

ZONING BYLAW RENEWAL INITIATIVE

GBA+ & EQUITY TOOLKIT

COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS SUMMARY

Edmonton

Acknowledgement

Shaping an inclusive, compassionate and equitable city is a collaborative effort. Yet, some voices in city building processes have traditionally been heard more loudly than others. For many individuals, getting involved has felt like a barrier and a privilege afforded to those only with resources, time, ability, and income. Inspired by the phrase, "Nothing about us, without us," participants of the Community Conversations generously shared their lived experiences, their aspirations for their communities, and their perspectives on how to address equity in our natural and built environments. We are grateful for their vulnerability and their candidness – and are hopeful that these relationships, and many more, are just the beginning of a larger conversation on how the City of Edmonton can embody and promote equity for all Edmontonians.

Zoning Bylaw

The [Zoning Bylaw](#) sets out the rules for the location and size of developments constructed on private property, and the activities that will take place on those properties.

The **Zoning Bylaw Renewal (ZBR) Initiative** is a multi-year overhaul of Edmonton's Zoning Bylaw that includes rethinking how, what and why the City regulates in terms of zoning and land development. The Zoning Bylaw Renewal Initiative is divided into four projects:

- + Creating a new Zoning Bylaw
- + Rezoning land city-wide to align with the new Zoning Bylaw
- + Providing technology to manage the new Zoning Bylaw and improve the online customer experience for planning and development services
- + Ensuring a smooth transition to the new Zoning Bylaw and technology through thoughtful implementation

Learn more about the Zoning Bylaw Renewal Initiative at edmonton.ca/zoningbylawrenewal.

Purpose

Community Conversations were conducted throughout November of 2020, to explore how planning, policies, and regulations have contributed to intended or unintended social impacts for marginalized communities. These conversations invited people of varying backgrounds and intersectionalities to participate, and focused on listening and learning. This Community Conversations Summary highlights insights shared while honing in on perceptions of zoning and the barriers it has created, and potential solutions.

Methodology

Community Member Selection

Based on their knowledge and experience, the project team drafted a list of preliminary equity topics that potentially intersect with the Zoning Bylaw. Using this list as a frame of reference, colleagues across the City of Edmonton recommended potential participants with distinct expertise and lived experiences to help provide personal and professional insight into land use regulations and their impacts on equity. Twenty-three community members were engaged throughout November of 2020. Explicit attention was given to ensuring people, specifically those part of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Colour), underrepresented, and marginalized communities, were invited to participate.

Identity Factors

Identity Factors are the various attributes that make up one's identity, and can include ability, age, income, ethnicity, education, language, gender, geography, race, and sex, among others. The following are the identity factors considered in the Community Conversations' methodology, but it is by no means an exhaustive list.

- + **Ability** is defined as the capacity for a person to act physically, mentally, legally, or financially.
- + **Age** is defined as a person's length of existence from birth to any given time
- + **Class** is defined as a person's perceived social and/or economic status
- + **Income** is defined as a person's gain or recurrent benefit often measured in money derived from capital or labour
- + **Ethnicity** is defined as a person's belonging to a particular ethnic affiliation or group that share a common and distinctive culture, religion or language
- + **Education** is defined as a person's knowledge or expertise resulting from the process of being educated
- + **Language** is defined as a person's method of communication, from their speech, writing, or gestures
- + **Gender Identity** is defined as a person's internal sense of self as male, female, a blend of both or neither
- + **Geography** is defined as a person's location relative to place or space
- + **Health** is defined as a person's mental or physical condition
- + **Race** is defined as a person's belonging to a group based on inherited physical traits and shared ancestry
- + **Sexual Identity** is defined as a person's sense of self as a sexual being or sexual orientation

Topic Areas

The following topics were explored in relation to the Zoning Bylaw: ableism, affordable housing, aging-in-place, BIPOC, climate justice, community participation, diverse housing, health, Indigenous peoples, mobility, places of worship, public spaces, sexual identity, small business, women, and youth. City of Edmonton planners consolidated and reviewed readings on each of the topic areas identified (See Table 1.0 in the [Sub Appendix](#)), informing themselves on key issues, challenges, and opportunities prior to their interviews. During the interviews, participants also identified additional topics to discuss.

Community Conversations

Each of the Community Conversations were conducted by integrated interview teams – a principal investigator and a changing mix of planners from the City of Edmonton’s Zoning Bylaw Renewal Initiative, Development Approvals, Planning Coordination, City Planning, and Urban Design teams. Their involvement was motivated by a personal and professional interest to listen and learn from differing perspectives, and to explore unfamiliar topics. Every conversation stretched over two-hour intervals, and followed a semi-structured interview format. To help community participants adequately prepare and to engage meaningfully, questions were shared in advance of the interview. An Interview Guide was created to ensure consistency between interview teams, and after each discussion, interviewers debriefed to discuss and agree upon major themes/issues and solutions identified. Community Conversation participants were invited to co-create and co-edit this report.

