—as essential to creating safe and welcoming environments. Participants also expressed a desire for accessibility planning to intentionally include the needs and experiences of neurodivergent individuals, such as creating sensory-friendly spaces. These features were seen not as optional, but as baseline indicators of inclusion. When missing, they were described as exclusionary and alienating. Beyond facilities, participants emphasized that physical design should reflect inclusion in visible ways—through signage, layout, and amenities—not just through language or policy.

*“Accessible facilities, gender-inclusive washrooms, and visible messaging that explicitly welcomes queer and trans individuals contribute to feeling truly included.”*

## Opportunities for change

- + **Increase visible safety measures in public spaces and transit** — Participants shared concerns about feeling unsafe in public spaces—particularly on transit and at LRT platforms. Suggestions focused on having trained, visible personnel present to offer reassurance and respond effectively in real time. These reflections did not center solely on enforcement, but on fostering a sense of care, presence, and accountability. There was a call for security models that feel supportive rather than punitive.

*“I believe there would need to be peace officers or municipal enforcement officers riding the buses and trains regularly, so that interventions could be made immediately.”*

- + **Create dedicated 2SLGBTQIA+ places and spaces** — We heard a desire for more spaces where members of 2SLGBTQIA+ communities can gather and build connections. There was a call for the City to create and recognize public parks, streets and other areas as dedicated 2SLGBTQIA+ spaces. This kind of visible public acknowledgement was seen as a way to increase both safety and inclusion—for everyone.

*“Dedicated queer spaces make safety. To have this energy in the city would make it much safer for folks. Examples of places like a street or region that is acknowledged as a queer friendly space.”*

- + **Design City events and environments with inclusion in mind** — Participants pointed to outdoor events, arts programs, and informal community spaces as areas where they felt most included. These settings allow for greater self-expression, offer a more relaxed atmosphere, and are less likely to feel scrutinizing or overly controlled than formal City spaces. Thoughtful design, in both setting and structure, was seen as a key contributor to creating spaces where 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals could show up comfortably and authentically.

*“Outdoor events feel safer for me and my partner.”*

- + **Build community spaces that feel like home** — Participants shared dreams of accessible, well-funded community spaces where 2SLGBTQIA+ people can gather, learn, create, and rest. These are not niche or temporary pop-ups, but permanent, joyful spaces that affirm culture, identity, and care. Respondents envisioned an Edmonton where every City facility, from libraries to recreation centres, includes accessible, gender-inclusive washrooms, changerooms, and signage that affirms all identities. We heard a vision for a city where inclusive design isn't an add-on, but a standard part of how spaces are planned and built.

*“The change rooms are a HUGE reason I feel safe in newer facilities – so relaxing and accepting not to have to think about it.”*

## ↔ Tensions

It's important to acknowledge that not everyone agrees. Participants shared a range of perspectives, and in some cases, their ideas were in tension with one another. The following tensions emerged during our conversations:

- + **The City will need to strike a balance between belonging and identity difference** — We heard a tension between the desire for separate spaces that recognize and celebrate cultural and identity-based differences, and the need to feel included in the broader community. For some, separate spaces offer safety, solidarity, and the comfort of being among those with shared lived experiences. At the same time, inclusive spaces promote visibility, participation, and the ability to participate fully in public life.

This tension was reflected across our engagement activities, where both needs were seen as essential. People expressed wanting to be seen as the same—able to show up, take part, and belong—while also being seen as different, with their identities acknowledged and their experiences treated with care.

Some participants shared that they did not feel safe in public spaces, particularly as newcomers, and expressed a longing for environments where their differences were not only accepted but valued. Alongside this was a strong desire to feel part of the larger community; not othered or siloed, but recognized and included. We heard that balancing these needs—for safety, solidarity, visibility, and inclusion—is key to building communities where people feel both respected and connected.

*“I believe the more labels and segregation we make actually hurts the movement in the long run. We are all human.”*

*“We are looking for spaces that are welcoming, but also spaces that are also targeted to ourselves.”*

- + **Varying views on security presence** — Participants shared differing views on the role of enforcement and visible staff presence in public spaces. While some expressed a desire for more security to enhance safety and respond to harm, others noted that the same presence can heighten anxiety or feel like surveillance, particularly for those who are racialized, trans, or otherwise marginalized. The tension was not about the need for safety, but about who feels safe in the presence of authority, and how that safety is delivered.

*“More peace officers and security guards.”*

*“The less peace officers and police the better.”*



## Beyond Belonging: Building a 2SLGBTQIA+ Safe Spaces Action Plan

Engagement with the 2SLGBTQIA+ community  
is happening now until April 21, 2025.

*Beyond Belonging engagement poster*

# Theme 2:

## The City takes a bold, clear stance against hate

**The City should act with courage, clarity, and consistency in the face of growing hate. They asked for a strong public stance affirming 2SLGBTQIA+ rights—not a neutral position, but one grounded in equity and human rights.**

With hate crimes and incidents targeting 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals on the rise in Edmonton and across Canada, this engagement process provided a chance to hear directly from the community about how hate can be addressed.

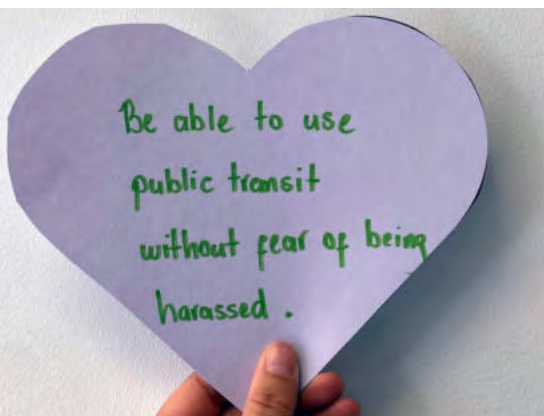
### Here is what we heard



- + **Neutral is not enough** — We heard service providers particularly emphasize the need for the City to act with courage, clarity, and consistency in the face of growing hate. While some members of the general public preferred neutral or depoliticized framing, organizational voices urged the City to lead publicly and vocally, standing up for inclusion even when it may be politically contested.

*“I think it is important to take a firm stance in City messaging; It is not enough to be neutral.”*

- + **Sustained City support and leadership** — We heard the need for long-term, consistent municipal support to protect the rights and well-being of Edmonton's 2SLGBTQIA+ communities—regardless of future political shifts. Participants expressed concern that changes in leadership could weaken or reverse progress, diverting attention away from the core goals of inclusion, equity, and safety. There was a clear call for the Safe Spaces Action Plan to be embedded as a lasting part of City governance, supported by clear accountability structures that uphold the City's commitments over time.

*“One thing I'm worried about: what happens if this work finishes and we end up with a non-cooperative City Council in the fall?”*



 **Be able to use public transit without fear of being harassed.** 

*Paper heart filled out by a “Host Your Own Conversation” attendee answering the question: “What is one hope you have for 2SLGBTQIA+ people in Edmonton that you want to share with the broader community?”*



## Opportunities for change

- + **Center inclusion in public messaging and policy** — We heard a strong desire for the City to take clearer and more visible stances in support of inclusion. This included public messaging, anti-hate policies, and fostering a broader culture of affirmation. There was a call to move beyond symbolic gestures and ensure that queer and trans communities are actively included in how safety is defined, communicated, and upheld across City policies and practices.

*“Edmonton must make a clear decision on whether to invest in meaningful change, utilizing its considerable social and cultural capital.”*

- + **Develop processes to respond to acts of hate** — We heard the need for the City to strengthen its processes for reporting, responding to, and following up on incidents of hate, discrimination, or violence. There was a call for greater transparency and accountability in how these incidents are handled. Suggestions included reviewing the existing public complaints process, funding a dedicated hate crime reporting line, and creating proactive responses to known patterns of hate. We also heard the need for 2SLGBTQIA+ communities to not just be consulted, but actively involved in designing, delivering, and leading the work on policies and safety initiatives involving 2SLGBTQIA+ communities.

*“Ideally, the approach to reducing or responding to hate crimes would include some restorative justice elements rather than just relying on the police to deal with a situation.”*



Okimaw kihêw mêkwanak (OKM) hosted a collage-making workshop as part of their “Host Your Own Conversation” in 2025.

The image featured here is one participant’s response to the question: “Imagine Edmonton in 10 years – what do inclusive city services, programs, spaces, and places look and feel like for 2SLGBTQIA+ people?”

# Theme 3:

## Visible support is matched by meaningful action

**Consistent, visible leadership from the City that moves beyond symbolism through public affirmations, to clear stances against discrimination, and year-round actions that show 2SLGBTQIA+ communities are seen, valued, and protected.**

Many participants shared that feeling safe and included in Edmonton requires more than just visible signs of support. They emphasized the need for real action through consistent leadership and clear policies. This section highlights the importance of moving beyond symbols to create lasting, systemic change.



### Here is what we heard

- + **Gestures aren't enough** — Participants across all engagement activities emphasized that safety and inclusion cannot be achieved through symbolic gestures alone. While Pride flags, decals, and awareness campaigns were seen as positive signals, they were often described as insufficient when not backed by real policy change, programmatic action, or consistent follow-through.

*“City services using gender neutral language is a great start, as well as having inclusive messaging, imagery, and accessible resources for support.”*

- + **Safety requires systems, not just symbols** — Safety was described as a feeling grounded in trust, protection, and accountability—not just in symbolic markers of inclusion. Without real-time responses to harm, these symbols risk feeling performative. Participants called for clear protocols, visible staff presence, and a commitment to proactively preventing harassment and hate.

*“Explicit inclusive messaging and active allyship in the form of public statements and policies and display of pride flags or other signals of an inclusive space.”*

- + **Supporting 2SLGBTQIA+ communities year-round** — We heard that the City of Edmonton has an opportunity to demonstrate its commitment to inclusion by standing with 2SLGBTQIA+ communities not only during Pride month, but throughout the entire year. Suggestions included: consistent public acknowledgement that 2SLGBTQIA+ rights are human rights, visible public campaigns that promote safety and awareness year round, and dedicated funding for 2SLGBTQIA+ programs and initiatives.

*“Year round indicators that LGBTQ people will be supported and celebrated ... and having the policies to back it up.”*

- + **Intention versus impact** — Participants noted a disconnect between what the City views as inclusive action and what 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals actually experience. Stances of neutrality can be interpreted by some as passive or indifferent, particularly in the face of rising hate or exclusion. In moments of increased polarization and threats to equity, silence from leaders in City Administration and City Council can be perceived as complicity. We heard a call for bold, consistent leadership that affirms inclusion as a civic priority at all levels of decision-making.

*“Being neutral in the face of prejudice is a failure of inclusion.”*

## Opportunities for change

- + **City staff, culture and capacity must reflect inclusion** — Participants emphasized the importance of having affirming, informed and well-prepared staff at all levels of the City—from frontline roles to leadership and policy-making. Welcoming language, correct pronoun usage, and a non-judgmental tone helped build trust and reduce anxiety. These moments often determined whether a space felt open and affirming—or uncomfortable and inaccessible. Appreciation was expressed for staff who engaged with authenticity, care, and respect.

*“Kind and polite staff, respectful dialogue.”*

*“Clear accountability measures must be in place to track effectiveness and community impact.”*

- + **Offer programs and services that reflect queer values** — Participants shared that inclusion felt strongest in spaces where 2SLGBTQIA+ values were not just welcomed, but actively reflected. This included a visible commitment to equity, representation, and social justice—communicated through programming choices, signage, staff presence, and overall tone. These elements helped signal that the space was not only inclusive, but aligned with the community’s deeper values and priorities.

*“For example, ‘Hate Free YEG’ project from a few years ago that included stickers and training. The City could replicate this for example, on a much larger scale.”*

- + **Consistency across City services** — Participants expressed frustration that experiences with City services can vary dramatically depending on the facility or individual staff member. This inconsistency was described as disorienting, and at times unsafe, particularly for trans and gender-diverse residents. We heard a call for City-wide standards and accountability to ensure that inclusion is not just written into policy, but reflected consistently in day-to-day practice.

*“My experiences here have varied significantly. My experiences with staff have been positive, but actually using facilities is always hit or miss, depending on who is around.”*



*Beyond Belonging project stickers*

# Theme 4:

## The need is not equal – vulnerable populations have unique needs

**Safety and inclusion efforts in Edmonton must center the unique, intersecting needs of marginalized groups—especially those furthest from access, including Indigenous peoples, racialized communities, disabled individuals, and those navigating multiple identities. Equity requires intentional focus on those with the most complex and compounded vulnerabilities.**

Participants identified a high number of complex social needs and issues that exist within the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. Participants shared that a key consideration for building the 2SLGBTQIA+ Safe Spaces Action Plan should be prioritizing how support reaches the most vulnerable in the community.



