What We Heard Report

Heritage Places Strategy

Phase Two

January 2026

Full Version

SHARE YOUR VOICE
SHAPE OUR CITY

Edmonton

February 2026

Table of Contents

Table of Contents 2
Acknowledgements 3
Project Overview 4
Engagement Approach 5
What We Heard 11
Next Steps 36

Acknowledgements

Land Acknowledgement

The City of Edmonton acknowledges the traditional land on which we reside is in Treaty Six Territory. We would like to thank the diverse Indigenous Peoples whose ancestors' footsteps have marked this territory for centuries, such as nêhiyaw (Cree), Dené, Anishinaabe (Saulteaux), Nakota Isga (Nakota Sioux), and Niitsitapi (Blackfoot) peoples. We also acknowledge this as the Métis' homeland and the home of one of the largest communities of Inuit 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 place we call Edmonton is known to many as amiskwaciwâskahikan (ᐊᒥᐢᑲᒪᐧᑭᐊ᙮ᐢᑲᐦᐃᐧᐃᑲᓐ or Beaver Hills House) before the area was colonized in the nineteenth century. Indigenous Peoples have looked to the meaning of space (referring to location, physical space and/or physical geography) as a means of establishing a sense of place (referencing meaning within space) long before Edmonton's built form developed. A new heritage strategy will help to broaden what heritage can be, beyond our colonial and settler history, to reflect a more holistic representation of the histories and stories for those who call this place home.

Thank You

The City would also like to thank those participants who contributed their thoughts and perspectives through facilitated conversations, completing the survey, meeting with the project team and providing written submissions. Your contributions will help shape the Heritage Places Strategy.

Project Overview

The City of Edmonton is reimagining how to identify, commemorate, and preserve the places that matter most to Edmontonians. This isn't just about historic buildings, it's about the natural spaces, cultural landscapes, and community landmarks that tell our collective story. Drawing on UNESCO's Historic Urban Landscape approach[1], the City is moving beyond individual structures to embrace a more holistic understanding of heritage. The Heritage Places Strategy will help to contribute to The City Plan, its Guiding Value to "Preserve" and various policy directions specific to heritage (i.e., "1.2.3.3 Facilitate programs and services that preserve, document and celebrate the city's heritage"). The strategy will be guided by the City's Indigenous Framework to foster stronger relationships with Indigenous Peoples around heritage planning. It will also look at how heritage can support Council priorities such as affordable housing and Edmonton's (2019) declaration of a climate emergency.

Overall Project Goals

The goals of the new Heritage Places Strategy are to:

- Build on the City's heritage program to create a strategy that includes diverse histories, voices and places
- Widen the lens of the heritage program to:
    - recognize the contributions of underrepresented people, places, and cultures, including Indigenous Peoples
    - recognize places of cultural heritage, natural heritage in addition to built heritage
    - consider how heritage contributes to our climate resiliency objectives
- Replace the Historic Resource Management Plan (2009) and update Policy C450B (2008)

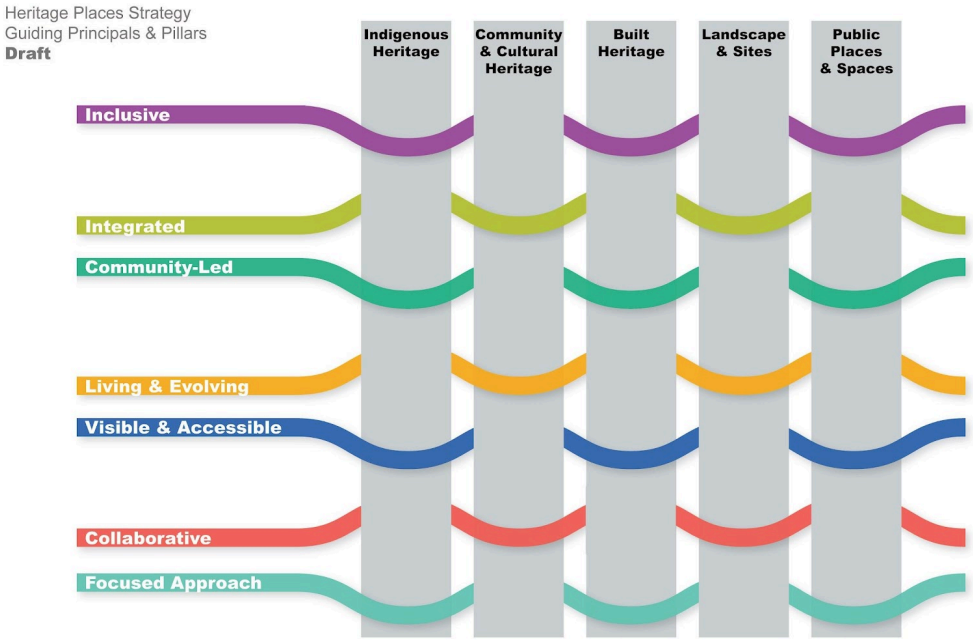
Project Phases and Timeline



[1] For more information on UNESCO's Historic Urban Landscape Approach

Transition From Phase 1 to Phase 2

Based on the feedback received in Phase 1, along with research from other municipalities and analysis of Edmonton's policies, the project team drafted Guiding Principles and Pillars to form the foundation of the new strategy.



Engagement Approach

Phase 2 engagement took place in late fall 2025 and built on the Phase 1 engagement results. For this second phase, the project team engaged with Indigenous partners, heritage partners, community organizations, representatives from communities whose voices may not have been part of heritage planning before, and the public through a variety of activities.

This What We Heard Report summarizes the feedback collected during Phase 2.