GBA+ and Equity Toolkit

The feedback contained in this Community Conversations Summary will be used to develop a GBA+ and Equity Toolkit. The GBA+ (Gender Based Analysis Plus) and Equity Toolkit will guide the City of Edmonton’s administration on how best to consider concepts of equity and diversity when drafting land use regulations for the city. The first draft of regulations prepared with the GBA+ and Equity Toolkit will be shared with participants of the Community Conversations for further feedback, validation, and refinement.

Limitations of the Methodology

- + Participants were identified through existing relationships with equity-seeking groups.
- + Conversations were only two-hours in length.
- + Conversations were facilitated through a virtual platform.
- + Interview teams consisted of a diverse group of planners, with differing perspectives and biases.

Equity Deserving

Intersectionality is a theoretical framework that was introduced by professor Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 in a paper for the University of Chicago Legal Forum titled “[Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics.](#)” Through the paper, Crenshaw explains how African-American women face overlapping disadvantages and discrimination related to sexism and racism. This approach or lens is a best practice and assists researchers to better understand and address the multiple barriers and disadvantages that individuals with intersecting social identities, such as race, gender, sexuality and class, face. Using an intersectional approach to develop policies and research projects helps to better identify and address systemic barriers. (Source: Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council)

Equity-seeking groups are communities that face significant collective challenges to participating in society. This marginalization could be created by attitudinal, historic, social and environmental barriers based on age, ethnicity, disability, economic status, gender, nationality, race, sexual orientation and transgender status, etc. Equity-seeking groups are those that identify barriers to equal access, opportunities and resources due to disadvantage and discrimination, and actively seek social justice and reparation.

The Community Conversations demonstrate how multiple **Identity Factors** intersect to form an individual’s identity. While participants shared how they may belong to a particular equity-seeking group, they reinforced that their perspectives are their own. Their thoughts and ideas are purposefully amplified throughout this document, and provide City of Edmonton staff with a foundation to begin to shift their thinking about certain groups from **equity seeking to equity deserving**. Individuals from equity-seeking groups are **deserving** of communities that are inclusive, diverse, and support belonging. Their expertise is additive to the work of city building, not subtractive, and is vital to achieve Edmonton’s stated vision for the future. Ensuring they belong and have a place in society is not a burden they should carry, but is their right as human beings. It is imperative that we, as City Administration, hear them.

"Edmonton has the potential to be a mosaic, not a melting pot. We need to allow communities to share their experiences."

"We need to design the built environment to nurture and create a sense of community, reduce isolation, and create housing for those who are underhoused."

"The city can be a vehicle of equity. It can erase the discrepancies that exist in and between communities."

"My partner and I come from humble beginnings, with wonderful parents that worked their entire life, opened small businesses, and contributed to the city's growth."

"I want to see Indigenous and people of colour planning and leading the city."

"I experience the world very differently, not only through the eyes of my kids, but also as a woman."

"I feel really grateful to be part of influencing a city that I love."

"Whether you know it or not, you participate in urban planning. Anyone who lives in a city can speak to their experiences. The question is – are we ready to listen?"

"An equity lens is important because it hasn't been done before."

"I want to decolonize our people, and help Indigenous peoples realize their inherent right to their land."

"I feel indebted to bring my experiences forward. I feel a duty to make sure our processes create opportunity for civic life."

"I think the voices of people, first generation, second, third, or fourth and from other parts of the world, and Indigenous voices, are coming through."

"Planning for the most vulnerable means planning for everyone."

"How do we break down the current system of single use zones in the city? That's going to be hard because a lot of people are used to the status quo."

"Cities are an opportunity for democratization, equity, participation, and development."

"There are multiple co-benefits when we design and plan our cities for the health and well-being of people."

"I'm looking at how services, programs, and housing can be provided to seniors from the LGBTQ2S+ community."

"Young people want to live in a cool city. But we need good places to live."

"I want a city where I can feel safe, whether I'm walking or driving, and where there is access to different experiences."



Summary of Findings

The Community Conversations revealed a depth of equity concerns and impacts cultivated and sustained throughout the land development and planning process. Social inequities identified in the conversations have been classified as Communication Barriers or Historical Negative Externalities. Still, the categories intersect, overlap and inform each other, and while some concerns are labelled as Communications Barriers, they can also perpetuate Historical Negative Externalities. The Common Identity Factors associated with each of the Communication Barriers and Historical Negative Externalities were identified by those interviewed.

While much of the feedback may be addressed by the Zoning Bylaw, other barriers and strategies (e.g. sidewalk design, bathroom layout) will require a multi-disciplinary approach with other City departments or other orders of government (e.g. Alberta Building Code outlines rules around building construction in terms of safety and materials).

Communication Barriers

Communication Barriers can impact the way users access, find, and interpret zoning and policy information. Participants identified the Zoning Bylaw’s **format, lack of clarity and awareness, language,** and **technical jargon**, as particularly cumbersome, and as significant barriers to engaging and interacting with the Zoning Bylaw.