### Here is what we heard

- + **Outreach and access must be intersectional** — We heard participants urging the City to ensure services reach those who are often furthest from access—including newcomers, racialized folks, disabled individuals, unhoused people, and those with limited English. We heard that inclusion cannot be based on assumptions of sameness. It must reflect the diverse, layered, and intersecting experiences of 2SLGBTQIA+ residents across Edmonton.

*“You must support those most at risk first. These are the groups with the most complex needs, but they must be prioritized, as addressing their needs will address everyone else’s in a cascade.”*

*“Edmonton should increase outreach programs to ensure folks are aware of the services and spaces available to them. This could involve having information in multiple languages, promoting services through community leaders, or hosting events that are specifically designed to introduce underrepresented communities to city spaces.”*

- + **Indigenous experiences at the centre** — Participants shared a hope for a future Edmonton where Indigenous ways of knowing, perspectives, and histories are valued and celebrated. This includes honouring the unique identities of Two-Spirit people, acknowledging the impacts of colonization, and embedding reconciliation into both policy and practice. In this vision, inclusion means recognizing that Indigenous and 2SLGBTQIA+ experiences are interconnected—and equally essential to building a safer, more welcoming city for all.

*“Greater cultural awareness of gender is needed, including how gender was understood in various cultures before colonialism.”*



## Opportunities for change

### + **Understand the unique intersections of 2SLGBTQIA+ identities and other identities people hold —**

We heard that to build a city that is truly safer and more welcoming, the City of Edmonton must recognize intersections that include people's experiences of ableism, antisemitism, racism, poverty, and xenophobia. This includes enacting clear consequences for discriminatory behavior, taking public stances against hate, and integrating education that challenges bias. Respondents who live at the intersection of 2SLGBTQIA+ identities and other experiences shared that their experiences of belonging are uniquely impacted by rising hate and a lack of clear, visible support. Participants described feeling isolated, forced to hide parts of who they are in order to stay safe, and uncertain whether City systems or queer spaces will support them when harm occurs.

*“Many Jewish LGBTQ are going back into the closet right now. What can we do as a city to ensure this stops and everyone feels safe to be who they truly are?”*

- ### + **Address the intersection of safety and social disorder —** Responses pointed to discomfort in environments shaped by visible social issues—including houselessness, substance use, and public distress. Suggestions emphasized the need for both stronger supports for vulnerable populations and environmental changes that promote calmer, more predictable public spaces. Participants told us they wanted City services to be more responsive to the overall atmosphere and dignity of shared environments, balancing safety, compassion, and accessibility for all.

*“Better cleaning and maintenance of public facilities and transit will also increase the impression of safety and comfort.”*

- ### + **Address language as a barrier to belonging —** We heard those who do not speak English often face increased vulnerability when navigating public spaces and City services. Language barriers can make it difficult for newcomers to access support, understand systems, and participate fully in community life. Some participants noted challenges related to differing expectations around language use, and emphasized the importance of the City recognizing and addressing these barriers. We heard that supporting language accessibility is essential to fostering inclusion, reducing isolation, and ensuring equitable participation for all residents.

*“Language is a real obstacle for us (newcomers).”*

# Theme 5:

## A focus on education, training and public understanding

**There is a need for public campaigns, school-based programs, and messaging that counters stigma and misinformation. Safety was described not only as a matter of physical space, but also as something shaped by cultural norms.**

Throughout the engagement we heard about the positive impact that education can have in increasing understanding of the lived experiences of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. We also heard about the important role that respondents feel the City can play in leading and supporting educational and public awareness initiatives.



### Here is what we heard

- + **A City that leads through education and awareness** — We heard a vision for an Edmonton that doesn't just show support—it helps lead the way in shifting public attitudes. Respondents imagined City-led education efforts that go beyond awareness, creating meaningful learning moments that challenge bias and build understanding. These efforts were seen as opportunities to grow allyship across the city—on buses, in schools, at public events, and online. In this vision, ongoing public education helps residents of all ages and backgrounds feel empowered to stand up for each other and contribute to a more inclusive city.

*“There is so much misinformation about what pride flags or crosswalks mean, or why drag queen story time should be allowed – education is needed.”*

*“The City can help facilitate cultural shift by being actively a part of queer acceptance and inclusion through funding, visual representations of inclusion, event sponsorship, and engagement with community on various issues.”*

- + **Training for all** — We heard about the value of education and training for City staff and law enforcement, and also for the broader public to help create lasting change in Edmonton. Bystander intervention training, bias awareness workshops, and support for learning how to respond to discriminatory behaviour were some of the topics seen as important to address both within the municipal workforce and the general public. We heard a need for these education and training efforts to be led in collaboration with members of 2SLGBTQIA+ communities, with programs and initiatives designed and delivered directly by those with lived experience.

*“Training on how to hold conversations with folks who are discriminatory, becoming aware of the words we use and what they might mean.”*



## Opportunities for change

- + **Train frontline staff to respond to bias, discomfort, and harm** — Participant experiences pointed to a need for frontline staff who are equipped to respond effectively when harm occurs—not only in cases of safety threats, but also in everyday moments of exclusion or bias. Inclusive, trauma-informed training was named as an essential foundation. Participants described wanting to see visible action when someone is being harassed or excluded, particularly in ways tied to queer or trans identities. Participants noted that the harms experienced in public services often stem not from malice, but from a lack of preparation, understanding, or adequate systems of support.

*“Provide training for City staff on 2SLGBTQIA+ issues, including unconscious bias and inclusive communication.”*

- + **More 2SLGBTQIA+ events, resources and programs** — Participants shared a desire to see more—and more diverse—events, resources and programs that support 2SLGBTQIA+ communities across the city. Increasing these opportunities was seen as a meaningful way to foster inclusion and visibility. Suggestions included a range of events such as family-friendly gatherings, book clubs, subsidized drag shows, and exhibits in galleries and museums. Beyond events, we also heard a need for housing programs, supports for accessing healthcare, and targeted resources for youth.

*“It is important to demonstrate to the public that queer folks have been a part of Edmonton’s history for as long as Edmonton has existed. So exhibits such as the Fort Edmonton queer history program are very important (for) shifting the narrative from this idea that queer and trans people are a ‘new trend.’”*



Guests at Queer Prom 2025, organized by the Pride Centre of Edmonton, answered the question: “What is one hope you have for 2SLGBTQIA+ people in Edmonton that you want to share with the broader community?”

# Theme 6:

## Queer and trans inclusion is normalized

**Participants highlighted the need for inclusion that is integrated into everyday life — not confined to Pride season or special projects. Safety was tied to the ability to show up fully in public life without being othered or spotlighted. We heard that meaningful progress doesn't happen in isolation—it requires collaboration across communities, organizations, businesses, and all levels of government.**

We heard that participants want to see a city where their 2SLGBTQIA+ identity is seen as a norm, not an exception, and where this identity is recognized and celebrated for its contribution to a vibrant public life in Edmonton.



### Here is what we heard

- + **Being seen matters** — We heard that seeing 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals reflected in public ad campaigns, City communications, and mainstream media helps normalize diverse identities and affirms a sense of belonging. Respondents shared that when representation is diverse and authentic—featuring people of different races, genders, sexualities, and lived experiences—it not only combats stereotypes but also signals that the City values and respects all residents.

We also heard that meaningful representation goes beyond visual images and is strengthened when supported by inclusive messaging and storytelling that reflects the realities of 2SLGBTQIA+ lives. Respondents would like to see public narratives that show queer joy, family, leadership, and community connection in order to shift perceptions and foster a stronger culture of inclusion.

*“A hate-free Edmonton is possible—just as marriage equality seemed out of reach 20 years ago but is now widely accepted.”*

*“Use positive public messaging about queer issues to bring awareness to queer issues for the general public in ways that normalize and humanize us.”*

- + **When queer and trans representation is everyday** — Safety was tied to the ability to show up fully in public life without being othered or spotlighted. This means embedding inclusive practices throughout City services, using affirming language, and ensuring staff are prepared to engage respectfully and knowledgeably. We heard descriptions of safety as emerging not from exceptional gestures, but from ordinary and reliable inclusion.

*“In 10 years, I hope we don't need to specify where it is safe for 2SLGBTQIA+ people because it has become a non-issue, and everyone is simply welcome and safe everywhere.”*

- + **2SLGBTQIA+ diversity is celebrated** — We heard a vision of the future filled with vibrant expressions of queer joy, creativity, and success woven throughout Edmonton's cultural life. In 10 years, respondents imagine an annual event calendar filled with festivals, drag shows, public art, and performances that center 2SLGBTQIA+ voices and reflect diverse stories. They also envision a city where the histories and contributions of 2SLGBTQIA+ people are acknowledged and uplifted—not only during Pride, but all year long.

*"I'd love to see more murals and plaques to celebrate queer and trans history in Edmonton."*

*"Bring more national and international 2SLGBTQ+ events to town such as the Gay Games. Designate an LRT station as a "Pride Station" and decorate it as such to help mainstream and normalize inclusion as part of the City infrastructure."*

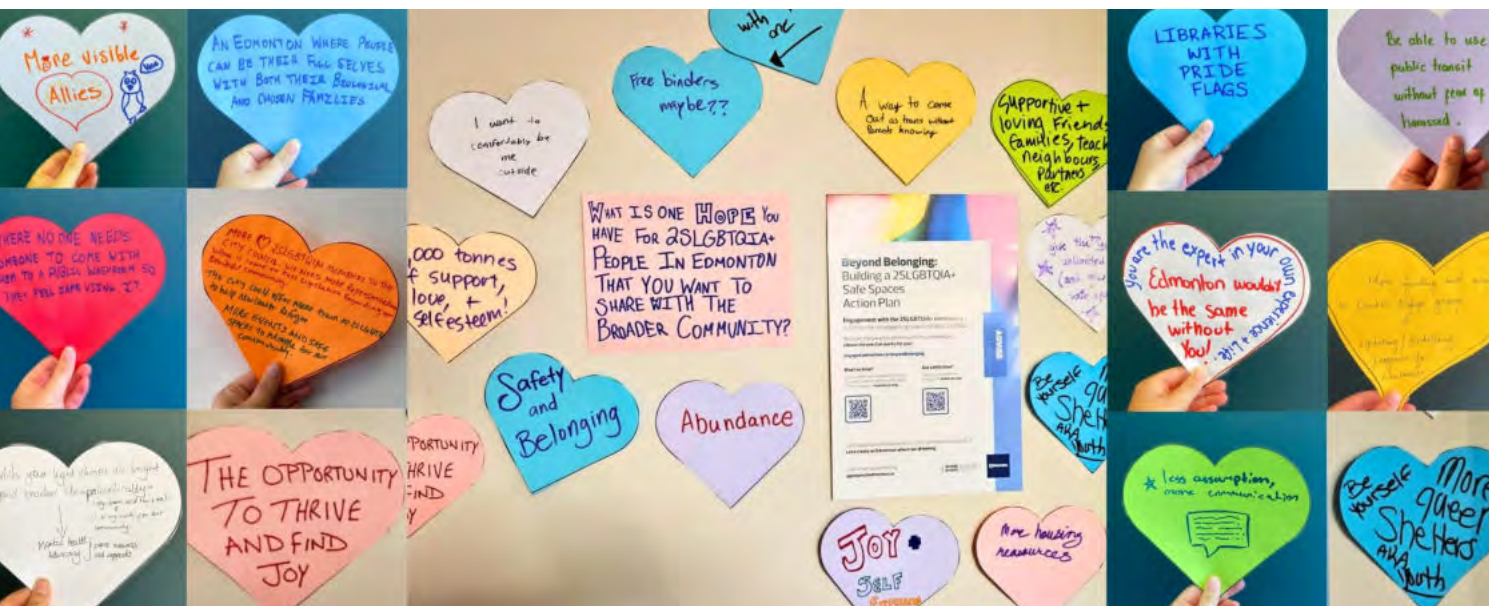
- + **When there is support for the whole person, not just their identity** — A broad view of safety emerged, that includes housing, healthcare, and access to basic needs. Participants noted that being safe requires more than identity-specific inclusion—it means being stably housed, economically secure, and able to access supportive services without fear or stigma. This intersectional framing of safety challenges the City to take a more holistic approach in its policies and programs, recognizing the full range of supports that contribute to safety and well-being for members of queer and trans communities.