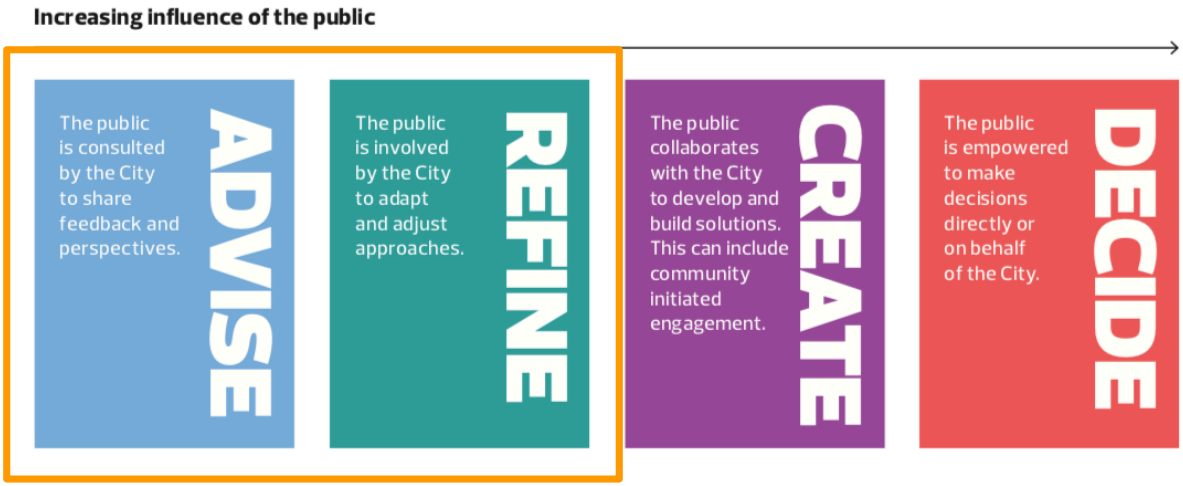
Engagement Goals

The City of Edmonton's Public Engagement Spectrum explains the four roles the public can play when they participate in City of Edmonton engagement activities. Moving within the spectrum, there is an increasing level of influence and commitment from the City and the public.

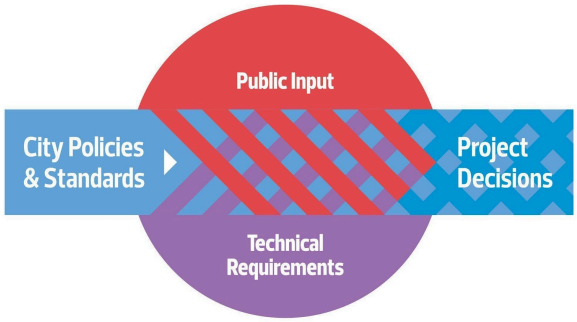
The current phase of engagement for the new strategy falls within the ADVISE and REFINE levels of the spectrum. Members of the public, who may have a variety of views on heritage matters, were invited to participate at the ADVISE level, meaning they were asked to share their feedback and

perspectives on the Guiding Principles and Pillars of the new Heritage Places Strategy. The partners, such as heritage and historic organizations, Indigenous partners, developers, and community organizations were invited to participate at the REFINE level, meaning they were asked to provide more in-depth insights on the content of the Guiding Principles and Pillars.

The visual below illustrates the City of Edmonton's Public Engagement Spectrum:



Engagement feedback is one very important factor that the City considers when making decisions. In addition to engagement feedback, the project team also considers City policies and guidelines and research from other cities. This full suite of information ensures that the decisions are consistent with policies and standards, align with best practices, and result in the best outcomes for our city.



How We Engaged

During Phase 2, the project team engaged with partners and the public through a variety of activities, as described below.

Activities	Description	Audience	Format	Statistics
Engagement				
Conversations with Indigenous Partners	Hosted sessions to gather insights into proposed Guiding Principles and Pillars.	Indigenous Partners	3 in-person	6 attendees
Conversations with Heritage Partners & Community Orgs	Hosted sessions to gather insights into proposed Guiding Principles and Pillars.	Heritage Partners	2 in-person, 1 virtual	24 attendees
Engaged Edmonton Webpage	Included the ability for participants to ask questions and provide feedback via online forums.	Public	Online	861 visitors 2 contributions
Online Survey	An online survey was distributed via the Edmonton Insight Community, available on the City's webpage, the Engaged Edmonton page, and emailed to partners.	Public	Online	2,656 responses
Written Submissions	Received input via the project email heritagestrategy@edmonton.ca	Partners	Online	5 emails
Communications				
Social Media & Project Webpage	Project awareness and updates were posted on the City of Edmonton's website, Facebook and X (Twitter) accounts.			
Emails & invitations	Emails were sent to partners, organizations, community leagues and members of the public who had signed up for project updates to inform them about the input opportunities and encourage them to spread the word through their networks.			
Public Service Announcement (PSA)	The Heritage Places Strategy's engagement opportunities were included in the City's weekly PSA.			

Who We Engaged

Indigenous Partners

Indigenous engagement is critical for this project to ensure that Edmonton's approach to heritage management is inclusive of Indigenous ways of knowing and being and supports meaningful reconciliation. For this second phase of engagement, our Indigenous partners included the City's Indigenous Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) partners. Engagement took place with representatives of the Confederacy of Treaty Six First Nations, the Enoch Cree Nation and the Otipemisiwak Métis Government. These meetings were a follow up to Phase 1 conversations and focused on gathering perspectives on the draft Guiding Principles and Pillars and opportunities for ongoing collaboration.

Heritage Partners

Heritage Partners and community organizations include those who have a strong affinity for heritage, have heritage as a significant part of their mandate, or are interested in exploring their role in heritage planning. This included the Edmonton Heritage Council, Edmonton Historical Board, several individual community leagues, Edmonton Public Schools, business improvements areas, BILD Edmonton and the infill development community.

Representatives were invited to one of three sessions (two in-person and one virtual session, each approximately 90-120 minutes each). These sessions were a continuation of conversations started in Phase 1. Each session was designed as an interactive workshop to foster meaningful conversation.

Underrepresented Groups

This included groups and organizations with an affinity for heritage, but who may be underrepresented in traditional heritage planning. In Phase 2, we heard from representatives from the 2SLBGTQIA+ community, Pride Corner, Council of Canadians of African & Caribbean Heritage, Francophone community and Multicultural Health Brokers Co-Operative. Like the Heritage Partners, representatives were invited to one of the three sessions.

Public

Public refers to residents, property owners, individual members of a heritage/historical organization or community league, or Edmontonians at large. They may or may not be familiar with heritage or the City's heritage program but are interested to offer their insights.

There were three ways for the public to share their feedback:

- **Engaged Edmonton**, the City's digital engagement platform, acted as an interactive hub providing an overview of the project (e.g., purpose, goals, timeline and alignment with City policies) and allowed people to ask and receive answers to questions about the project, and comment directly on the Guiding Principles and Pillars.
- **Online survey** invited people to provide input on the proposed Guiding Principles and Pillars. The survey was distributed via the City's webpage, the Engaged Edmonton page, emailed to partners, and also sent to the Edmonton Insight Community. The Edmonton Insight Community is an online panel of over 25,000 Edmontonians who receive surveys on various projects led by the City.
- **Written Submissions** via the project team's email for any additional input.