Format

The main way to access the Zoning Bylaw is through an online platform available on the City of Edmonton’s website. Participants noted how the Zoning Bylaw’s web-based format makes it inaccessible for those with disabilities or low-income – as access to and understanding of computers and internet connections are prerequisites for usage. They described the current online platform as particularly difficult to navigate and not user-friendly. The Zoning Bylaw is also presented primarily through text, and lacks diagrams and tables – presenting potential barriers for those with visual impairments or cognitive disabilities.

Others shared how there is a particular privilege in knowing where and how to access information. While in-person support is available through the City of Edmonton, participants identified hours of operation as barriers for those who work throughout the day, or who have childcare responsibilities.

Age was identified as a notable barrier to interacting with the Zoning Bylaw. For example, young people may lack capital (both social and financial) to participate or develop property. There was a general perception that the primary users of the Zoning Bylaw are individuals who own land.

“It requires people to come to the City office during business hours. Some people can’t get time off of work, or arrange for childcare.”

“A lot of young people can’t even afford a house so, like, how are they going to interact with it? They are impacted but can’t participate.”

“By the time we get to the City, we’ve already tried to go through the system, and we’re frustrated.”

“Zoning information could be presented in a podcast form so people could listen to it and play it back.”

“Not everyone thinks of checking up zoning before they do something or what the rules are.”

“You can’t send certain sections of the bylaw as a link.”

Common Identity Factors of those impacted: ability, age, education, ethnicity, gender, geography, income, language, newcomer, race, housing tenure, small business

Lack of Clarity and Awareness

The Zoning Bylaw itself is a legal document containing technical information. For this reason, a level of knowledge and understanding of zoning is needed to effectively access the Zoning Bylaw to participate in the city-building process. Participants noted how regulations in the Zoning Bylaw are unclear, and how their purpose/intention is either poorly stated, ambiguous, or simply absent.

The permitting process was also identified as a barrier. Participants did not understand what zoning requirements need to be met in the permitting process or what documents are needed for a complete application. Both were deemed to be a significant financial burden for individuals who lack planning and design expertise or those not able to hire consultants.

"People just don't have the resources. And people don't see themselves in city processes or zoning."

"It's hard to understand what they mean, and why it is the way it is."

"Zoning Bylaw pushes the responsibility onto the individual to interpret it."

"It wasn't until I crossed the line or wanting to do something, that I ended up trying to find out what it is that I was supposed to do."

"I see everybody else renting out their basement suite. How can I rent out my basement?"

"A lot of clauses can be interpreted in several different ways."

Common **Identity Factors** of those impacted: education, income, language, housing tenure, small business

Language

Participants noted how the Zoning Bylaw is presented in English, posing a barrier for those of which English is an additional language or those not fluent in English. They also pointed out how the regulations are presented with complex sentences, well above the average literacy level.

"I have no idea how my mom opened up a business back in the day. I feel for those who can't communicate or speak English, to be able to engage."

"The Zoning Bylaw favours the well-educated, strong English speakers, and business interests."

"I often ask myself, 'Can mom and dad read this?'"

Common **Identity Factors** of those impacted: ability, age, education, ethnicity, income, language, newcomers

Technical Jargon

As stated before, the Zoning Bylaw is a legal document which uses technical language. Participants noted how the Zoning Bylaw’s language may only be understood by those with a specific educational background. They pointed out how zoning definitions are hard to understand, and often use jargon or legalese. Because it may be difficult to comprehend, developers often hire consultants to navigate the Zoning Bylaw. As a result, income plays a significant factor in whether an applicant can hire a consultant. This presents a particular financial barrier for residents, community groups, and artists.

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| <p>“The literature makes me feel dumb, and talked down to.”</p> | <p>“They need to use plain language.”</p> | <p>“How it is written creates a huge barrier. It does not empower people to understand what they can do with their property. It requires professional advice which comes at an economic cost.”</p> |
| <p>“People want to do the right thing but don’t know the right professional or have the skillset.”</p> | <p>“Artists and community groups want to activate the city. But to get a permit to do something, they need capital because they are forced to hire planners and designers to review the Zoning Bylaw.”</p> | <p>“Impossible to decipher as a user.”</p> |

Common Identity Factors of those impacted: education, ethnicity, income, language, housing tenure, small business

Historical Negative Externalities

Historical Negative Externalities are barriers that have generated over time, due to a policy, and how it was written and implemented. Participants identified the following items as impacting vulnerable or marginalized populations negatively – and as prevalent across multiple Identity Factors: **accessibility and universal design; affordable and diverse housing; community economic development; inclusion; reconciliation; safety; and transit, amenities, and services.** Participants also acknowledged how these challenges, when overlapping, are acutely magnified, disproportionately impacting people of colour, youth, and those with disabilities, and diverse gender and/or sexual identities.

Accessibility and Universal Design

Though the Zoning Bylaw includes building regulations, participants noted how the Zoning Bylaw has poorly considered universal design, pointing out an absence of regulations that support mobility within public space, safe passage throughout the built environment, and accessible housing supply.

For example, participants commented that the absence of housing with elevators has potentially led to fewer accessible dwelling units within the core, reducing one’s ability to locate in neighbourhoods well-served by public transportation, parks, open space, amenities, and services. This is of particular importance to seniors, who were mentioned as having potential difficulties with navigating stairs in two-storey housing. Conversely, participants noted that those who want to use the stairs for physical activity and safe social distancing should have the capacity to use them, and that they should be designed for user-friendliness and safety.