*"Consider how poverty, limited access to health care, race/cultural background, etc might impact the experiences of this community and how the City could present crossover care and services."*

## Opportunity for change

- + **Foster community presence and peer visibility** — Participants shared that seeing other queer and trans people—whether represented in City staff, at public events, or in leadership roles—contributed significantly to feelings of safety and inclusion. Peer visibility helped ease the stress of being the only visibly queer person in a space and offered a sense of belonging, affirmation, and shared understanding.

*"I hope to see more visibly queer and trans people just doing normal things in the city. Working anywhere, existing in public."*



Paper hearts filled out by Host Your Own Conversation attendees and Queer Prom 2025 answering the question: "What is one hope you have for 2SLGBTQIA+ people in Edmonton that you want to share with the broader community?"

# Theme 7:

## 2SLGBTQIA+ voices are embedded in leadership

**Participants asked that the City not only consult with queer and trans communities, but involve them directly in shaping policies, programs, and the 2SLGBTQIA+ Safe Spaces Action Plan itself. The emphasis was on power-sharing, not tokenism, and on building systems that are designed with, not just for, the communities they serve.**

In order for steps to be made towards a safer and more inclusive Edmonton, participants shared that 2SLGBTQIA+ representatives need to be invited to sit around decision-making tables. There is a call for policies and programs to be designed with, not simply for, the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, empowering their voices to lead the conversations around how best to create an inclusive Edmonton.



### Here is what we heard

- + **Co-design, not just consultation** — Both service providers and community members expressed a desire for the City to move beyond consultation and toward co-creation. Participants asked that the City not only consult with queer and trans communities, but involve them directly in shaping policies, programs, and the 2SLGBTQIA+ Safe Spaces Action Plan itself. This included paid opportunities, shared leadership models, and respect for the wisdom that comes from lived experience. Part of this request was a call for power-sharing and ensuring that those most affected by exclusion are also involved in designing solutions for inclusion.

*“The City can continue funding community-led safety initiatives.”*

- + **Collaboration creates greater impact** — We heard that meaningful progress doesn't happen in isolation—it requires collaboration across communities, organizations, businesses, and all levels of government.

*“Corporate organizations and funders must recognize the importance of investing in 2SLGBTQIA+ spaces and programs. Governments at all levels, as well as corporate and private funders, must step up to meet the needs of the community.”*





## Opportunity for change

- + **Representation matters** — The absence of 2SLGBTQIA+ presence and voices was described as a barrier to trust, relevance and progress. There were calls for the City to prioritize inclusive hiring practices and ensure that lived experience shapes how services are developed, evaluated, and delivered. Representation was seen as meaningful only when paired with cultural safety, supportive structures, and a commitment to long-term inclusion.

*“Hiring more 2SLGBTQ+ people, especially those who are trans, Two-Spirit, racialized, or newcomers, so people see themselves reflected in the staff and leadership.”*

# 2SLGBTQIA+ Advisory Committee

One way to incorporate 2SLGBTQIA+ voices in decision-making would be to establish an advisory committee that would meaningfully reflect the diversity of Edmonton's 2SLGBTQIA+ communities. The section below provides the summary of what we heard.

## Here is what we asked service providers

What lived experiences and perspectives does your organization think are important for advisory committee members to have in order to ensure the committee represents the 2SLGBTQIA+ communities of Edmonton?

**Why did we only ask service providers?** These questions were directed specifically to 2SLGBTQIA+ service providers, as they require a deeper and more nuanced understanding of civic engagement and municipal processes. Service providers are uniquely positioned to reflect on both the needs of 2SLGBTQIA+ communities and the structural considerations that will influence the effectiveness of an advisory body. Their frontline experience offers valuable insight into what's needed for meaningful and sustained impact.



## Here is what we heard from service providers

- + **Committee members must reflect intersectional identities** — Service providers reiterated that 2SLGBTQIA+ lived experience is shaped by intersecting identities—including race, Indigeneity, gender identity, disability, neurodiversity, immigration experience, age, and socioeconomic status—all of which influence how people experience safety, inclusion, and belonging in Edmonton. We heard that the advisory committee must intentionally reflect this diversity to ensure decisions are shaped by those most affected by systemic barriers. Without intersectional representation, key voices risk being overlooked, and the committee could unintentionally replicate the exclusions it aims to address.

*“Intersectionality is key: the committee needs people of colour, people with disabilities, people who identify as women, new Canadians, people with children, and people from different socioeconomic backgrounds.”*

## Specifically, representation from the following areas were noted as important for this committee:

- + **Indigeneity** – Representation from Indigenous, Two-Spirit, and Knowledge Keeper voices from different Nations and communities to ensure the committee's work is informed by Indigenous worldviews, lived experiences, and cultural knowledge.  
*“(Representation) from Indigenous folks especially those who identify as 2-Spirit.”*
- + **Age and generational diversity** – Representation from both youth and seniors to ensure the committee reflects a range of life experiences and generational perspectives shaped by shifting social and cultural understandings of 2SLGBTQIA+ identities.  
*“I think it is important to have a wide range of age groups. Queer inclusion has changed so much throughout the years and older queer folks are really important to discuss the hardships that have been faced and can provide hopeful perspectives on community gathering and resiliency. While, younger queer folks can offer perspectives on some of the new concerns the community faces.”*
- + **Gender diversity** – Representation across the gender spectrum, with particular emphasis on trans voices, to ensure the committee reflects the full range of identities and addresses the specific barriers faced by trans community members.  
*“There MUST be representation from the Trans community, as they are most at risk.”*
- + **Racial diversity** – Representation from racialized communities to ensure the committee reflects the diverse cultural experiences and systemic barriers faced by 2SLGBTQIA+ people of colour.  
*“It is important that perspectives include racial diversity.”*
- + **Varying socioeconomic perspectives** – Representation across income levels, employment status, and education backgrounds, including lived experience with housing insecurity, to ensure the committee reflects the economic realities faced by many members of 2SLGBTQIA+ communities in Edmonton.  
*“(Include representation) of the experiences of poor and marginalized people.”*  
*“The advisory committee needs people with lived experience—especially those most at risk of hate and discrimination. This includes ... unhoused people, and those living in poverty.”*
- + **Geographic and political diversity** – Representation from 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals across different areas of Edmonton, including both progressive and conservative communities, to ensure a broad range of neighbourhood perspectives and lived experiences are reflected in the committee's work.  
*“Members could be from communities that may be more proactive or progressive to understand the strategies they implemented in the past, or members from less progressive or more oppressive to understand the persecution members of the community may face in other regions, societies, and cultures.”*

## ↔ Tensions

It's important to acknowledge that not everyone agreed. The following tensions emerged during our conversations:

- + **Representation versus allyship** — We heard an emphasis for the advisory committee to be composed of those who identify as 2SLGBTQIA+. At the same time, there was recognition of the value in including trusted allies with relevant lived or relational experience. This included parents of 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals, long-time advocates, and those who have consistently supported 2SLGBTQIA+ communities — such as owners or managers of queer-inclusive spaces — who may bring important perspectives to the table.

*“It's also important to include parents of queer and trans kids, who have firsthand experience navigating systems that aren't always supportive.”*

- + **Breadth versus depth** — There was a tension in perspectives between the desire to include a wide range of intersectional identities and the need to maintain a focused, functional advisory group. The call for broad representation reflects the richness and complexity of 2SLGBTQIA+ communities—but also highlights the challenge of doing this meaningfully within the structure of a single committee.

*“To create (an) advisory committee that encompasses the queer community of Edmonton, it is important to seek out the people who are already making movements for the community. Look for those who are already leaders in the community.”*

*“Intersectionality is key: the committee needs people of colour, people with disabilities, people who identify as women, new Canadians, people with children, people from different socioeconomic backgrounds.”*

## Potential Barriers

Additionally, we wanted to understand from service providers the potential barriers that might prevent 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals from applying to or participating in the advisory committee and how the City can help reduce or remove those barriers.



## Here is what we heard from service providers

- + **Fear for personal safety** — We heard concerns about both physical and emotional safety due to the visible and public nature of serving on a municipal committee. Fears of being targeted, doxed<sup>15</sup>, tokenized, or publicly outed were identified as significant barriers that may prevent individuals from applying or participating.

*“(S)ome people won't feel safe having their name made public, as they might feel they're making themselves or their loved ones a target.”*

- + **Personal emotional cost** — We heard concern about the emotional labour involved in serving on a public advisory committee. Participants shared that their expression of identity varies across personal and professional contexts, and participating in a public-facing role could unintentionally “out” them. We also heard that not all members of 2SLGBTQIA+ communities feel safe or comfortable with one another, and that past negative experiences—whether with institutions or community spaces—may lead to hesitation or disengagement.

*“I may be resistant to applying to this committee if I have had unfortunate experiences with the City beforehand about my identity or sexuality in the past.”*

<sup>15</sup> “Doxing” refers to publicly identifying or publishing private information about someone especially as a form of punishment or revenge. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/dox>

- + **Logistical and financial cost** — Participants identified several practical barriers that could limit participation, including language accessibility, transportation challenges, childcare needs, and financial concerns. There were also concerns about the time commitment required to serve on a committee, particularly for those balancing work, caregiving, or other responsibilities.

*“An individual’s capacity in terms of time and finances is a huge barrier.”*

- + **Perceived lack of experience** — We also heard that community members may hesitate to apply due to the belief that formal education or professional qualifications are required, potentially discouraging individuals with valuable lived experience from putting their names forward.

*“Committees can seem intimidating. A lot of folks don’t know how they work, or think you need a certain background or education to be involved. That can make people feel like it’s ‘not for them.’”*

## Here are service providers’ suggestions to overcome these barriers:

- + **Prioritize safety** — We heard a range of suggestions to help ensure the safety of advisory committee members. These included offering options for anonymous participation, selecting accessible and inclusive meeting spaces, and making a clear, public commitment from the City of Edmonton to support and protect 2SLGBTQIA+ participants.

*“Meeting minutes could refer to board members by their first names, meetings don’t need to be filmed and put online.”*

- + **Create an open and inclusive emotional space** — We heard that the advisory committee will need to be a space where the diversity of 2SLGBTQIA+ communities feel emotionally safe. Suggestions included normalizing the sharing of pronouns, valuing lived experience over formal credentials, and offering support for those who may be new to formal committee work. This could include mentorship, one-on-one check-ins, and clear, accessible communication to ensure everyone feels informed and confident in their participation.

*“A lot of the youth we work with get nervous with these opportunities because they aren’t sure what to expect, or feel like they can’t show up as their genuine selves. Offering to meet folks 1-on-1 before committee meetings, or putting together an informative and easy to read document would be a good step.”*

- + **Provide practical support and accommodations** — We heard that offering supports like honorariums, childcare or transportation would help reduce financial and logistical barriers to participation. We also heard a call for flexibility in how participation is structured—including options for virtual attendance and varied meeting times to accommodate different schedules and needs.

*“It would be helpful to offer a stipend to participants to cover the cost of their time and/or costs of attendance such as child care.”*

*“I wonder if it would be possible to have a few seats reserved for drop in positions so people can show up when they have the space, time, etc. And these do not require a high level of education or experience.”*

# What happens next?

**As a culminating step in this engagement, the City will host a Community Meal to share what we heard during our community conversations with 2SLGBTQIA+ service providers and validate our findings. This step serves two important purposes:**

- + It gives the project team an opportunity to confirm that the voices and experiences of 2SLGBTQIA+ communities are meaningfully reflected in the engagement findings.
- + It creates space for representatives from 2SLGBTQIA+ organizations to come together, to connect, celebrate, and continue building relationships, while offering final reflections on what's most important to consider as the City moves forward with developing the 2SLGBTQIA+ Safe Spaces Action Plan.

The meal is an important part of how we honour the stories that were shared and recognize this moment as one part of a broader journey toward inclusion, safety, and belonging for 2SLGBTQIA+ Edmontonians.

As this phase of engagement concludes, it's important to carry forward the momentum, relationships, and trust that have been built into the next stage of work. This process was intentionally designed to be generative. Not just a one-time consultation, but a foundation for ongoing, community-led conversations, reflection, and accountability.

All of the feedback collected to date and summarized in this What We Heard report will be shared with City Council. The 2SLGBTQIA+ Safe Spaces Action Plan informed by the input summarized in this report will be shared with City Council in early 2026, coinciding with implementation of the Action Plan.

## Carrying this work forward

The stories, insights, and reflections shared throughout the Beyond Belonging engagement process offer a powerful reminder: creating a safer, more inclusive city is both urgent and ongoing work. While this report marks the end of one phase, it is also a starting point – a foundation for continued collaboration, accountability, and action.