Engagement GBA+ Analysis

The Heritage Places Strategy is looking to widen the lens of Edmonton's history that recognizes the contributions of currently underrepresented people, places, and cultures. The project team took a Gender Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) approach to better understand how equity can be embedded in the engagement process, in recognizing heritage places, and in updating the heritage program's traditional heritage management approaches. Through this analysis, the team identified that it was important to engage with groups whose contributions to Edmonton's history are underrepresented. With the help of the City's Indigenous Relations Office, engagement was also planned with the City's Indigenous MOU partners.

Similar to Phase 1, the project team sought input from cultural groups with longstanding historical connections in Edmonton who may or may not be familiar with the existing heritage program or other underrepresented groups who may not have participated in the past, but whose insight will help to inform the strategy's development. Building on the conversations had in Phase 1, the project team heard from some of these underrepresented groups, including the 2SLGBTQIA+, Black and African diaspora, Francophone and other cultural communities in Phase 2.

The team also sought to better understand the perspectives of different demographic groups through cross-tabulation analysis of the survey results, which are noted in the What We Heard section of this report.

What We Asked

Conversations

Across the in-person and virtual sessions, a brief presentation outlined the draft Guiding Principles and Pillars.

Following the presentation, three overarching questions were provided to session participants to prompt discussion:

- What do you like about the draft Guiding Principles or Pillars?
- What are you unsure about or what is unclear?
- What adjustments would you propose?

Engaged Edmonton

On the Engaged Edmonton webpage, people were asked to provide feedback through two tools:

- **Ask a Question** - invited people to pose questions to the City's project team and see what others had posed.
- **Forum -** invited people to contribute to the discussion threads on the Guiding Principles and Pillars for people to share thoughts on what they like, what may be unclear and/or what adjustments they would propose.

Survey

The Phase 2 survey asked the following questions:

- Overall, how much do you agree or disagree that the proposed Guiding Principles provide strong guidance for the new Heritage Places Strategy?
    - Is there anything you would add or change to the Guiding Principles?
- Overall, how much do you agree or disagree that the proposed Pillars provide a strong foundation for the new Heritage Places Strategy?
    - Is there anything you would add or change to the Pillars?
- Is there anything else you would like to share about the Heritage Places Strategy project that was not covered in the survey?

What We Heard

This section highlights what was heard across various engagement activities. It includes the feedback summarized and categorized into themes heard from Indigenous partners, heritage partners, community organizations, and the public.

Activity: Conversations with Indigenous Partners

The project team attended individual sessions with Enoch Cree Nation, the Confederacy of Treaty Six First Nations, and the Otipemisiwak Métis Government. Each session opened with acknowledgement of the lands and relationships that brought representatives together and closed with the offering of sweetgrass – recognizing the wisdom shared and the weaving together of the knowledge that this work requires.

The three conversations were different and complementary insights repeatedly surfaced across all three. In the session with Enoch Cree Nation, the weight of past consultations, the realities of displacement, and what needs to be done differently were discussed. In the session with the Confederacy of Treaty Six First Nations, topics included worldview and possibility - how ceremony and story function, and what belonging in Edmonton could look like. In the session with Otipemisiwak Métis Government, present practice - how heritage lives through family, what "preservation" misses, and what ongoing relationship requires after a strategy is complete were brought up. Below, the different perspectives and common themes are summarized below.

Relationship is the Work Itself

Partners were clear: you cannot separate the process of building relationships from the work of learning about heritage. They are the same thing. One representative named the concern directly.

> *"My biggest concern would be if when you wrap this all up, that you don't come talking anymore."*

Good intentions alone are not enough. Sustained relationships are what ensures heritage work stays on track, and what catches issues before they start to go wrong.

> *"Good intentions can quickly lead to not-so-great situations when you forget who you've involved."*

The message for the City: heritage engagement needs to begin with relationships and stay grounded in them. Better questions won't shortcut this. The relationship is the method. Partners were also clear that the strategy itself is not the goal. What matters is what happens once it is complete.

Partners described relationship maintenance in practical terms. It does not require intensive engagement. Regular contact, being kept in the loop, being invited before decisions are made rather than consulted after, these are enough.

A committed working group with continuity through staff and political changes was specifically recommended. When key people leave and institutional memory disappears, the burden falls on communities to re-explain what they have already shared.

Trust and Presence Govern What Can Be Shared

Heritage knowledge - stories, significant places, cultural practices - lives within relationships. Partners explained that this knowledge does not sit waiting to be collected. Certain stories can only be told at certain times of year, and some require permission from specific people before they can be shared. What one Elder knows may be different from what another knows, and both are valid.

One representative described how formal consultation sessions in boardrooms tend to produce limited results, while engagement that "turns into a whole visiting session" is where trust gets built. Knowledge keepers talk differently when they're physically at a place. Being on the land together opens access to knowledge that can't be reached through interviews elsewhere.

Elders have been through this before. They have participated in consultations, shared knowledge, and watched that information disappear *"on someone's desk somewhere that's no longer here."* This pattern has created legitimate wariness. Some Elders have stopped engaging with certain processes or people. What might look like resistance is often pattern recognition.

Future engagement inherits this history. Acknowledging it and demonstrating different behaviour over time is part of rebuilding trust.

Ceremony Creates the Conditions for Sharing

Ceremony came up as essential for creating conditions where knowledge can flow. Ceremony does something: it creates safety, signals respect and opens what would otherwise stay closed.

"Having that ceremony invites that space, and it also creates it as a safe space,"

Partners emphasized that Indigenous peoples want to share. The question is whether the right conditions are created. Offering tobacco, asking permission, accepting "no" as a valid answer. This is how relationships work.

"We are so open to sharing - it's one of our natural laws to share."

Historical Experiences Persist

For Enoch Cree Nation, the 1902 and 1908 land surrenders shape everyday life. West Edmonton - its neighbourhoods, developments, shopping centres - was built on surrendered Enoch territory. One representative described teaching her daughters about this history while living in a community named after Richard Secord, who purchased the surrendered land, suggesting that *"people in that whole neighbourhood have no idea."*

Place names carry this history. River Cree originally described Cree people living by the river *"the Nahey people... by the river. Then eventually we just kind of (got) pushed further and further."* The name persists while its meaning has been forgotten by most Edmontonians.