Landscaping requirements and maintenance are also believed to privilege able-bodied people, as they both require a level of physicality which some may struggle with, including seniors. Without adequate and accessible housing units, those aging-in-place may be forced to leave the neighbourhoods they currently live in.

Within public space, navigation by those differently abled, may be impacted by the choice of building materials, poorly designed access ramps, or construction diversions that abruptly block sidewalks from public access. Streetscaping elements like benches or street furniture, within privately-owned public spaces, were noted as fabricated with hostile architectural elements, like spikes or fences, preventing public access and enjoyment.

Participants noted how widths for building entrances and sidewalks may present barriers for individuals with mobility aids. When businesses are situated away from sidewalks, longer ramps are generally needed, adding more time for different abled people to enter the area. Large swaths of parking can cause pedestrian challenges, and fences around buildings may discourage natural walking patterns. Such fences may in turn decrease walkability and access to public amenities in the surrounding neighbourhood. Participants also noted how accessible parking spaces are often located far from businesses of interest.

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| <p><i>“Accessibility needs to be in the Zoning Bylaw. The fact that it isn’t, is ableism.”</i></p> | <p><i>“Some privately-owned spaces add screeching noises, blinding lights, or spikes to prevent people from sitting.”</i></p> | <p><i>“Universal accessibility would take care of most issues that seniors face.”</i></p> |
| <p><i>“The longer the ramps, the harder it is to go up! The further a building is from the street, the longer the ramp is going to have to be.”</i></p> | <p><i>“An able-bodied person can hop out of their car and easily go into a store. But me, I have to schlep through the parking lot, through the snow – which I won’t get through in my wheelchair.”</i></p> | <p><i>“Absence of elevators can present a challenge for people who are getting older, and decide for them where they can live.”</i></p> |
| <p><i>“Absence of safe and user-friendly stairs for everyday use can impede physical activity opportunities for health and safe social distancing amenities for travel between building floors.”</i></p> | | <p><i>“We’re looking at building a house. Part of that is exploring a garage suite for our aging parents. Putting in an elevator might cost a lot of money.”</i></p> |

Common Identity Factors of those impacted: ability, age, ethnicity, income, gender, geography, race, sexual identity

Affordable and Diverse Housing

The cost of housing differs greatly between neighbourhoods throughout the city, which has impacted where people live. Participants contend that restrictive zoning regulations have acted as deterrents to housing diversity, choice, and affordability – like single-family-only zoning which has prevented low to medium-density housing forms to develop as-of-right in certain neighbourhoods. They noted how these housing restrictions have led to a concentration of affordable and/or supportive housing in enclaves and specific areas of the city, resulting in spatial segregation of people based on income, age, gender, sexual identity, and ability.

Participants also noted how restrictive uses have discouraged supportive housing units, and created barriers to gathering, entrepreneurship, cultural ceremony, and community services; or presenting challenges for conversion of condominiums to affordable housing.

Parking requirements were identified as a financial constraint for developers, leading to unaffordable housing for the end user. Parking was mentioned as not a necessity for some affordable housing projects as tenants often do not have access to or own a vehicle. Participants noted how infrastructure and servicing costs are barriers for housing developments, which inevitably reduce housing affordability. Others noted how upzoning, the process of increasing zoning density on a parcel of land, may inadvertently lead to increases in land value, making it more difficult to develop supportive housing projects due to cost. Landscaping was also identified as a potential barrier for low-income residents to meet minimum standards or to maintain over time.

- "There is a perception that poor people live in duplexes, and that they will bring down property values. This works against intergenerational or multigenerational families."*
- "Minorities will do anything to ensure their kids are in a good place. If putting people in an apartment means they can be close to a good school, that's a sacrifice they will make. And a big part of that is cost. It puts us in this caveat. It creates a ripple effect, and causes poor relations between races."*
- "Supportive housing is needed, and not just for those who are underhoused, but for those who are aging."*
- "Are there ways we can allow diasporic communities to live closer together, to create what they had back home? Because that's what they're doing anyways."*
- "We need to integrate affordable housing into neighbourhoods. Because if we don't, market forces will take over and people who do not have incomes to stay there will be displaced."*
- "Unjust to have empty office buildings but people are camped outside."*
- "Why are all affordable housing in central areas? Why is it not elsewhere?"*
- "I remember a lot of neighbours being in an uproar. They were like, 'It's going to increase crime, it's going to do this, it's going to do that.' None of those things happened. How do we show the community that allowing other races and other incomes won't negatively impact their neighbourhood?"*
- "Minimum site area relates to income because you need to own a certain amount of property."*
- "Most single-detached homes are costly. Even as a young professional, semi-detached homes are out of reach for my partner and I. When these housing types are unaffordable, living outside the core and driving cars becomes very seductive."*
- "I lived in an apartment until I had my third kid, and I didn't want to move. But it was getting too small. I wish there were more options for families in apartments, or townhouses."*
- "I can't really find accessible housing."*
- "Members of the LGBTQ2S+ community, newcomers, Indigenous, and children are excluded from housing."*
- "Myth that queer people are affluent. More queer people live in poverty than not. Stable housing and education are key to escaping poverty."*
- "The fact that you can build higher densities in the suburbs is creating an unfair playing field."*
- "Housing pricing has displaced people from communities. We tear down single family homes for two skinny homes, or we build a giant tower. Why aren't there other options?"*
- "My mom was a single parent, and was on a waitlist for housing. It took her six years to get housing that matched her income level. I think about how stressed she was, and how different her 20s would have been. I wish people would understand how semi-detached or basement suites could dramatically change people's lives for the better."*