The City of Edmonton is committed to carrying this work forward in partnership with 2SLGBTQIA+ communities, using what was heard to inform meaningful change through the development of the 2SLGBTQIA+ Safe Spaces Action Plan. Together, we can build a city where everyone feels seen, valued, and safe(r).

For more information about this process and to stay informed about next steps, please visit [edmonton.ca/beyondbelonging](https://edmonton.ca/beyondbelonging).

## Appendices

Appendix A: How we engaged

Appendix B: How we communicated

Appendix C: Who we talked to – demographic details

Appendix D: 2SLGBTQIA+ Experience Map

# Appendix A: How we engaged

Beyond Belonging:  
Building a 2SLGBTQIA+  
Safe Spaces Action Plan

City of Edmonton  
Social Development and Community Service  
Safe and Healthy Communities

June 2025

Edmonton.ca/[beyondbelonging](https://edmonton.ca/beyondbelonging)

| **SHARE** YOUR VOICE  
**SHAPE** OUR CITY

**Edmonton**

# How we engaged

This appendix provides a detailed overview of our approach to meaningful engagement, descriptions of the three phases of our community engagement activities, and provides a brief overview of who chose to participate<sup>1</sup>.

## Our approach to meaningful engagement

Throughout Beyond Belonging, we were committed to creating a process that centred the voices of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. This meant using an approach that was equity-centred, human-centred, trauma-informed, and both adaptive and responsive to the diverse realities of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community in Edmonton. Recognizing the historical and ongoing marginalization and discrimination faced by 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals, every step of the engagement was designed to foster trust, prioritize lived experience, and ensure participants had meaningful control over their involvement. The following outlines how these principles were embedded throughout our work.

### Equity-centered

Equity was at the core of this engagement process, centring the voices and experiences of 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals while acknowledging the historical marginalization that contributes to the systemic barriers they face today. We also approached this work with a strong intersectional lens, recognizing that experiences of safety and inclusion are shaped not only by sexual orientation and gender identity, but also by race, age, disability, newcomer status, and other identities. Targeted outreach efforts ensured that those living at the intersections of multiple forms of marginalization were prioritized and included. By intentionally creating space for diverse experiences within the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, the engagement process worked to surface the complex realities that often go unseen. In addition, by ensuring a focus on a community-led approach, the project allowed 2SLGBTQIA+ community members to go beyond being participants to being leaders and decision-makers, helping to shape the recommendations that will result from this engagement. This equity-focused foundation is critical to dismantling systemic barriers and ensuring full civic participation for all Edmontonians. This approach aligns with the City of Edmonton's Public Engagement Policy<sup>2</sup> and Framework, its commitments to reaching out to diverse communities in thoughtful and meaningful ways, understanding perspectives and building trusting relationships, and its principle of being equitable, inclusive and accessible<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> A detailed overview of who was engaged in this project is found in Appendix C.

<sup>2</sup> [Council Policy C593D - Public Engagement](#)

<sup>3</sup> [City of Edmonton Public Engagement Framework](#)

## Trauma-informed

Recognizing that 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals may have experienced a wide range of trauma including discrimination, marginalization, and violence, it was imperative that the engagement process be built on a trauma-informed approach. This meant at every step of the project - from methodology selection to data collection and reporting - we took an approach to minimize harm, support agency, and create an environment of dignity and respect.

Examples of how this engagement project implemented a trauma informed-approach include:

- + Participants were offered clear information about the purpose and scope of the project and had access to support resources like mental healthcare, if required.
- + Community organizations were supported to carry out engagement in communities where they already had established relationships.
- + Community organizations helped ensure wrap-around supports and debriefing options were available throughout the engagement.
- + Organizations that facilitated Host Your Own Conversations were provided with training and resources - both material and financial - to support both the facilitation and documentation of their discussions.
- + Honoraria were provided to acknowledge the value of participants' time and contributions.

Informed by the understanding that 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals often face inequity and discrimination<sup>4</sup>, the engagement process prioritized consent and control. This trauma-informed design not only reduced the risk of re-traumatization but also fostered safer, more empowering spaces where authentic, honest sharing could occur.

## Human-centered

At its heart, this project was about building relationships, trust, and connection. The engagement process was designed with the whole participant in mind; it was important to value not only what was shared, but to acknowledge that the experience created - and left behind - through participation was also important. We paid careful attention to starting the engagement well, knowing that early experiences with the project would set the tone for trust and openness throughout.

The initial phase of the project focused on deep listening, gathering feedback from service organizations and community experts that was used to shape how the following phase was designed and implemented. This approach ensured that the tools and methodologies used in the second phase were culturally and emotionally appropriate.

We designed all conversations throughout the engagement to foster agency, allowing participants to engage in ways that felt safe and meaningful to them. The approach recognized that people bring multiple, intersecting identities that shape how they experience safety and inclusion. By offering

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<sup>4</sup> [Government of Canada](#)

spaces for both light-touch conversations and deeper dives into complex issues, the project offered a variety of engagement opportunities for participants, ensuring that the engagement experience itself was welcoming, respectful, and responsive to diverse needs.

In an engagement setting focused on equity, trauma-informed practice, and inclusion, design choices can communicate that the organizers have considered the emotional landscape of participants and are committed to creating a space that feels affirming and safe. Our team included a number of seemingly minor touches to build trust and communicate that the process was not just transactional - it was relational. These small touches - rainbow stickers with the name of the project; engagement materials delivered in gift bags wrapped with a bow; and hand-written thank you notes to organizations hosting conversations - demonstrate that participants are seen as whole people, not just as sources of data, and that their well-being matters throughout the process. This care-driven approach helped shift the tone of engagement from extractive to invitational, encouraging deeper, more meaningful participation.

## **Adaptive and attuned**

From the outset, we were committed to listening deeply, remaining open to feedback, and adjusting methods and strategies to respond to the diverse and evolving needs of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. This meant shifting timelines when needed, offering a mix of engagement formats - i.e. in-person, virtual, and self-directed - and being mindful of the emotional and logistical needs of participants.

A key learning from the pre-engagement phase was the importance of existing, trusted relationships between 2SLGBTQIA+ community organizations and the people they support. These organizations were already holding space for connection, care, and conversation. Recognizing this, the engagement approach was designed to support—not replace—these relationships. This approach respected the connections already in place, empowered community leaders, and helped create more authentic and meaningful engagement.

By adapting our methods in real-time and staying attuned to what people were sharing, we were able to build trust, demonstrate respect for participants' time and experiences, and gather richer, more authentic insights. This approach reflects our belief that effective engagement is not one-size-fits-all - it requires humility, attentiveness, and a willingness to evolve in response to the community's needs.

## **Phase 1 - Listen and learn: Pre-engagement workshops**

The first phase, conducted in February 2025, focused on consultation with representatives from organizations that serve the 2SLGBTQIA+ community through pre-engagement workshops.

The focus of this pre-engagement phase was to gather information from community organizations serving 2SLGBTQIA+ communities to inform the design of the engagement tools. We wanted to understand how the engagement activities could best serve the needs of 2SLGBTQIA+ people and

support participants to feel physically and emotionally safe during engagement activities. We knew that involving community experts and connectors early in the engagement process would help support more meaningful conversations with the public later in the project.

## Who we engaged with

Before this project began, the City started connecting with organizations that offer services and support to 2SLGBTQIA+ people and communities. This early outreach helped introduce the project, build relationships, and create space for collaboration. As a result, a Register of Interested Parties was developed, bringing together contacts that reflect the diversity within Edmonton’s 2SLGBTQIA+ communities. Representatives from these organizations were invited to participate in the pre-engagement phase.

As part of Phase 1, we hosted two in-person workshops and one virtual workshop in February 2025. To ensure inclusivity and accommodate those unable to attend the scheduled sessions, we also conducted individual pre-engagement conversations with two separate organizations.

ACTIVITY	PARTICIPATION
In-Person Workshops (3) + February 5, 2025 + February 11, 2025	23 participants
Online Workshop (1) + February 4, 2025	10 participants
1-1 Interviews	2 organizations who were unable to attend the scheduled workshops

Many 2SLGBTQIA+ community activists, leaders and businesses participated in these initial sessions, including representatives from the following organizations:

- + Alberta 2SLGBTQIA+ Chamber of Commerce
- + ASPECC
- + Boyle Street Community Services
- + City of Edmonton
- + Community Initiatives Against Family Violence
- + Edmonton 2 Spirit Society
- + Edmonton Community Foundation
- + Edmonton Drag Festival
- + Edmonton Public Library
- + Edmonton Queer History Project
- + Evolution Wonderlounge
- + MacEwan University
- + Newcomer Centre
- + PolicyWise for Children and Families
- + Pride Centre of Edmonton
- + Pride Corner on Whyte
- + Queer & Trans Health Collective
- + Sage Seniors Association
- + Spirit of Hope United Church
- + Trans Rights YEG
- + University of Alberta
- + University of Alberta Students Union
- + Youth Empowerment and Support Services (YESS)
- + Zetna Collective

# Phase 1: What we heard and how we responded

The themes and actions outlined below reflect what we heard from the pre-engagement conversations and how these learnings were incorporated into the project’s second phase.

WHAT WE HEARD	WHAT WE DID IN RESPONSE
Engaging the diversity of 2SLGBTQIA+ communities in accessible, safe ways is essential.	Offered four different engagement methodologies to reach people where they are, both in-person and online. Developed a resource list of supports to share with individuals in the event that they need additional support. Mental health supports and Elders were funded to be a part of engagements where requested.
Organizations need support to lead engagement rather than outsiders entering their trusted spaces.	Organizations were supported to carry out engagements in ways that honoured the specific relationships they hold with their communities through <i>Host Your Own Conversation Kits</i> . Provided subsidies for staff time, refreshments, and honoraria for participants in recognition of the increased demand on energy and resources of carrying out the engagement.
A desire to gather as 2SLGBTQIA+ people and organizations that serve them.	Prioritized creating engagement tools and methodologies that helped build and strengthen connections between 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals and supporting organizations. Incorporated a Community Meal at the end of the project to share and verify findings.
A desire for interactive and creative ways for people to provide input.	Creative elements were incorporated into both in-person and online engagement methodologies. Examples include: paper hearts at in-person engagements where participants could indicate who they were keeping in mind while participating; online mapping where colour-coded icons indicated various levels of safety at different locations; using collage to respond to a question in the <i>Host Your Own Conversation</i> .
A need for people to share strengths and joy, not just challenges.	Engagement tools were designed to provide opportunities to share what’s working and what brings out queer joy, community, and strength, while also asking for suggestions on what changes need to be made.
‘Belonging’ is something that 2SLGBTQIA+ people want to determine for themselves.	Offered choice and respected the agency and experiences of 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals with the view to move beyond mere belonging to thriving. Reflected this approach in updating the project title from "Building Belonging: Creating a 2SLGBTQIA+

WHAT WE HEARD	WHAT WE DID IN RESPONSE
	Safety and Inclusion Action Plan" to "Beyond Belonging: Building a 2SLGBTQIA+ Safe Spaces Action Plan."

The insights and expertise shared by community leaders and representatives from organizations supporting 2SLGBTQIA+ communities proved to be invaluable to the initial phase of the project.

## Phase 2 - Explore and Engage: Beyond Belonging Implementation

The focus of our second phase was to build on what we heard during the pre-engagement to hear from participants about their ideas for creating spaces, places, services, and programs that feel safe, inclusive, and welcoming to all. A flexible engagement approach was used to support broad participation—offering space for both brief, informal conversations and deeper, more focused discussions. This approach helped surface a wide range of voices and experiences, allowing for a rich exploration of the many ways safety and inclusion are understood and felt within Edmonton’s 2SLGBTQIA+ communities. The second phase of the project took place throughout March and April 2025 and involved engagement with members of 2SLGBTQIA+ communities and allies.

During the pre-engagement phase, we heard that tailoring conversations to specific audiences would be essential to building trust and encouraging meaningful participation. We took that feedback seriously and designed our approach accordingly.