Heritage Lives in the Present and Ancestors Remain Present Through Story

Heritage, as partners described it, operates in present tense. Historical experiences persist as daily realities. Ancestors are present, not behind us. What communities are doing today is creating the heritage of the future.

Partners described a relationship with ancestors that differs from western notions of commemorating the past. This understanding means heritage interpretation requires different language. Talking about Indigenous peoples in past tense e.g., *"The Cree lived here",* misrepresents a living relationship. Stories function as the medium through which ancestors remain present. They are how connection is maintained. One representative explained her morning prayer practice with her children:

> *"We're not praying to [grandmother as if] she's gone. We are alive with it today. Like, her spirit lives on."*

Heritage is Being Created Now

Partners also emphasized that heritage flows forward.

> *"We're all actively engaged in heritage and building heritage. What we're doing now is going to be the things people in 100 years look back on."*

This reframes what heritage work is for. It encompasses the past, but it also involves recognizing what communities are creating today and ensuring those practices, stories, and relationships can continue.

For the strategy, this means using present-tense language in heritage interpretation, supporting living practice, and recognizing that heritage is being made now.

The Shape and Logic of the Framework Matters

Partners engaged with the draft Guiding Principles and Pillars framework closely and their questions focused as much on its structure as its content. The way a framework organizes heritage shapes how people understand what heritage is and what the work involves.

The draft framework organized heritage into five Pillars connected by Guiding Principles. Indigenous heritage sat as one Pillar, among others. Partners questioned whether this arrangement could hold what Indigenous heritage actually is.

> *"I look at stuff like this and go, I don't even know how to translate that into Cree."*

If the framework's organizing logic can't be expressed through Indigenous concepts, the structure itself may need rethinking.

Partners also cautioned against using the framework to establish which places matter most. The risk in creating hierarchies of significance is that absence from a list becomes absence of importance.

Knowledge about a place might live with an Elder who hasn't been consulted, or within a family that hasn't been asked. A framework that locks in priorities too early closes off what it doesn't yet know.

"You could argue that all land is important. And we do."

The strategy's underlying structure will shape how heritage work is understood for years to come. Partners' feedback suggests it should remain open and able to accommodate what hasn't yet been heard as relationships deepen and understanding grows.

Where Indigenous Heritage Sits

Indigenous heritage touches everything - land, buildings, community, public space, story. Isolating it in one category risks losing that interconnection. But dispersing it entirely risks making it invisible.

This tension led to conversations about positioning. A standalone Pillar offers visibility, a place where Indigenous heritage can be seen and prioritized. A Guiding Principle ensures Indigenous perspectives inform how all heritage categories are approached. A lens changes how the entire strategy gets developed.

Partners did not land on one answer. They saw the need for all of these: dedicated space where Indigenous heritage won't get lost, and integration throughout so it shapes how the City thinks about everything else.

Diversity Within Indigenous Communities

Partners emphasized that diversity exists within and across Indigenous communities. Knowledge is distributed across individuals, families, nations, lineages. What one Elder knows may differ from what another knows, shaped by their experiences and the teachings they received. Even Elders from the same place may carry knowledge *"taught in a different way."* This diversity is how Indigenous knowledge systems work.

The strategy should hold space for different and even divergent perspectives. Coherence across communities is neither expected nor necessary. What matters is continuing to seek out voices not yet heard.

Activity: Conversations with Heritage Partners

Feedback on the Guiding Principles

There was strong support for the Guiding Principles. Suggestions for improvements focused on the need for clearer language, stronger definitions, and less ambiguous terminology. Participants questioned technical terms, sought clarification on distinctions between concepts, and pushed for language that has "teeth" rather than aspirational softness.

Guiding Principle: Inclusive

This Guiding Principle aims to reflect Indigenous, racialized, and 2SLGBTQIA+ histories and settler heritage. Participants strongly supported inclusive approaches to heritage while raising concerns about language, representation, and who is included in the definition of inclusive.

Intersectionality Over "Alongside"

Participants wondered if the use of “alongside” in the Inclusive Guiding Principle description (i.e., *Inclusive - Reflect Indigenous, racialized, and 2SLGBTQIA+ histories alongside settler heritage*) was the most appropriate word. To better represent the concept of intersectionality[2] and overlapping identities, there was a suggestion to adjust the wording. This would recognize that histories and identities are not separate silos but are interconnected and overlap in complex ways.

One participant shared that the term “settler” can create a division or leave out people who may not identify with the term "settler" (e.g. new immigrants). Others argued that “settler” terminology is essential for honest engagement with colonial history.

"Settler colonialism hasn't ended.”

Acknowledging settler colonialism—past and present—is necessary for reconciliation and to understand systems that need to be critiqued and improved.

Including Other Voices

Participants noted that the Inclusive Guiding Principle should include disability communities which represent a significant and historically marginalized group. Engagement with the City’s Accessibility

[2]Intersectionality refers to how our experiences are influenced by our overlapping identities, such as age, race, gender and many more. These identities can interact with power structures and barriers compound in ways that create marginalization, disadvantage our well-being, development and opportunity.

Advisory Committee, as one example, can help with specific issues such as but not limited to accessible plaques and building modifications.

Guiding Principle: Integrated

This Guiding Principle aims to align heritage goals with broader City priorities including climate, housing, and economic development. Participants questioned whether genuine integration is possible given current City dynamics and priorities.

Economic Development Overshadows Heritage

Participants felt that integration as currently described would make heritage subordinate to other goals, particularly economic development, rather than creating genuine alignment.

"We are shoehorning heritage goals into other goals. It feels like heritage is a filler in The City Plan, when it's not supposed to be."

The concern is that "integration" in practice means heritage must conform to economic development, housing, and climate goals rather than these goals being shaped by heritage values. Multiple participants cited recent concrete examples of heritage being sacrificed for short-term economic development. Framing heritage through a triple bottom line (with economic, social, and environmental values) was acknowledged but noted as previously unsuccessful.

Meaningful Integration

Some participants were pessimistic about the possibility of integration at this point, while others articulated what meaningful integration should look like. Integration should mean policies that support and reinforce each other, not creating contradictions where heritage goals are routinely overridden by other priorities.

"If we are talking about putting heritage in The City Plan, we missed that boat already. Maybe it's a noble goal but it's not an effective strategy."

"Make sure that integration doesn't lead to conflicting policy requirements."