Common **Identity Factors** of those impacted: ability, age, class, ethnicity, gender, geography, housing tenure, income, race

Community Economic Development

There is a steep learning curve to understanding zoning and knowing which permits are required when doing a development. This is particularly troublesome for individuals and/or small businesses that purchase or lease land without having a full understanding of what zoning is and how it fits into the land development process. Participants noted how it is difficult knowing where to find zoning information, and understanding which permits are required – before making an investment. For small businesses, fees associated with the development permit process were identified as barriers – and largely benefit large-scale businesses. Small businesses also shared that they often take a path of least resistance, choosing locations based on their current zoning, as they would rather avoid the rezoning or change of use process. They also highlighted a significant time delay in receiving Building Permits, following their Development Permit approvals.

The lack of community economic development was identified as connected to overregulation. Participants shared how neighbours are interested in adding to the local economy through micro-businesses or home based-businesses, but that these uses require costly development permits, and are regulated through the Zoning Bylaw. They noted the absence of neighbourhood-level economic development as impediments to walkability, bikeability, and liveability.

Participants also noted a desire to allow multiple uses within spaces to support a mix of commercial activities and businesses.

- “Home-based businesses are happening all over the city, and some are happening illegally because people don’t know the rules or don’t have the funds. Just allow them.”*
- “My grandma was a microentrepreneur in Hong Kong, but what she would sell out of her home would not be allowed here.”*
- “If a newcomer was looking to start a small business, maybe it’s a Halal butcher shop or some type of micro business at home, what should the Zoning Bylaw tell them? And how should they use it?”*
- “Let’s say, someone is struggling, single mom. She just has enough to pay the bills. Let’s say she has a massage license. She opens up a secondary business. She doesn’t know if she will have clients. Now there are fees for development permits. She’ll either pay for it or not. If she doesn’t pay for it, now it’s illegal, then she gets fined. It’s a vicious cycle.”*
- “I think extra restrictions have created barriers from people wanting to develop interesting spaces, properties, and good businesses.”*
- “They may be more capable of making more like tactical changes to the city. Sometimes the Zoning Bylaw can get in the way of that. Why can’t we just turn this vacant lot into a community garden? Why is the Zoning Bylaw going to prevent that?”*
- “95% of our businesses are small businesses. This shows Edmonton’s grit and the hard work of our communities.”*
- “The development process has, it seems, over 400 fees associated with them.”*
- “If only we could do micro businesses related to growing food or selling food. It would be an income generation opportunity for those who are seeking that, whether they’re like newcomers, or folks with lower-incomes.”*
- “Businesses open up in locations where others have failed. I kind of finally got it. People are tired of going through the development process. If the location is half decent, and the infrastructure is there, I don’t have to go through zoning.”*
- “That’s what our neighbourhood was. People were trying to get by. Everyone I knew had a hair salon in their basement or business from their home.”*
- “Restrictive zoning can lead to monopolies for larger companies, and stifle others from investing or building their own businesses.”*
- “Why can’t you have a restaurant and a retail shop in the same space?”*

Common **Identity Factors** of those impacted: class, ethnicity, geography, income, newcomers, race

Inclusion

Participants noted how there is an unequal access to the Zoning Bylaw, in that the process for development privileges opposition from community members with the loudest voices – individuals with education, time, resources, among many other Identity Factors, that allow them to participate. Participants noted how zoning decisions are often not accessible, prioritizing engagement from those with land or property and those able to hire professional support to navigate the zoning and development processes. For newcomers to Canada, participating in planning, rezoning, and zoning exercises is uncharted territory. Newcomers may not be familiar with a culture of participation and being asked to share feedback/input and to decide. Young people do not feel their perspectives matter, as they may lack social and financial capital to engage in the development process.

Participants noted how moral values are layered into the Zoning Bylaw. The definition for Religious Assembly, as they note, has focused on a normative view of religion and divine worship, unfolding issues of class, racism, and religious prejudice. Participants noted how the Religious Assembly definition in the Zoning Bylaw poorly accommodates the evolving nature of places of worship as places of gathering for all types of uses, like daycare services, arts, theatre, and community services. In addition, the definitions and zone regulations in the Zoning Bylaw only partially recognizes the fact that much of the “gathering” nature of Religious Assemblies can and does also occur in secular facilities, such as in Community Recreation Services.