WHAT WE WANTED TO KNOW	THE QUESTIONS WE ASKED
1 - Understand what contributes to safety and inclusion for 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals in Edmonton	From everyone: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ The City of Edmonton is building a 2SLGBTQIA+ Safe Spaces Action Plan. What advice would you give us to help build a city that is safer and more welcoming for the 2SLGBTQIA+ community?</li> </ul>
2 - Identify what needs to change within City spaces, services, and programs to improve these experiences	From 2SLGBTQIA+ communities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ What of the following City of Edmonton services, programs, spaces and places are you aware of?</li> <li>+ What of the following City of Edmonton services, programs, spaces and places have you accessed?</li> <li>+ We want to know how safe and included you perceive these City of Edmonton services, programs, spaces and places to be. Please rate each of the services, programs, spaces and places below on a scale of 1 to 5.</li> </ul>

WHAT WE WANTED TO KNOW	THE QUESTIONS WE ASKED
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ In order for you to feel safe/included with these services, programs, spaces and places, what would you change?</li> <li>+ What makes you feel safe and included with these services, programs, spaces and places?</li> </ul> <p>From 2SLGBTQIA+ communities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ What can the City of Edmonton do to help you feel more safe and included when accessing city spaces and services as your full self?</li> <li>+ What gaps in current City services and/or spaces need to be addressed to ensure you feel safe and included as a 2SLGBTQIA+ person?</li> </ul> <p>From service providers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ What can the City of Edmonton do to help the communities you serve feel more safe and included when accessing City of Edmonton spaces and services as their full selves?</li> <li>+ What can the City of Edmonton do to support the services your organization provides to the 2SLGBTQIA+ community?</li> </ul>
3 - Explore how existing supports can be strengthened to increase safety and inclusion for all	<p>From 2SLGBTQIA+ communities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ We recognize that there are important non-City led initiatives that support people in the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. Which types of programs and spaces have you accessed in the past 5 years?</li> </ul>
4 - Generate ideas for addressing the rise in hate against 2SLGBTQIA+ community members	<p>From service providers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ How can the City contribute to addressing the rising hate towards members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community?</li> <li>+ What training, tools, or resources are needed to empower individuals and organizations to prevent, safely intervene or respond to hate targeting 2SLGBTQIA+ people?</li> </ul>
5 - Gather input on the composition and structure of an advisory committee to City Council	<p>From service providers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ What lived experiences and perspectives does your organization think are important for advisory committee members to have in order to ensure the committee represents the 2SLGBTQIA+ communities of Edmonton?</li> <li>+ What barriers might prevent 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals from applying to or participating in the committee, and how can these be addressed?</li> </ul>

WHAT WE WANTED TO KNOW	THE QUESTIONS WE ASKED
6 - A look to the future, through the eyes of 2SLGBTQIA+ communities	<p>From everyone:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Imagine Edmonton in 10 years. What do inclusive services, programs, spaces and places look and feel like for 2SLGBTQIA+ people in Edmonton?</li> </ul> <p>From 2SLGBTQIA+ communities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ What is one hope you have for 2SLGBTQIA+ people in Edmonton that you would like to share with the broader community?</li> </ul>

To engage as many and as diverse a representation of 2SLGBTQIA+ participants as possible in this important conversation, we hosted multiple opportunities for input and involvement. These included:

### Online survey - Public

A “Share Your Ideas”, online survey using the City of Edmonton’s survey platform, was available from March 25 to April 21, 2025. The survey link was hosted on Engaged Edmonton as well as on [edmonton.ca/beyondbelonging](https://edmonton.ca/beyondbelonging). Members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community and allies were asked to share their experiences of safety and inclusion when accessing city places, spaces, services and supports and how feelings of safety and inclusion could be increased. This survey also collected detailed demographic information.

### 2SLGBTQIA+ Experience Map

[Engaged Edmonton](#) also hosted a mapping tool from March 25 to April 21, 2025. Participants were invited to drop colour-coded pins on a map of the city marking locations in Edmonton where they experience safety and inclusion (green), discomfort but not a lack of safety (yellow), and a lack of safety or inclusion (red). This point-in-time tool allows us to visualize areas for improvement for City Services and spaces, as well as highlight spaces across the City that are currently modeling innovative ways to include 2SLGBTQIA+ people in Edmonton<sup>5</sup>.

### Online survey - Service Providers

An online survey using the City of Edmonton’s survey platform was available from March 25 to April 21, 2025. Representatives from organizations that serve the 2SLGBTQIA+ community were invited to share their perspectives on: changes that could be made to City of Edmonton spaces and services to make them safer and inclusive, how to address the rising hate towards members of the 2SLGBTQIA+

<sup>5</sup> Detailed feedback from the 2SLGBTQIA+ Experience Map can be found in Appendix D.

community, and their recommendations for the composition and structure of a 2SLGBTQIA+ Advisory Committee.

## Host Your Own Conversation

The *Host Your Own Conversation* initiative was developed to create flexible, community-led opportunities for 2SLGBTQIA+ organizations to engage their own networks in conversations about safety and inclusion in Edmonton. The goal was to honour and centre the lived experiences of 2SLGBTQIA+ people by allowing organizations to guide discussions in ways that felt most meaningful and accessible to them. This approach responded directly to community feedback that emphasized the need for multiple participation options and the importance of meeting people where they are.

Participating organizations received a *Host Your Own Conversation Kit*, which included a structured but adaptable guide to support dialogue and consistent data collection. Service providers captured insights from their conversations by completing an online Google Form, responding to a set of shared questions to ensure comparability across sessions. To further support participation, the project team offered online training for hosts ahead of their sessions, in-person facilitation assistance upon request, and both posters and custom stickers to help create welcoming environments. Financial supports included subsidies for staff time and honoraria for participants, recognizing the additional energy and resources required to support this engagement.

## Who we engaged with

To include as many 2SLGBTQIA+ voices and experiences as possible in this important conversation, we offered multiple opportunities for input and involvement between March 25 and May 3, 2025. These included:

ACTIVITY	PARTICIPATION
Public Survey	538 responses 463 that identify as 2SLGBTQIA+
Service Provider Survey	18 responses
Map Your Experience	103 contributions from 40 contributors
Host Your Own Conversation	15 conversations hosted 204 individual participants

Given the diversity within 2SLGBTQIA+ communities and the importance of intersectionality in conversations about identity, outreach efforts were intentionally designed to include individuals living at the intersections of multiple forms of marginalization.

The *Host Your Own Conversations* were community-led discussions designed to create safer, more accessible spaces for 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals to share their experiences and insights in ways that

felt comfortable and relevant to them. The following service providers hosted these conversations with their communities:

- + Aging with Pride
- + Boyle Street Community Services
- + CHEW Project
- + Comité franco-queer de l'Ouest
- + Community Initiatives Against Family Violence
- + Edmonton Community Foundation
- + Edmonton Drag Festival
- + Fyrefly Institute
- + Jewish Federation of Edmonton
- + Okimaw Kihêw Mêkwanak
- + Pride Corner on Whyte
- + Pride@TheCity
- + Rainbow Refuge
- + The Landing

This tool helped us connect with a wide range of 2SLGBTQIA+ people, including those who also self-identified as:

- + Youth
- + Seniors
- + Indigenous individuals
- + Newcomers to Canada
- + People with disabilities
- + Racialized minorities
- + Individuals experiencing housing precarity
- + Members of faith communities
- + Neurodivergent individuals

Approximately 86% of those who responded to the public survey<sup>6</sup> self-identified as 2SLGBTQIA+, with the following gender identities and sexual orientations represented<sup>7</sup>:

### Gender Identities

- + Agender
- + Genderfluid
- + Genderqueer
- + Man
- + Non-binary
- + Tran man
- + Trans woman
- + Woman
- + I prefer to self describe as: 2SLGBTQIA+π, A normal person, Bigenderflux?, Cis, Cis woman, Confused, Demimasc, Gay man, Gender non-conforming, Genderfluid non-binary transfem person, Indigiqueer, Intersex, Multi-gender, Non-binary trans masculine, Nonbinary without the dash between, Non-binary woman, Queer, She/they, Trans masc, Trans neutral, Transfemme, Transmasculine, Two Spirit transman, Two-spirit

### Sexual Orientation

- + Asexual
- + Bisexual
- + Gay
- + Heteroflexible

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<sup>6</sup> See Appendix C for detailed demographic information about those who participated in the public survey.

<sup>7</sup> For more information on definitions related to gender, sexual and romantic minorities, please visit the Community-Based Research Centre's [General Information](#) resource.

- + Homoflexible
- + Lesbian
- + Pansexual
- + Queer
- + Questioning
- + Straight
- + I prefer to self describe as: 2 Spirit, Aromantic, Aro-spec, Demi-bisexual, Demisexual, Demisexual/Pansexual, Fluid, Indigoqueer, Omnisexual, Poly-romantic, Sapphic, Trans, Two spirit, Two spirited woman

The diversity of voices represented through these engagement activities brought essential perspectives and will contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the unique needs and strengths of 2SLGBTQIA+ Edmontonians who face compounded barriers to safety. This understanding will be vital in shaping an Action Plan that reflects the diverse realities of those most impacted.

## **Phase 3 - Reveal and Confirm: What We Heard Report and Community Meal**

The third phase of the project will take place in June 2025. Phase 3 is both a culmination of the engagement process and a continuation of the project's commitment to reflection and accountability. As part of this phase, a Community Meal shareback is being hosted with 2SLGBTQIA+ service providers to validate the findings shared in the *What We Heard* report. This step ensures that community voices are accurately reflected in the engagement outcomes. Equally important, the meal offers a space for connection, appreciation, and honouring the stories that were shared. It also supports continued relationship-building among 2SLGBTQIA+ organizations and provides meaningful context for the City as it moves forward with the development of the 2SLGBTQIA+ Safe Spaces Action Plan.

# Appendix B: How we communicated

Beyond Belonging:  
Building a 2SLGBTQIA+  
Safe Spaces Action Plan

City of Edmonton  
Social Development and Community Service  
Safe and Healthy Communities

June 2025

Edmonton.ca/[beyondbelonging](https://edmonton.ca/beyondbelonging)

**SHARE** YOUR VOICE  
**SHAPE** OUR CITY

**Edmonton**

# How we communicated

## Phase 1 - Listen and learn: Pre-engagement workshops

The first phase of the engagement involved service providers and 2SLGBTQIA+ community leaders with whom the City had already begun establishing relationships, so communication was targeted and personalized to this audience.

### Invitation emails

Invitation emails described the purpose of the pre-engagement workshops and invited recipients to participate either in either an in-person or online session. Emails were sent to 2SLGBTQIA+ community-based organizations and other key stakeholders on the stakeholder registry.

### Draft community agreements

A set of guidelines were shared in advance of the pre-engagement workshops that served as a baseline understanding for how to participate in the engagement activities.

### Local resources sheet

A list of resources was shared with participants who might be triggered by their involvement in the engagement and require support.

## Phase 2: Explore and engage: Beyond Belonging implementation

Several strategies were used to share information about the project with 2SLGBTQIA+ communities. Because the engagement was intentionally targeted, communication efforts were strongly supported by 2SLGBTQIA+ organizations who helped amplify outreach through their existing networks and trusted relationships.

The following communication methods were used to advertise engagement opportunities:

- + Emails for 2SLGBTQIA+ service providers

- + Emails to Edmonton Insight Community who self-identified as 2SLGBTQIA+
- + Project Website
- + Online Engagement Portal (Engage Edmonton)
- + Posters
- + Postcards
- + Social media posts
- + Beyond Belonging Stickers



The following communication methods were used to advertise engagement opportunities:

## Template emails for 2SLGBTQIA+ service providers

To support widespread participation and make it easier for service providers to share engagement opportunities within their communities, the project team developed accessible communication templates. These included sharable content with links to online engagement tools, as well as a customizable email invitation for organizations hosting their own conversations. This approach recognized the trusted relationships already held by community organizations and aimed to reduce barriers to spreading the word.

## Edmonton.ca/BeyondBelonging - project website

This website is hosted on the City of Edmonton’s main website under the City Government “Initiatives, Innovation and Strategies” portal and went live on March 25, 2025. The project website provides a thorough overview of the engagement initiative including information on the project context, priorities and timeline. The page also lists 2SLGBTQIA+ supports and services, answers to a number of frequently asked questions, and guidance on what to do if you witness or experience discrimination or violence.

Below are the statistics for the [edmonton.ca/BeyondBelonging](https://edmonton.ca/BeyondBelonging) page between its March 20, 2025 launch and May 31, 2025:

- 267 total users
- 542 sessions
- 508 views

## Engaged Edmonton - online engagement portal

The Engage Edmonton website was live between March 25, 2025 and April 21, 2025 and included the following information: project overview, project team contact information, 2SLGBTQIA+ Experience Map, link to the Share Your Ideas survey and a list of Community Supports and Services.

Below are the statistics for the online engagement portal:

- 1,143 views<sup>1</sup>
- 998 visits<sup>2</sup>
- 697 visitors<sup>3</sup>
- 103 contributions<sup>4</sup> to the 2SLGBTQIA+ Experience map
- 40 contributors<sup>5</sup>

## Posters and postcards

Printed and electronic versions of posters and postcards were distributed to all 2SLGBTQIA+ organizations on the Interested Party Register.



<sup>1</sup> Views - the number of times a Visitor views any page on a site.