Guiding Principle: Community-Led

This Guiding principle aims to support grassroots storytelling, stewardship, and decision-making. It received strong, enthusiastic support with participants eager to take on leadership roles and offering concrete examples of how they could contribute.

Empowering People

Participants suggested a new Guiding Principle or Pillar addressing empowerment stating that heritage places are meaningless without people to steward and activate them.

> *"It's heritage places not heritage people...but maybe a new Pillar, maybe a new word around empowering people? I don't know if it needs to be a Pillar, but it's worth investigating. But these things won't happen if people can't do anything about it."*

Grassroots Storytelling

Given Edmonton's increasing diversity, community-led storytelling was seen as essential for capturing the full range of heritage narratives. This connects to the broader theme of heritage as lived experience rather than imposed narrative.

> *"I think it's really important, as Edmonton has become very diverse. There's lots of stories from different ethnocultural communities."*

Community Capacity and Confidence

Community organizations expressed confidence that they could execute heritage work. This willingness to contribute, even without funding, represents capacity that the strategy could leverage. Letters of support or official recognition could empower the community to pursue heritage initiatives independently. Participants suggested ways for groups beyond just consultation. They could execute or administer certain actions, reducing strain on the heritage team and budget.

> *"For Community-Led, there's opportunities for actions to be undertaken by community groups with interest at some level, so as to not impact the City budget."*

This includes documentation, surveys, photos before demolition, and ongoing stewardship. Community-led doesn't mean unstructured. There needs to be clear, democratic processes for determining what communities want, who speaks for them and what cultural practices need to be respected during engagement processes.

Multilingual and Culturally Appropriate

Community-led approaches enable heritage to be shared in various languages and cultural contexts.

"What about allowing community stories to be told in their own language? The Migrant Action Plan has Swahili, Punjabi, Ukrainian, Tagalog, as a way of celebrating communities and recognizing diversity, help them tell their stories in their own languages."

Guiding Principle: Living & Evolving

This Guiding Principle aims to embrace heritage as dynamic—connecting past, present, and future--to resonate with how many people experience heritage in their daily lives. Participants appreciated the recognition that heritage must adapt to changing circumstances. This flexibility is particularly important for accommodating climate change, economic shifts, and evolving community needs.

"I like Living and Evolving [as a Guiding Principle]. The market is continually changing, and we need flexibility."

Lived Heritage vs. Documented Heritage

For many, especially immigrants, heritage is lived experience rather than formal documentation.

"Heritage is a very colonial word. You need to be able to track back, the written record, 'our houses are preserved for this amount of time'. For new immigrants, heritage isn't a thing that's spoken about, it's a lived thing. People are just their heritage. There's no need to capture it in written form."

"Cultural memory and tradition, living tradition, that's heritage."

This challenges the conventional documentation-focused approach to heritage and validates oral traditions, cultural practices, and lived experiences.

Participants recognized that communities themselves are constantly evolving, with different cultural groups inhabiting neighbourhoods over time. The strategy needs to recognize these layers of history without privileging earlier iterations over current ones.

"The Avenue of Nations, 107 Avenue, that's been a gateway for people for many years. Vietnamese, and now more recently African. And now the Vietnamese are mostly gone from there, but that was a part of history."

Many also shared that what we do now becomes the heritage of the future. This perspective shifts heritage from being retrospective to include present creation of meaningful places and practices.

Landscapes That Evolve

Even landscapes that appear natural have evolved through human intervention, and not all historic states are worth preserving. This acknowledges that heritage sites can improve over time and that evolution does not necessarily equate to loss.

"I've talked to people in Terwillegar Park, they say, oh what a nice natural park, and I have to say, this used to be a quarry. But people think, oh this is how Edmonton's River Valley always was. But it has evolved. "

Guiding Principle: Visible & Accessible

This Guiding Principle aims to make heritage legible in public space, infrastructure, and everyday life. Participants emphasized that accessibility must be inclusive and employ multiple methods. For heritage to be visible, it needs prominence in decision-making, not just physical markers.

"I would love it for heritage to come up in more conversations and be held with more public value, not just that we see it in the physical way like a structure."

Non-Exclusionary Place Making

Accessibility must include all people. This expands accessibility beyond physical mobility to include economic access, digital access, and social inclusion. Heritage and place making should not be designed to exclude certain people.

"Whenever we are thinking about making things accessible it has to be accessible to [the] unhoused community as they are the most vulnerable among us, they deserve to know heritage"

Multiple Interpretation Methods

Participants supported using diverse methods for making heritage visible and accessible. Digital interpretations as well as access to information in several languages was encouraged. Participants wanted more creative interpretation beyond traditional commemorative plaques.

"I think we could look at some different strategies that aren't just plaques up on buildings that are still standing and start to see how we can be more creative in remembering these communities that grew up and their contributions and what they've created."

Guiding Principle: Collaborative

This Guiding Principle aims to enable meaningful partnerships between communities, the City, and heritage organizations. Participants supported collaboration and emphasized the need for clear structures, shared resources, and partnership.

Partnership as Positive

Collaboration should include different funding models and sharing financial resources, not just responsibilities. However, the City was encouraged to facilitate partnerships even when it cannot provide all the funding directly. Collaboration requires clear, transparent processes.

"If collaboration is supported in some way, budget can come from other parties, so budget doesn't have to be a constraint in the same way."

"I think it's not that the collaboration isn't there, it just needs teeth. It needs to be laid out, this is what we are doing, and this is how we protect community members, and this is how City administration works."

Guiding Principle: Focused Approach

This Guiding Principle aims to prioritize realistic, achievable actions. It received mixed reception, with some understanding the need for focus and others seeing it as pre-emptively limiting ambition. It was also viewed as an operational requirement rather than an aspirational principle.

Focus on Outcomes, Not Budget

Participants wanted the focus to be on desired outcomes rather than budget constraints. They shared that this Guiding Principle could be used to justify doing only small, safe things rather than pursuing the bold action heritage preservation requires. Some participants were concerned that focusing too much on what's "realistic" could undermine transformative change.

"Focused approach, that's a euphemism for we don't have enough money to do what we want to do. In my work, we say, forget the budget, what do we want? Then we work back from there with how to fit it in the budget. It's important to think about the outcomes we want."

"It's like saying if you don't dream, you'll never get anywhere. Just do what's easy. I think being too focused could be a problem."

Feedback on the Pillars

Participants reacted enthusiastically to the concept of Pillars, appreciating a structure which provided an organizing platform to discuss the many aspects of heritage.