Participants posed an important question, “How do we reconcile what we know and what we have been taught about how we live?” They noted how zoning has been planned from a heteronormative, nuclear-family, and gendered lens. For example, zoning has historically used gendered language, as opposed to inclusive non-binary language. The definition for a Household (i.e. maximum of three unrelated individuals or family relations based on marriage/adoption/blood), as they noted, is narrow, and fails to consider how concepts of family are evolving, either because of culture, or by choice (e.g. members of LGBTQ2S+ community are often rejected from their biological families, and find family kinship with others).

“Growing up, I was exposed to multigenerational housing, and seeing unlicensed basement suites. Everyone is trying to make it together. I found it common from cultures with communal backgrounds. People who are used to living in extended families, sharing living, sharing tasks.”

“I think it would be difficult for people to go through the process without a background in planning.”

“Communities shouldn’t be allowed to voice who they don’t want in their community.”

“For many Middle Eastern people, or those from Southeast Asian descent, they think they don’t have a role to play because back home, nobody asks them to be involved. On the other hand, people who do have access to the system and understand how to navigate it, are able to advance what they want to see.”

“But oftentimes, like young people just don’t have the capital to actually make the application, make the change.”

“NIMBYism comes from this idea that ‘This is why I built here’ and ‘This is why I bought this piece of property’. But sometimes that’s gamed, and doesn’t allow for new possibilities.”

"It's probably very rare that you're able to, like hear from somebody who doesn't have, like immigrant or refugee status, or is like a temporary foreign worker. Like, you're probably not going to have them fill out a survey on the city on zoning."

"People want transparency. It's not about neighbours shaping the outcome, it's about neighbours wanting to meet their new neighbours, and get educated about new projects."

"Loudest voices or the individuals with the most capital should not be the only people that are heard during the process."

"Within at least our Muslim community, our mosques are seen as more than just a place to go to worship, they're seen as community hubs where people congregate. There's daycares, preschools, soup kitchens, hampers."

Common Identity Factors of those impacted: ability, age, culture, education, gender, geography, housing tenure, income, language, pedestrians, race, sexual identity, small business

Reconciliation

Participants noted how the Zoning Bylaw has historically excluded Indigenous consultation and representation. They noted how engagement should adapt to Indigenous ways of sharing and learning like through ceremonies; and the importance of zoning to reflect Indigenous Traditional Knowledge.

They noted the importance of ensuring Indigenous culture is permitted, integrated, and reflected in the built environment. Some of the participants identified an ignorance of Indigenous culture and traditions, citing how hunting or gathering should not be classified in the Zoning Bylaw as recreational or special event uses.

Participants also noted the importance of supportive and/or affordable housing integrated with culturally-relevant services and amenities. They noted how faith-based shelters have subjugated Indigenous people to proclaim a particular faith in exchange for access to housing.

"Why do we have to prove that we're good neighbours?"

"Urban Reserves could support more homes, schools, and would address segregation in the community."

"Our community needs more access to affordable housing, supportive housing, and assisted living."

"Inherent in the Zoning Bylaw is a colonial approach to land management."

"The City does not reference Indigenous ceremonies in our zoning."

"Gathering on our land is not a 'special event' and hunting is not a 'recreation'. This is a prime example of colonialism."

"We have decolonized our people, and their inherent right to house Indigenous peoples on the land."

"It's a community space. It's like a little park. It's not really big. I look at that, and think I would like to put a teepee there, dry meat there, garden boxes there, grow tobacco and some food."

Common Identity Factors of those impacted: Indigenous, income

Safety

Participants noted how engaging with the Zoning Bylaw is an experience that many newcomers are not accustomed to, and that their general experience is a distrust of governments and authorities. They added that BIPOC communities are often afraid to engage with the Zoning Bylaw because of fear of being penalized for zoning discrepancies or errors. Processes like the Subdivision and Development Appeal Board (SDAB) and Council Public Hearings are perceived as intimidating, inaccessible, and privileged to those who are educated, and can speak English. Finally, there is a feeling that zoning compliance and enforcement is used as a tool to assert spatial dominance, which has negatively impacted people of colour.

Participants noted how regulations around CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design), while originally conceived to support safety, have led to feelings of general discomfort and over surveillance. They ask, "Who is CPTED defending a space from?" Their answer: those deemed undesirable to a space, which are generally people of colour, individuals experiencing homelessness, and members of the LGBTQ2S+ community.

Others noted how the lack of design standards have contributed to hazardous, inhospitable spaces for pedestrians. For example, narrow sidewalks, an absence of pedestrian-scale lighting, and non-transparency in design between streets and building interiors whether by level of transparency of ground-floor building windows, can impact the feeling of safety and comfort. They shared that a lack of well-designed sidewalks and accessible spaces often negatively impact women, and those with disabilities.

Participants noted how the built environment can pose both physical and mental threats, especially impacting those with disabilities, gender and sexual identities. For example, walls and boundaries can create a feeling of disconnectedness, unease, and enclosure. Public washrooms are largely designed for able-bodied people, and are often gendered. Participants noted that being queer, or read as queer in public space can be fraught with danger. For trans and non-binary people, public space was identified as an unsafe space for encounter, especially in public washrooms or at transit stops.