<sup>2</sup> Visits - The number of end-user sessions associated with a Single Visitor.

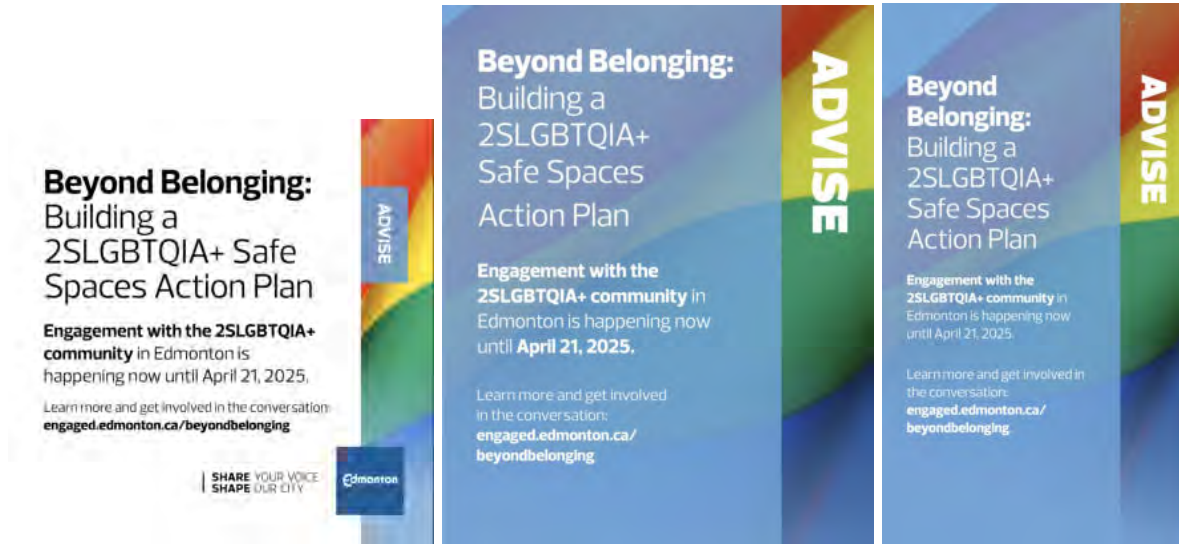
<sup>3</sup> Visitors - The number of unique public or end-users to a Site. A Visitor is only counted once, even if they visit a site several times in one day.

<sup>4</sup> Contributions - The unique number of responses or feedback collected through the participation tools.

<sup>5</sup> Contributors - The unique number of Visitors who have left feedback or Contributions on a site through the participation tools.

## Social media materials

Digital versions of the poster and postcard reformatted for a variety of platforms were provided to organizations that serve the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. This allowed the agencies to promote the project and the various engagement opportunities via their online community.



## Stickers

In an engagement setting focused on equity, trauma-informed practice, and inclusion, small design choices - like offering fun stickers - can signal to participants that the space has been created with care and thoughtfulness. Featuring a rainbow motif and a URL linked to the project's Engaged Edmonton page, stickers were handed out at all in-person engagement activities.



## Phase 3 - Reveal and confirm: What We Heard report and community meal

At the time of writing this report, the communications were not available.

# Appendix C: Who we talked to

Beyond Belonging:  
Building a 2SLGBTQIA+  
Safe Spaces Action Plan

City of Edmonton  
Social Development and Community Service  
Safe and Healthy Communities

June 2025

Edmonton.ca/[beyondbelonging](https://edmonton.ca/beyondbelonging)

| **SHARE** YOUR VOICE  
**SHAPE** OUR CITY

**Edmonton**

# Who we talked to

## Phase 1 - Listen and learn: Pre-engagement workshops

ACTIVITY	PARTICIPATION
In-Person Workshops (3) + February 5, 2025 + February 11, 2025	23 participants
Online Workshop (1) + February 4, 2025	10 participants
1-1 Interviews	2 organizations who were unable to attend the scheduled workshops

**Representatives from the following organizations participated in the pre-engagement workshops, both in-person and online:**

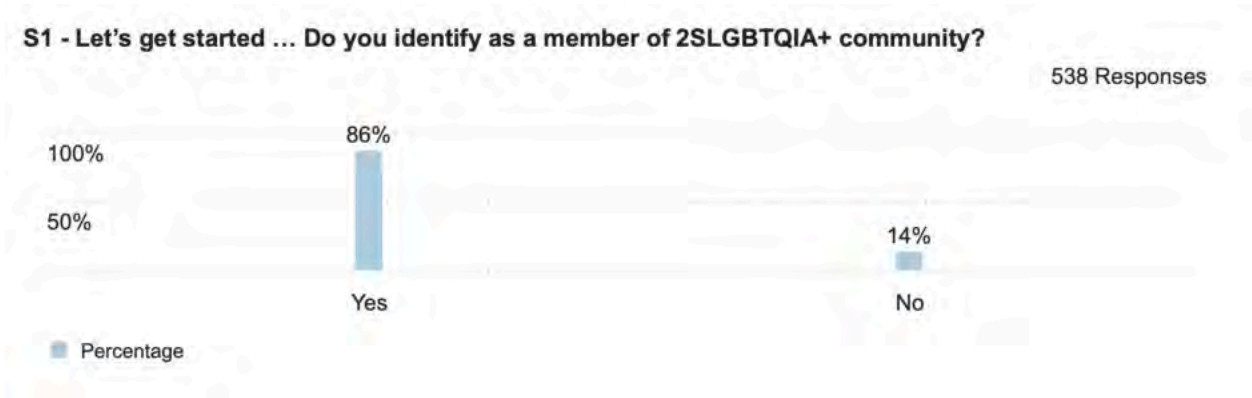
- + Alberta 2SLGBTQIA+ Chamber of Commerce
- + ASPECC
- + Boyle Street Community Services
- + City of Edmonton
- + Community Initiatives Against Family Violence
- + Edmonton 2 Spirit Society
- + Edmonton Community Foundation
- + Edmonton Queer History Project
- + Edmonton Public Library
- + Evolution Wonderlounge
- + Macewan University
- + Newcomer Centre
- + Policywise for Children and Families
- + Pride Centre of Edmonton
- + Pride Corner on Whyte
- + Queer & Trans Health Collective
- + Sage Seniors Association
- + Trans Rights YEG
- + United Church
- + University of Alberta
- + University of Alberta Students Union
- + Youth Empowerment and Support Services (YESS)
- + Zetna Collective

A number of 2SLGBTQIA+ community activists, leaders and businesses also participated in these initial sessions that informed the creation of the engagement tools and methods.

# Phase 2 - Explore and Refine: Beyond Belonging implementation

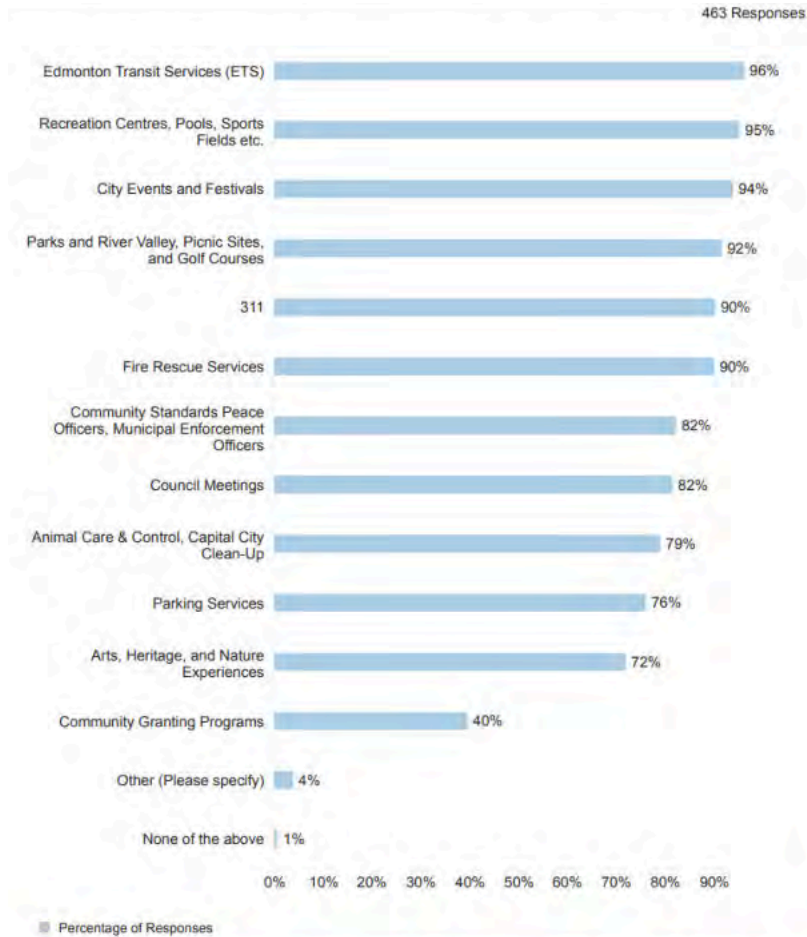
## Centering 2SLGBTQIA+ voices in the public survey

To help maintain the focus of the engagement and ensure that the survey results reflected the voices and experiences of 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals, the public survey began with a simple question: **“Do you identify as a member of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community?”** This question allowed us to centre the analysis on responses from those with lived experience, while still allowing for transparency around who participated. It also supported the integrity of the data by ensuring that insights were grounded in the realities of those the project aims to support.

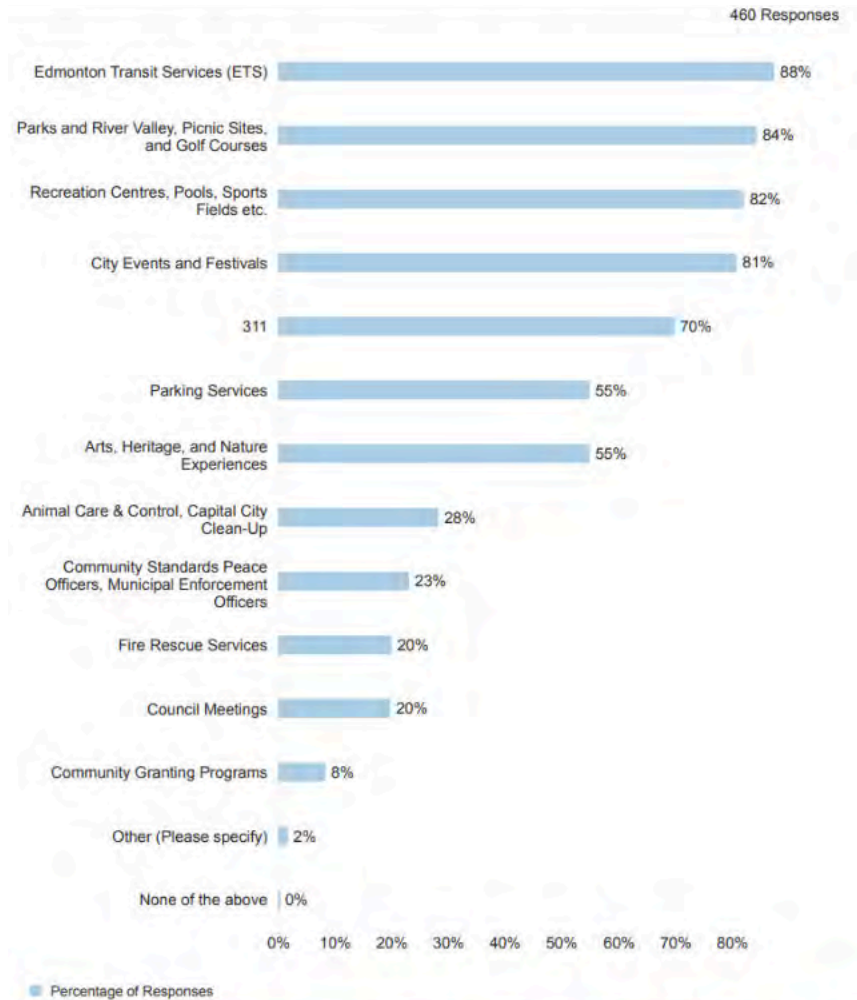


Before diving into what needs to change, we wanted to understand where things stand today. Here's what was shared by participants about their experiences and awareness of City of Edmonton spaces, services, and programs—and how they currently support (or fall short in supporting) 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion and safety.