Pillar: Indigenous Heritage

This Pillar recognizes the importance of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit histories and relationships to land. It received support as foundational to the entire heritage strategy, with participants emphasizing the need for action, Indigenous-led approaches, and honest engagement with difficult histories. Participants viewed Indigenous heritage as essential for all other heritage work.

"I like this...this recognition is the ground floor, it's essential so the other layers of culture actually make sense."

"It's the catalyzer for how other cultural experiences live and breathe and prosper."

Pillar or Guiding Principle

There was discussion about whether Indigenous heritage should be a Pillar or elevated to a Guiding Principle that informs all work. The argument for making it a Guiding Principle is that Indigenous heritage shouldn't be siloed but is the platform for all heritage work across all Pillars. A similar comment came up in the Indigenous engagement sessions.

"Should Indigenous heritage be a Pillar or a Guiding Principle? Should it stand on its own or be incorporated into all the Pillars?"

Substantive Action Over Tokenism

The strategy must move beyond proclamations and symbolic recognition to concrete actions that support Indigenous communities and honor Indigenous heritage.

"Time has come not just for words but action, and what it means to Indigenous people. People are looking more for substantive works and what heritage is and what it means to celebrate a name and community."

Naming and Renaming

There was strong support for Indigenous place names and incorporating Indigenous languages.

"I agree it would be amazing to put more Cree names and be able to hear them in whatever way we can get them out there because reviving a language that is largely going extinct would be a heritage strategy in and of itself."

However, participants acknowledged that renaming is challenging for some community members.

> *"There's people in the community that get upset when things get renamed. You need to be careful with renaming things and why."*

Reflecting Indigenous Diversity

Participants suggested that under the Indigenous Heritage Pillar that specificity is needed to acknowledge the distinct histories and relationships of different Indigenous nations.

> *"On the language of Indigenous heritage, it's missing some Indigenous groups. I feel like it should name specific groups, maybe identify specific groups so it ties into the history of Treaty 6 and the sense that we know Edmonton."*

Difficult Truths

Participants emphasized the importance of sharing difficult, uncomfortable truths. Heritage interpretation should not sanitize or romanticize the past but present authentic histories, including colonial violence and ongoing impacts.

> *"When it comes to settlers, learning about real Indigenous history beyond what we learned in school, we really have to sit with the discomfort and understand what actually happened."*

Recognizing Sacred Sites

Participants shared their support for recognizing sacred sites but were concerned that formal recognition of sacred sites could expose the sites to harm. This requires careful, Indigenous-led decision-making about what should be publicly recognized versus protected through confidentiality.

"Some information has danger in bringing it to light. Some groups don't want their history to come to light until they know it's safe. At least lay the groundwork to say it's ok and people can say what they want to. "

Recognition of Ongoing Indigenous Presence

Indigenous heritage is living and evolving, not frozen in time. Heritage isn't just about the past but acknowledges ongoing Indigenous presence and relationships.

Pillar: Community & Cultural Heritage

This Pillar recognizes the local histories and places of significance to diverse communities. Participants supported this Pillar but emphasized the need for stronger wording, clearer definitions, more democratic engagement, and recognition of all community types.

Local, community or neighbourhood-specific histories matter

Participants expressed that every community, regardless of its demographic makeup, has heritage worth recognizing. Communities can be diverse, changing, or have competing visions. Within communities, there is a need to ensure underrepresented voices are heard. The strategy should actively work to include voices that have been historically excluded or overlooked.

Local stories, specific to communities, give neighbourhoods their unique character and identity. Participants suggested that communities are not blank slates for redevelopment; they have existing networks, relationships, and social capital that should be valued. The City must acknowledge and value the social structures that create heritage already present in communities.

"[My community] is a place right now, there are families and people, and things that matter here, you can't pretend it's a blank slate and that there's a university and LRT so it should only be high density. This complete lack of understanding of the community, the social capital, it's just so frustrating there's zero recognition for that."

Evolving, Multi-Layered Communities

Communities are constantly changing with multiple layers of history. The strategy must recognize these layers without privileging earlier ones over current communities. Examples like ‘Church Street’

and others speak to the evolving history of Edmonton. Support should extend to newer neighbourhoods, not just mature ones.

"I'm thinking about Blatchford as well...there's planning initiatives to celebrate the history, the aviation history and the gateway to the north. And what will the communities evolve there and what will they value?"

Pillar: Built Heritage

This Pillar recognizes built heritage with historic, architectural, or cultural value. Discussions focused on protections, incentives, flexibility, and the relationship between heritage and development.

Stronger Language

The primary concern was that "recognize" provides insufficient protection. While "recognize" is a technical term in heritage architecture, participants wanted the strategy to move more buildings from recognition to designation with legal protections.

Broader Heritage Designations

Participants advocated for heritage protection beyond individual buildings. This included Heritage Character Areas that enveloped an entire community or geographical site**.**

"We want the City to look into more Heritage Character Areas. The reason why Whyte Avenue is, it's the form, it's a walkable fine grain thing we don't build today. It's not just every individual building; it's the context of them together. As new development that comes together, is it done in a way that's sympathetic to the existing character?"

While Edmonton has some zones with architectural controls that consider heritage (seven), the Mature Neighbourhood Overlay was removed with the new Zoning Bylaw. Participants urged the City to consider alternatives that would again respect neighbourhoods by prioritizing heritage.

"We need to think bigger than individual properties, it needs to be blocks and communities. We need to think about larger context"

Strategic and Nuanced Approaches to Densification

Densification and heritage do not have to be mutually exclusive and could be compatible with nuance and a thoughtful approach.

"I want conversations on how do we get more people into the neighbourhood and how do we do it in a way that people love it? "

"I don't think it needs to be an either-or conversation. I think we can accomplish what the City wants, but we need more nuance and to look block by block not just 15-minute city chunks."

Participants felt that this requires looking at development block-by-block rather than applying one-size-fits-all approaches. Participants suggested targeting heritage in Priority Growth Areas as a strategic imperative.

"Is there any consideration of tying some funding to priority growth areas? Or historical heritage sites in those areas?"

The team gave the example of Garneau. Many sites in the neighbourhood were zoned to accommodate high-density housing, but the zoning changes were less intensive on lots adjacent to historic resources. Participants understood the tension between heritage preservation and affordable housing.