- "Our downtown is filled with really big blocks of blank facades, which are really hostile."*
- "Women are always thinking about their safety."*
- "Lighting is not at pedestrian level, sidewalks are too small, street furniture is cold and not friendly for winter conditions."*
- "Even if you can walk to amenities, some businesses are hard to get to because of unsafe pedestrian crossings."*
- "When you create an opportunity for one segment of the population, you police and impact another."*
- "Words like zoning officer, compliance, and enforcement create negative connotations for those coming from countries who have distrust with authority."*
- "As a racialized person, I can tell you that when I walk into some parks, I don't feel safe. It's because of previous experiences of racism or constantly being bombarded by microaggressions."*
- "My mom is an immigrant. She trained me as I grew up that the government and their policies are the rulebook, and you just live by them. I think that's why I'm not engaged because I have felt that things have already been decided on."*
- "They're used to being fined for something, being threatened that something's going to happen if they don't do this or that."*
- "99% of the people on my block are first generation Canadians. People who benefit from the existing Zoning Bylaw are people who already have experience in construction, development, can speak English, and have higher incomes. This means certain people get further ahead in life. People of colour are at a great disadvantage. So it's like one group of people are weaponizing the Zoning Bylaw to get ahead and assert spatial dominance over people."*

Common **Identity Factors** of those impacted: ability, age, ethnicity, gender, income, newcomers, pedestrians, race, small business, sex, youth

Transit, Amenities, Services, Jobs

Participants noted how the Zoning Bylaw’s history of separating uses has inadvertently led to the development of communities not well-integrated with transit, amenities, and services; as well as city-wide sprawl. They noted how separating residential uses from commercial uses has likely led to heavy vehicle-use, and reduced pedestrian movement. Participants pointed out how older communities that have only zoned for single-family homes has led to limiting access to other people and amenities and services.

Participants noted a desire for a compact city, where spontaneity can happen, and where they can experience different places and amenities by walking, instead of car. They believe mobility is a right, and that mixed-use neighbourhoods can support connection, well-being, and health outcomes. They envision neighbourhoods with easy access to farmers’ markets, grocery stores, healthcare facilities, jobs, and public transportation. Enabling this, as they note, would shape a built environment as diverse as its community, but that current neighbourhoods currently lack nearby culturally-relevant services, shops, and amenities to support meaningful integration and celebration of diversity.

Participants noted how Temporary Uses in the Zoning Bylaw make it difficult for events, festivals, and pop-up vendors to animate public space, a barrier that impacts artists, nonprofits, and people of colour.

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| <p><i>“Our city encourages people to get to places by car, because the things they want and need aren’t close to them.”</i></p> | <p><i>“Anyone with a walker or wheelchair will know how difficult it is to get from their home to nearby grocery stores or health care or transit.”</i></p> | <p><i>“When you move into some areas, culturally diverse services become limited. Sometimes I have to drive 20-minutes to get to a Black-owned hair salon.”</i></p> |
| <p><i>“Families don’t look the same as they used to.”</i></p> | <p><i>“There’s no psychological services in this neighbourhood that aren’t the expensive ones.”</i></p> | <p><i>“I grew up in a lower-income neighbourhood, and the school I went to was downtown. Transit was my lifeline, but it still took me four hours out of my day, which meant less time for family, connection, and play.”</i></p> |
| <p><i>“If I’m being pushed out of the downtown and core neighbourhoods, I’m also losing access to transportation and other services.”</i></p> | <p><i>“People want community hubs, and want neighbourhood shops and cafes.”</i></p> | <p><i>“We have a legacy of single family and car centric planning, but other cities are changing that, and we can be part of that change.”</i></p> |
| <p><i>“In terms of locational considerations, we definitely look at locations of existing transit, good, services, and medical.”</i></p> | <p><i>“Not everyone can afford a car in their household, so how can you accomplish your daily needs if they are far from where you live?”</i></p> | <p><i>“Incentivize more developers to use rooftops for recreational space, hydroponic farms, or soil based gardening boxes.”</i></p> |
| <p><i>“The pandemic showed us how people are truly disconnected from services and amenities based on where they live.”</i></p> | <p><i>“We know that as people age, many of them develop disabilities that don’t allow them to drive, and if you live further away from services and healthcare – you’re significantly disadvantaged from a health perspective”</i></p> | |

Common **Identity Factors** of those impacted: ability, age, class, ethnicity, geography, income, language, race

Potential Solutions

Communication Strategies are opportunities to remove or overcome Communication Barriers.

Equity Regulations are opportunities to address or prevent Historical Negative Externalities.

Below are just a few of the most common Communication Strategies and Equity Regulations shared by participants.