## Which of the following City of Edmonton services, programs, spaces and places are you aware of?

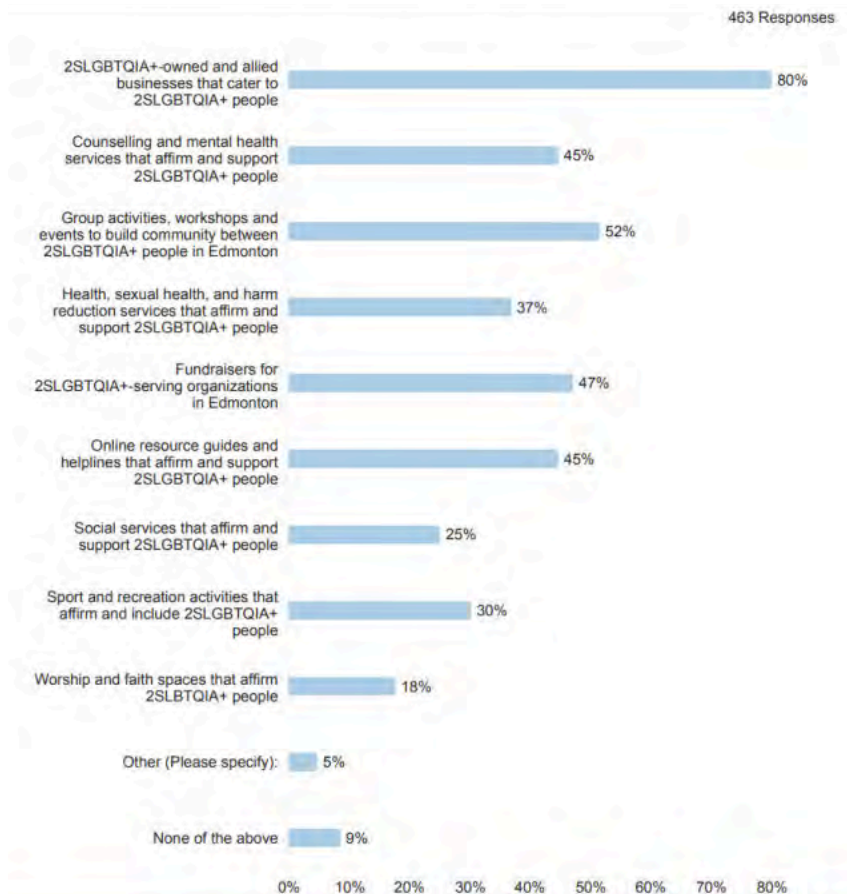


## Which of the following City of Edmonton services, programs, spaces and places have you accessed?



We also wanted to know what non-city supports and services respondents used in order to better understand how the City might be able to collaborate with and support community organizations. We asked:

**We recognize that there are important non-City led initiatives that support people in the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. Which types of programs and spaces have you accessed in the past 5 years?**



## Public survey demographics

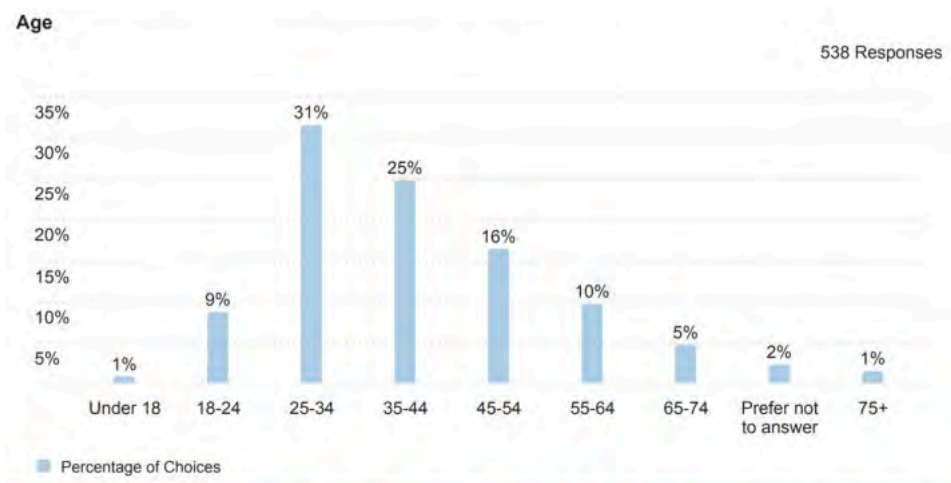
The Public Survey gathered feedback from respondents including a series of demographic questions:

- + Age
- + Edmonton resident
- + Region of the city
- + Gender identity
- + Sexual orientation

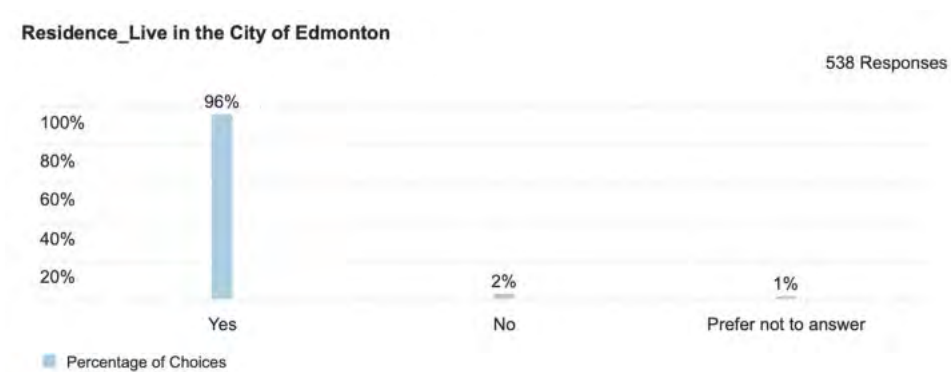
- + Identify as racialized/visible minority, person with disability, Indigenous, born outside of Canada, or other
- + How long have you lived in Canada?
- + Primary language
- + Employment status
- + Total household income

The data displayed on the following pages shows who engaged in the public survey.

### What is your age category?



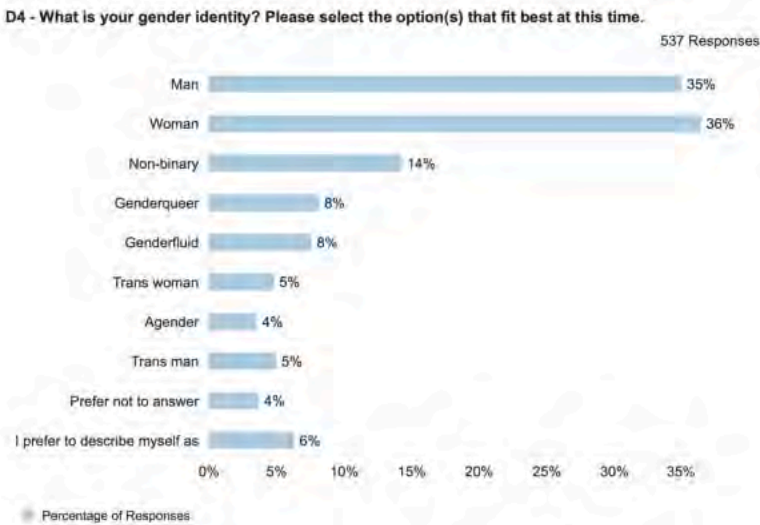
### Do you currently live in the city of Edmonton?



## What region of the city do you live in?



## What is your gender identity?



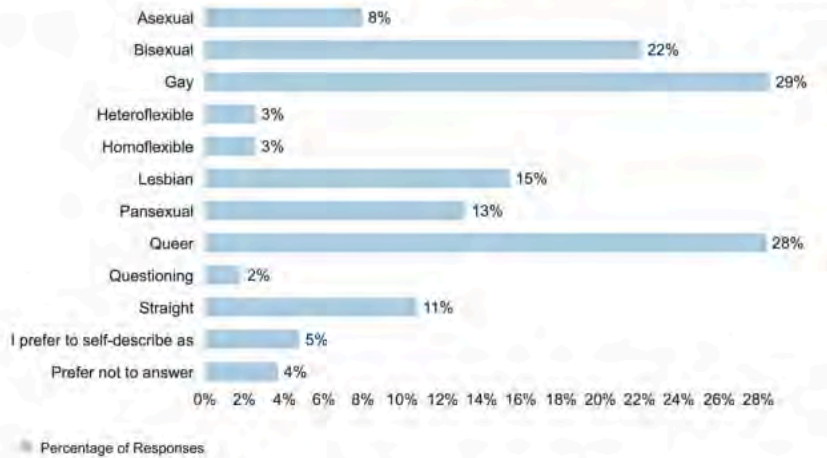
Responses to "I prefer to describe myself as" included:

2SLGBTQIA+π, A normal person, Bigenderflux?, Cis, Cis woman, Confused, Demimasc, Gay man, Gender non-conforming, Genderfluid non-binary transfem person, Indigiqueer, Intersex, Multi-gender, Non-binary trans masculine, Nonbinary without the dash between, Non-binary woman, Queer, She/they, Trans masc, Trans neutral, Transfemme, Transmasculine, Two Spirit transman, and Two-spirit.

## How do you identify your sexual orientation?

D5 - How do you identify your sexual orientation? Please select the option(s) that fit best at this time.

538 Responses

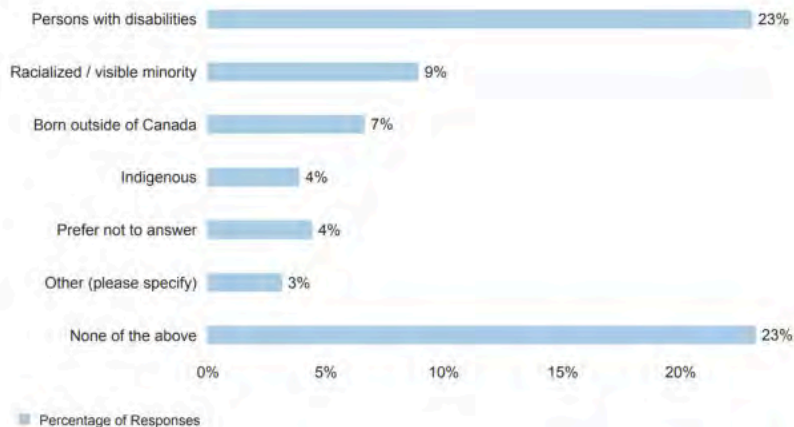


Responses to "I prefer to self-describe as" included:

2 Spirit, Aromantic, Aro-spec, Demi-bisexual, Demisexual, Demisexual/Pansexual, Fluid, Indigoqueer, Omnisexual, Poly-romantic, Sapphic, Trans, Two spirit, and Two spirited woman.

## Do you identify with any of the following?

538 Responses



## Which race category best describes you?

(Among those who identify as Racialized/visible minority)

We heard from 48 people that identified as a racialized or visible minority, selecting race categories that included White, Latina/Latino/Latinx/Latine, East/Southeast Asian, Indigenous, Black, South Asian, Middle Eastern, those preferring not to answer, and preferring to self describe as: "Caucasian, Hongkonger, Indo-Caribbean, Mixed, Native american, Nehiyaw, and Polish." Exact numbers of specific categories selected are removed to protect anonymity.

**Are you Two-Spirit?  
(Among those who identify as Indigenous)**

Among the 21 participants who identified as Indigenous, we heard from people who identified as Two-Spirit, people who did not identify this way, and those who preferred not to answer. Exact numbers of specific categories selected are removed to protect anonymity.

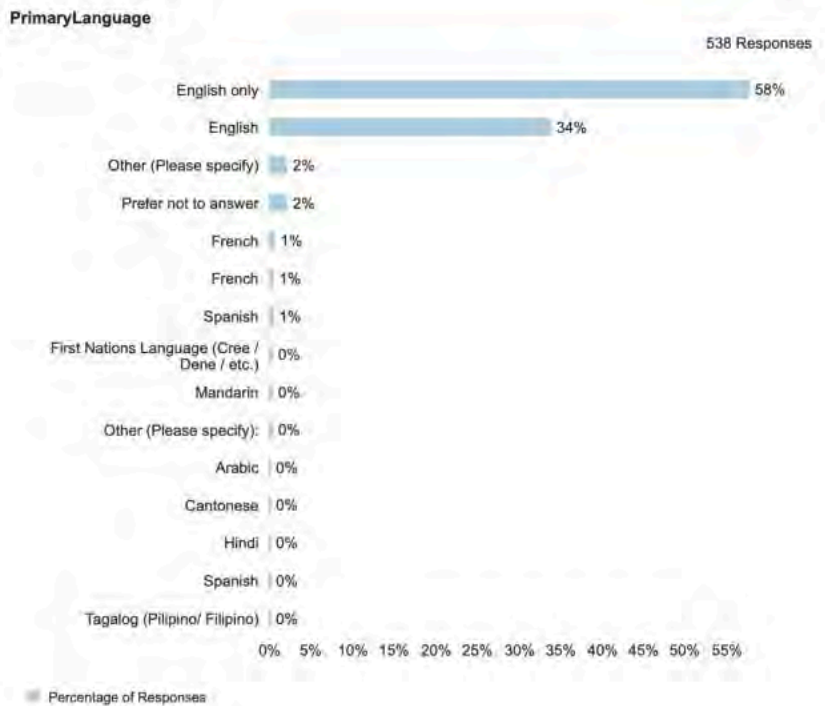
**What is your current immigration status?  
(Among those who identify as born outside Canada)**

Among those 36 participants who identified as born outside of Canada, immigration statuses included being a Canadian citizen, a landed immigrant/permanent resident admitted under the economic category, a landed immigrant/permanent resident admitted under the family class category, a refugee/protected person (formally approved), a refugee or asylum claimant/person in need of protection (applied but not yet approved), Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel Visa, here with a temporary work permit/papers, a student (obtained study permit or student work permit), a visitor, an undocumented person (irregular migrant). Exact numbers of specific categories selected are removed to protect anonymity.