"Affordable housing is so important and the average 25–30-year-old cannot buy a 1950's bungalow on a 50' wide lot. The built form will change as inflation grows and affordability is limited, that means more multi-family. Things can be done to better incorporate them into older neighbourhoods."

This requires finding ways to accommodate both goals rather than treating them as incompatible.

Incentive Structures

Participants supported incentive-based approaches. This aligns with the legal reality that the City cannot protect a property against the owner's will, so incentives are used.

"I think incentivizing things works the best, having a fund and fair criteria that people can use and apply for is certainly really helpful."

Participants suggest improvements to the Heritage Rehabilitation Incentive grant program, citing a need for flexible standards when historically accurate materials are unavailable or unsuitable. They note that strict requirements may be costly or impractical, and question the program's structure, including sequencing, workload, and guideline equity.

"A 1918 house you have to do the whole house, it's more than $100,000 worth of work, and you can't afford it, certainly not at once. And then it's a question on inclusiveness, and who is able to experience the heritage homes"

"I feel like the matching rehabilitation grant shouldn't be a one-time grant; I think it should be a lifetime grant that goes with the property. You feel like you can't afford to do anything until you can get the whole $100,000. I feel like right now the process incentivizes waiting until you get the whole grant. So then, even if you sell the house the next owner could get funding."

Stronger Designations and Protections

Participants wanted more buildings moved from the inventory (properties determined to merit conservation, but are not legally protected) to designation (properties legally designated as Municipal Historic Resources and protected from demolition) and wondered how they could support the heritage team in achieving this.

Pillar: Landscapes & Sites

This Pillar recognizes natural landscapes including parks, river valleys, trees, geological formations, and sacred sites. Participants emphasized ecological and cultural values at all scales, from river

valleys to community gardens, with particular attention to safety, accessibility, and the evolving nature of landscapes.

Ecological Considerations and Connections to Climate change

Landscapes encompass both natural and built environments at every scale. This ranges from geological features thousands of years old to small community gardens that matter to neighbourhoods. Landscapes should reflect ecological, recreational, and cultural values. These aren't separate categories—landscapes can serve multiple functions simultaneously. Together with tree and vegetation preservation, all this ties importantly into climate resilience and adaptation.

"Something with unique ecological significance is worth preserving. There are areas in the river valley in the rock strata where you can see volcanic eruptions from thousands of years ago. But also, public spaces like Coronation Park. The way the park is laid out, it celebrated the planets. And it's preserved."

Pillar: Public Places & Spaces

This Pillar recognizes public infrastructure, civic spaces, and community hubs. Participants agreed that public spaces should encompass more than formal civic spaces and highlighted the importance of schools, social histories, inclusive spaces, and removing regulatory barriers to community-led placemaking. The focus of creating and respecting community was once again prevalent. The terms "places" and "spaces" need clearer definitions.

Creating Community

This Pillar should focus on social histories, not just buildings. This recognizes the significance of community building. Participants appreciated how people use and create meaning in public spaces.

"I'm grateful you are revamping and changing what it means to have a heritage place. It isn't something that is set in stone and could be societal or cultural. Because that's what it is. It's people coming together"

Policy and permitting should support rather than prevent community-led activations, encouraging people to use and interact with spaces. The City's and community roles should be clearly articulated.

"Define in the future what the City's role in all this is...because it would be a shame once we get to a published strategy for the implication to be that communities would pick up that work without a plan as to how that actually comes together."

Community requires more than just housing density.

I feel like heritage is the only thing we can hang our hat on. The City Plan says we do these things, but communities are more than just houses. We are mistaking the flour for the cake. All the flour in the world won't make a cake. All the density in the world won't make community."

Schools as Critical Heritage

Public infrastructure like schools are vital to community heritage. Schools serve many different communities as anchors beyond just education.

"We have a lot of historic schools in the city that are important to people and it's important to keep them in mind and recognize the public infrastructure."

"There's a lot of work being done in our schools to recognize the neighbourhoods they are in because neighbourhood schools are very important to their specific neighbourhoods no matter the age of the school is."

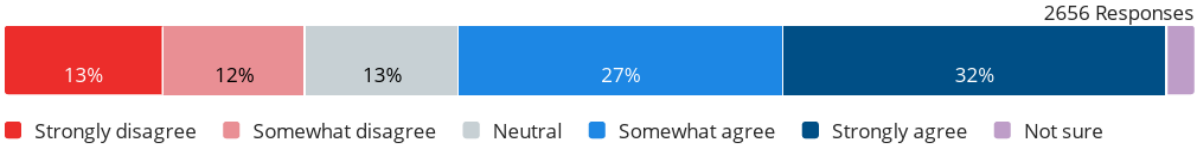
Activity: Survey

The Phase 2 online survey was made available on the project webpage, the Engaged Edmonton page, shared directly with partners and distributed to the Edmonton Insight Community. Five questions were asked that included a range of rating scales (i.e., closed-ended questions), open responses (i.e., open-ended questions), and common demographic questions at the end. A total of **2,656** responses were received (this includes 2,373 Edmonton Insight Community members who responded and 283 respondents who accessed the survey through the other channels). Please note: the respondent pool is a voluntary sample and is not statistically representative of the entire city of Edmonton population. Therefore, while the insights are valuable, the results reflect the views of the respondents only. The themes below provide a snapshot from the survey's closed-ended questions and the additional thoughts provided through the open responses. Responses were cross-tabulated with the demographic data to see how different groups responded.

Agreement with Guiding Principles

Respondents were asked how much they agree or disagree that the proposed Guiding Principles provide strong guidance for the new Heritage Places Strategy. A slight majority (59%) of survey respondents agree, with more strongly agreeing (32%) than disagreeing (either somewhat or strongly; 25%) (Figure 1).

Figure 1. ***Overall, how much do you agree or disagree that the proposed principles provide strong guidance for the new Heritage Places Strategy?***



Cross-tabulation analysis shows that

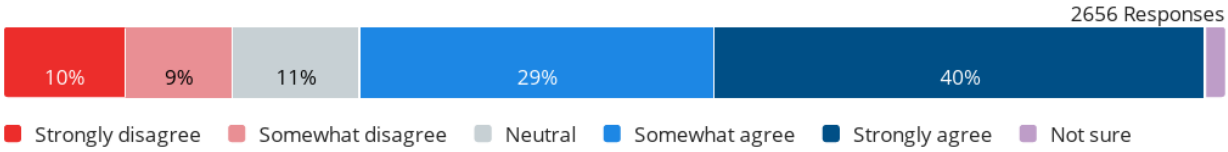
- Those aged 35 years or under are more likely to agree with the proposed principles (78% somewhat or strongly agree) than those aged 55 and older (55%).
- Cis-gender women are more likely to agree with the proposed Guiding Principles (70%) than cis-gender men (50%). Nearly two in three (62%) gender-diverse respondents express agreement.
- Higher levels of agreement with the proposed Guiding Principles are seen among those identifying as 2SLGBTQIA+ (76%) and persons with disabilities (67%), compared to those identifying as racialized or Indigenous (53%).

