What We Heard Report

Heritage Places Strategy

Phase Two

January 2026

Executive Summary

SHARE YOUR VOICE
SHAPE OUR CITY

Edmonton

February 2026

Executive Summary

Project Overview

The City of Edmonton is rethinking how we identify, celebrate, and protect Edmonton's heritage places. Rather than only focusing on historic buildings, the Heritage Places Strategy is looking at including natural spaces, cultural landscapes, and community places that tell Edmonton's story. Drawing on UNESCO's Historic Urban Landscape approach, this strategy will replace the City's Historic Resource Management Plan (2009) and update Policy C450B (2008), while supporting The City Plan's goals and Council priorities like affordable housing and climate action.

Phase 2 engagement, the second of three phases, happened in the fall of 2025 at the ADVISE and REFINE levels of the City's Public Engagement Spectrum. Based on the feedback we 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. During Phase 2, 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.

What We Heard Highlights

Feedback on the Overall Strategy

Participants expressed general support and enthusiasm for the Heritage Places Strategy, particularly appreciating that it broadens the scope of heritage beyond historic buildings to include natural spaces, cultural landscapes, community landmarks, and intangible heritage.

From the conversations with representatives from Enoch Cree Nation, the Confederacy of Treaty Six First Nations, and the Otipemisiwak Métis Government, key themes touched on the project and process such as: relationships as the work itself, trust and presence govern what can be shared, ceremony creates the conditions for sharing, historical experiences persist, heritage lives in the present, the shape and logic of the framework matters, and diversity exists within Indigenous communities.

Other common themes heard across the different engagement activities included:

- **Integration and Priority:** Participants were concerned that heritage will be subordinate to other City priorities, particularly economic development.

- **Urgency and Action:** Many felt that heritage resources are being lost at an alarming rate in mature neighbourhoods facing development pressures.
- **Language and Clarity:** Feedback included a desire for clearer language, stronger definitions, and less ambiguous terminology to ensure the strategy document is accessible to the public while maintaining technical precision.
- **Heritage as Community Identity:** Participants expressed an interest in reframing heritage beyond historical context to encompass present community structure and identity; talking about what makes Edmonton special is more inclusive and can go beyond the traditional heritage discourse.

Feedback on the Guiding Principles

A slight majority (59%) of survey respondents agree that the proposed principles provide strong guidance for the new Heritage Places Strategy. Themes heard across engagement activities about the Guiding Principles included:

- **Differentiation and Clarity:** Participants asked for clearer articulation of how Principles differ (e.g., collaborative vs community-led) and work together with distinct meanings and practical examples.
- **Heritage as Social Capital:** Heritage should be seen as vibrant social capital that continues to shape communities today, shifting focus from preservation of artifacts to nurturing of communities and relationships.
- **Clear Standards and Policy:** Request for clear, accessible standards and policies that the public can understand and that provide genuine guidance for decision-making.
- **Beyond Symbolic Recognition:** Participants distinguished between symbolic recognition and substantive action; desire for concrete outcomes, not just acknowledgement.

Feedback on the Pillars

Over two thirds (69%) of survey respondents agree that the proposed pillars provide a strong foundation for the new Heritage Places Strategy. Themes heard across engagement activities about the Pillars included:

- **Going Beyond 'Recognize':** Participants raised that recognition without protection may not be strong enough. Participants wanted language that implies protection, preservation, celebration, or championing.

- **Economic Pressures:** Economic development and financial pressures were identified as the main threat to heritage across all Pillar types, affecting buildings, landscapes, and public spaces equally.
- **Broader Definition of Heritage:** There was support for expanding beyond traditional built heritage to include social, cultural, natural, and intangible heritage.

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.

Visit edmonton.ca/historicresources for the full **Phase 2 What We Heard Report**.