**How long have you lived in Canada?  
(Among those who identify as born outside Canada)**

Among those 36 participants who identified as born outside of Canada, participants ranged from living in Canada for less than a year, to one to three years, to three to less than five years, five to less than ten years, ten years and above, and some participants preferred not to answer. Exact numbers of specific categories selected are removed to protect anonymity.

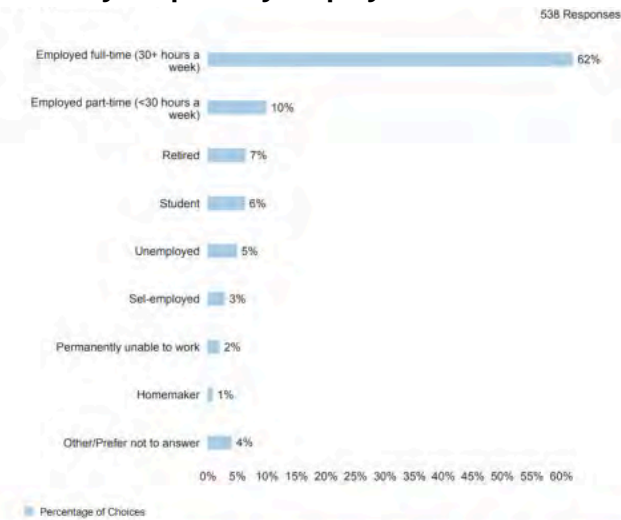
## What is the primary language spoken in your household?



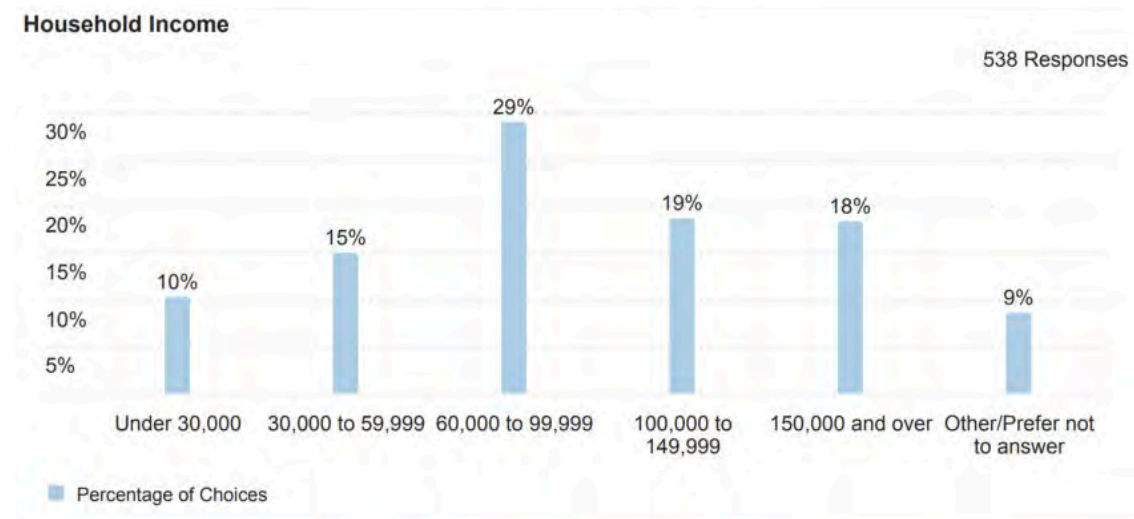
“Other” languages include:

Cree, Creolese, Cantonese; Polish; Mandarin and Swedish.

## What is your primary employment status?



## Total household income



## Service provider survey

The following service providers & community partners participated in this survey:

- + Edmonton Queer History Project
- + PolicyWise for Children & Families
- + Boyle Street Community Services
- + CHEW Project
- + Edmonton Fire Rescue Services
- + City of Edmonton, PFLAG
- + Community, Recreation and Culture
- + Fort Edmonton Park
- + COE
- + Edmonton Fire Rescue
- + HIV Edmonton
- + Queer Youth Prom
- + Abbotsfield Youth Project
- + 109 DENTAL

## Host Your Own Conversation: community-led engagement

The following service providers & community partners supported Host Your Own Conversations with their respective communities:

- + Aging with Pride
- + Boyle Street Community Services
- + CHEW Project
- + Comité franco-queer de l'Ouest
- + Community Initiatives Against Family Violence
- + Edmonton Community Foundation
- + Edmonton Drag Festival
- + Fyrefly Institute
- + Jewish Federation of Edmonton
- + Okimaw Kihêw Mèkwanak
- + Pride Corner
- + Pride@TheCity
- + Rainbow Refuge
- + The Landing

Through the Host Your Own Conversation tool, we were able to reach a wide diversity of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community who have intersecting identities including those who also identify as:

- + Youth
- + Seniors
- + Indigenous individuals
- + Newcomers to Canada
- + People with disabilities
- + Racialized minorities
- + Individuals experiencing housing precarity
- + Members of Faith communities

## **Phase 3 - Reveal and confirm: What We Heard report and community meal**

Phase 3 has not been completed at the time of preparing this report.

# Appendix D: 2SLGBTQIA+ Experience Map

Beyond Belonging:  
Building a 2SLGBTQIA+  
Safe Spaces Action Plan

City of Edmonton  
Social Development and Community Service  
Safe and Healthy Communities

June 2025

[Edmonton.ca/beyondbelonging](https://edmonton.ca/beyondbelonging)

**SHARE** YOUR VOICE  
**SHAPE** OUR CITY

**Edmonton**

# 2SLGBTQIA+ Experience Map

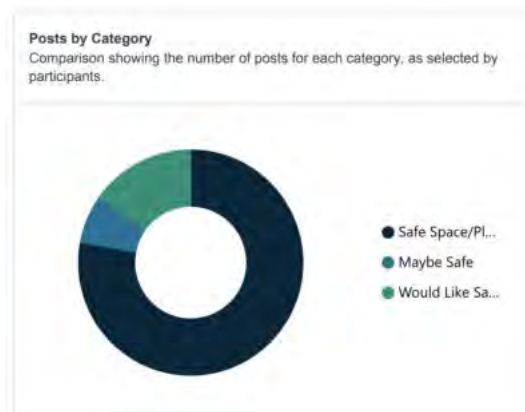
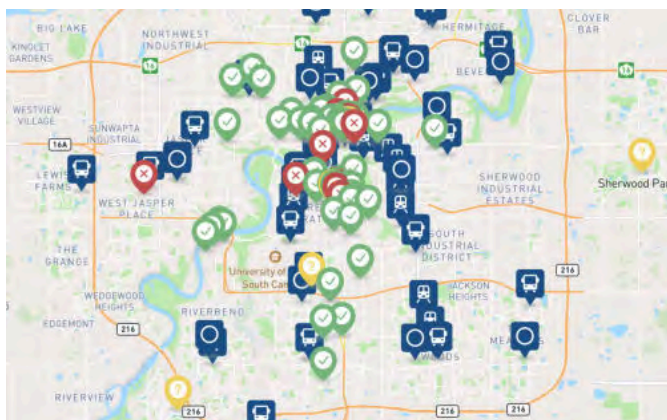
Engage Edmonton hosted a mapping tool from March 25 to April 21, 2025. Participants were invited to drop colour-coded pins on a map of the city marking locations in Edmonton where they experience safety and inclusion (green), discomfort but not a lack of safety (yellow), and a lack of safety or inclusion (red).

This point-in-time tool allows us to visualize areas for improvement for City services and spaces, as well as highlight spaces across Edmonton that are currently modeling innovative ways to include 2SLGBTQIA+ people.

## Summary of mapping contributions

### 103 contributions from 40 contributors

- + **Green Pins:** I feel safe and included here
  - o 75 submissions
- + **Yellow Pins:** This is an ambiguous space/place. I feel uncomfortable but not unsafe here
  - o 12 submissions
- + **Red Pins:** I would like to feel safe/included here, but haven't in the past
  - o 16 submissions



# City of Edmonton places and spaces

Type of Location	# Identified as "I feel safe and included here."	# Identified as "This is an ambiguous space/place. I feel uncomfortable but not unsafe here."	# Identified as "I would like to feel safe/included here, but haven't in the past."
LRT Station or stop			2
Transit Centre	1		1
Recreation Facility	7	6	

## City of Edmonton locations identified

The University Transit Centre and the Commonwealth, The Meadows, Clareview, Londonderry, and Grand Trunk Community/Fitness and Leisure Centres are listed as City spaces where people have felt safe and included.

*"I like that there is a family change room. As a trans person, it is a gender neutral spot where I feel comfortable changing in. Also the changing stalls are big and comfortable to move in."*

Six recreation centres, including Jasper Place Leisure Centre, Booster Juice Recreation Centre in Terwillegar, Hardisty Fitness and Leisure Centre, Commonwealth Community Recreation Centre, and Kinsmen Sports Centre, were identified as City spaces or places where people have felt uncomfortable but not unsafe.

*"My experiences here have varied significantly. My experiences with staff have been positive, but actually using facilities is always hit or miss, depending on who is around. Things like staring are common, or being less willing to share equipment or space. Spaces surrounding physical activity are often especially uncomfortable and I worry about this pushing visibly queer people out of gyms and becoming a social determinant of health, making our health as a whole worse."*

The Churchill and Belvedere LRT stops, and Stadium Transit Centre are City spaces and places where participants previously identified not feeling safe or included.

*"Feeling unsafe in high floor LRTS, and stairwells on Capital Line during day time hours. Receiving dirty looks, stares, there is a feeling of danger and visibility for safety. I feel threat of public attack when dressed "out of conformity". Segregated washrooms are an issue, visibility is low, would like to see Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) in washrooms, i.e. panic buttons in all washroom types."*

# Community places and spaces

# Identified as "I feel safe and included here."	# Identified as "This is an ambiguous space/place. I feel uncomfortable but not unsafe here."	# Identified as "I would like to feel safe/included here, but haven't in the past."
67	6	13

## Community Spaces & Places Identified

Specific addresses, space names, and identifying factors have been removed in this appendix to protect the anonymity of participants who shared their input.

Participants identified 67 spaces where they felt safe and included. These locations spanned various sectors: non-City government buildings, schools, libraries, faith spaces, non-profit organizations, and subsidized housing. A diverse range of businesses also contributed to these feelings, including financial institutions, entertainment venues (theatres, malls, coffee shops, board game cafes, pubs, and breweries), wellness facilities (gyms, barbershops, salons, physiotherapy clinics), and retail (adult stores, shops, and stores catering to 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals).

*"I do not pass well, have had my nails painted... and have received nothing but respect from staff and visitors alike. You can frequently find people of all walks of life here, including students, kids, disabled people, and even the occasional sports parent."*

Shopping centres, some neighbourhoods, a library, and a public space were the six areas identified as ambiguous spaces or places.

*"I feel safe when Pride Corner is there, but I feel unsafe when there is a street preacher shouting anti-LGBT rhetoric at me. I would feel safer if the street preacher were unable to use a loudspeaker to shout at me."*

High-density public spaces, shelters, swimming spaces, healthcare facilities, convention spaces and shopping centre were among the thirteen spaces where participants indicated they have not felt safe or included in the past.

*"I would love to go to this waterpark, but the long, crowded, gendered changing rooms just cause too much anxiety."*



**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

Safe and Healthy Communities,  
Social Development Branch,  
Community Services Department  
June 2025

Please visit [edmonton.ca/beyondbelonging](https://edmonton.ca/beyondbelonging)