Respondents were asked if they would add or change anything to the Guiding Principles. Of the 2,656 respondents, 968 provided a response (36.4%). One theme that emerged was the importance of consulting with Indigenous Elders, elder Edmontonians, and long term residents from diverse communities. Respondents felt valuable historical knowledge is held and should inform the strategy. A related theme, connected to the "Inclusive" Guiding Principle, was that many were in favour of reflecting Indigenous, racialized, 2SLGBTQIA+ histories in addition to settler histories. Another common theme related to the "Integrated" Guiding Principle where respondents expressed concern that heritage preservation might be compromised when balanced against other City priorities or that heritage could "take second place" to development.

Agreement with the Pillars

Respondents were asked how much they agree or disagree that the proposed Pillars provide a strong foundation for the new Heritage Places Strategy. Over two thirds (69%) somewhat or strongly agree (including 40% stating they strongly agree). Under one fifth (19%) of respondents either somewhat or strongly disagree with the proposed Pillars (Figure 2).

Figure 2. ***Overall, how much do you agree or disagree that the proposed pillars provide a strong foundation for the new Heritage Places Strategy?***



Cross-tabulation analysis shows that

- Those aged 35 years or under are more likely to agree with the proposed Pillars (87% somewhat or strongly agree) compared to those aged 55 and older (66%).
- Cis-gender women are more likely to agree with the proposed Pillars (77%) compared to cis-gender men (62% agree). Two in three (66%) gender-diverse respondents indicate agreement.
- Higher levels of agreement are seen among those identifying as 2SLGBTQIA+ (78%) and persons with disabilities (76%). Respondents identifying as racialized or Indigenous have lower levels of agreement with the proposed Pillars (62%).

Respondents were asked if they would add or change anything to the Pillars. Of the 2,656 respondents, 689 provided a response. A common theme heard was related to worries about heritage preservation impeding housing affordability and urban development.

"Will there be protection for historic neighbourhoods that are seeing increasing density? Density is good but once those historic homes are torn down they can never come back. Maybe protections can be put in place for those few unique neighbourhoods that still exist - Glenora, Westmount, Highlands, Garneau. There are not very many so it wouldn't be hard to say "this is a historic block" and zone it that houses need to be preserved."

Additional Comments

The final survey question asked respondents if there was anything else they would like to share about the Heritage Places Strategy project that was not covered in the survey. Of the 2,656 respondents, 629 provided a comment. Many respondents expressed enthusiasm for the strategy and the importance of heritage (buildings, sites, and trees), protecting buildings from demolition (especially after having lost many), and the importance of reflecting Edmonton's past to residents and visitors. Respondents included feedback to consider more incentives to preserve, rehabilitate, maintain, and repurpose heritage buildings with climate integration in mind. Some wanted to see more about how the City will be a steward of its own assets, like City Hall. Others mentioned buildings or sites that deserve attention or are at risk, such as mid-century modern buildings, the Royal Alberta Museum, and known or unmarked Indigenous burial locations.

Many expressed concern about the loss of heritage (specific buildings or the 'feel') in older neighbourhoods due to infill redevelopment. Some worried about the costs of the project and the impact it could have on taxes or other City services. A few respondents were not sure about the strategy's purpose and intended outcome and suggested more details or simpler language to help as well as continued engagement. Many respondents commented on the need to reflect the diversity of Edmonton's history and communities -- whether Indigenous, settler, Latin American, European, Asian, 2SLGBTQIA+ -- as well as telling both the challenging and celebratory stories.

"The concerted effort to be inclusive of our shared collective history is very welcome. Overt statements of inclusivity are key to ensuring our various communities within the larger community are seen and celebrated. We are stronger and more vibrant when this happens."

Activity: Engaged Edmonton

The Engaged Edmonton webpage received 861 unique visitors and 2 contributions across the two feedback tools. Two questions were received (and responded to by the project team) as part of the 'Ask a Question' tool. One participant asked if there was a better name for the project that could take into consideration 'place' in geography, Indigenous history, and public spaces. Another participant asked whether Indigenous engagement was taking place given that heritage has long been associated with colonial and built heritage. They shared that this presents an opportunity for the City to work towards reconciliation and reparation by focusing on Indigenous heritage.

The 'Forum' tool, which provided a space for participants to share comments on each of the Guiding Principles and Pillars, did not receive any submissions. This may be a result of participants needing to create a profile on Engaged Edmonton to provide comments, limited time or interest, or that people provided feedback through other activities such as the survey.

Activity: Written Submissions

Similar to the first phase of engagement, the project team welcomed written submissions from partners or residents. Five submissions were received and the themes are summarized below.

One resident shared that more information is required to tell the history of amiskwaciwâskahikan, account for Indigenous history, and provide a clearer picture of the original inhabitants. A few submissions shared concerns about the impact of infill redevelopment or the loss of history in older neighbourhoods such as Highlands, Garneau and Rossdale. One resident was concerned about the rezoning of a site for housing that had once operated as a tram and bus turnaround. Another outlined suggestions to improve the City's heritage approach including the creation of new character areas, neighbourhood-level planning, a private tree bylaw, improving the designation process, and incorporating sensitive infill. One resident expressed concern for the "Integrated" Guiding Principle and that heritage should not be forced to submit to broader goals from The City Plan that could undermine preservation. Finally, a couple of submissions touched on natural heritage, from the importance of the river valley to recognizing the Holowach Tree (located downtown and named after the Ukrainian family that planted it c. 1920) as a heritage resource.

Next Steps

Thank you again for your participation! The feedback received from Phase 2 engagement, together with the ongoing research and alignment with policy objectives, will be used to draft the Heritage Places Strategy. In Phase 3, the project team will share the draft strategy with partners and the public showing how their contributions were used. Phase 3 engagement is targeted for spring 2026. To stay up to date with the project and engagement opportunities, visit edmonton.ca/historicresources.