Communication Strategies

- + Expand the City of Edmonton's hours of operation
- + Plain language
- + Language translation
- + Podcasts, video, social media to explain zoning concepts
- + Visual aids
- + Graphics and visualizations
- + Intuitive user interface and experience
- + Improved search engine
- + Community newsletters
- + Information sessions about the Zoning Bylaw
- + Liaisons to help those who do not have the technical ability to interpret the Zoning Bylaw
- + Education and marketing that highlight underrepresented areas of a city
- + Communicating intention/purpose/benefit of a regulation
- + Articulate the connection of a regulation to the City's overarching plans/policies
- + Ensure language is gender-inclusive, non-discriminatory, and inclusive of non-binary identities
- + Remove terms like enforcement, officers, and compliance
- + Consider lowering permitting fees for small businesses, or those from equity-seeking groups
- + Review and improve notification processes

"It'd be cool if realtors, and zoning, almost worked together and said, 'Hey, you moved in this area? Here's a list of rules.'"

"And who are those knowledge keepers in the community, in those specific equity seeking groups, that can give out information from the city?"

"Instead of issuing fines and placing people in a constant state of fear, having conversations with people on why they are making these errors."

"Communications are different for different races, genders, or lower socioeconomic statuses. Come from a state of empathy and patience to understand what people need."

"Have things in multiple languages. Don't be afraid to get it wrong, the community will help."

"Provide within a City, a service that is for people who do not have the technical or economic ability to interpret the regulation."

"Graphics or call-out-boxes to explain the regulations would be helpful."

"If someone is poor. They're starting a business to do something good for themselves and the community. Can the city offer subsidies for these start-ups - even for the first year?"

"Create a one-stop-shop where you can put in your address, learn what your zoning requirements are, and be taken step-by-step through the process."

Equity Regulations

- + Allow for more flexibility, less restrictive zoning
- + Desegregate land uses, allow for more integration
- + Enable mixed-use, mixed-income development
- + Explore incentives for developers in exchange for affordable/accessible housing; mixed-use developments; mixed-income developments; supportive housing; medium-density housing; public and/or green space; sustainability/ climate resilience features; and bicycle infrastructure
- + Reduce number of residential zones, and permit diverse housing typologies
- + Remove regulatory barriers for Home Based Businesses
- + Remove regulatory barriers for Temporary Uses for community activations/programming
- + Incorporate universal design into the Zoning Bylaw
- + Keep the reduction of parking minimums, and explore parking maximums
- + Explore a more holistic approach to safety (as opposed to CPTED)
- + Enable small-scale commercial in residential neighbourhoods
- + Promote human scale and proportionality
- + Promote visual interaction between the built environment and the street
- + Review and improve notification regulations
- + Allow for multiple uses to exist on a property or in a building
- + Review Household definition and remove values around what defines "family"
- + Review Religious Assembly and Community Recreation Service definitions to adapt to enable secular/non-denominational community services and gathering.
- + Support Indigenous culture, traditions, and land use on public and private land
- + Remove or integrate overlays to reduce zoning complexity
- + Review landscaping regulations for areas prone to flood or green infrastructure requirements

"We need to figure out a way to allow and encourage small scale commercial things in residential neighborhoods."

"It'd be so nice if we could incentivize supportive housing and affordable housing and medium-density housing."

"I definitely think that we need to segregate less, and really be a little bit more intentional, and aggressive with human scale planning and allow for more mixing of incomes and mixing of uses."

General Feedback

Though the Community Conversations were intended to focus on zoning's impacts to equity, participants shared stories and insights extending beyond zoning. This feedback is captured in broad strokes below and relates to planning processes, engagement, and land development:

Planning Processes and Engagement

- + Planning for the most vulnerable benefits everyone
- + Social inequities are insidious and layered throughout city policies and regulations
- + City planners have power – the power to acknowledge their biases, and the power to identify and address inequities faced by marginalized populations
- + City planning is an intimidating experience – make it accessible so people can be engaged and heard; and benefits can be understood
- + Engagement processes need to be transparent, and levels of influence and decision-making power need to be communicated
- + Build trust, relationships, and sustained engagement with equity-seeking groups over time, not on an episodic basis

Land Development

- + Zoning has led to spatial segregation and social inequities, and have disproportionately impacted BIPOC communities, and those with disabilities, gender and sexual identities
- + Regulations are oriented to a heteronormative hegemony; they make implicit assumptions about who people are, and what their needs are
- + Zoning should be less restrictive, in order to support community/industry creativity and innovation
- + Physical, social, and natural environments impact health and well-being
- + Development decisions on private property may impact broader society and communities
- + The built environment should be as diverse as its communities – amenities, jobs, open space, transit, and culturally-relevant services, all within a distance from home that can be accessed by walking, cycling or transit
- + Increase health-supporting amenities in all neighbourhoods and decrease those built environment factors that injure health and safety, including for the most vulnerable

Planning Processes and Engagement

Additional insights and experiences shared through the Community Conversations will also be helpful to inform the launch of District Planning. District Planning will provide policy guidance on integrated land use, mobility, growth and decision-making to support The City Plan. The City Plan, Edmonton's Municipal Development Plan (MDP), identifies districts as diverse, accessible collections of neighbourhoods that contain most of the services and amenities that Edmontonians rely on. The City Plan emphasizes the importance for Edmonton to nurture 15-minute districts that allow people to easily meet their daily needs within a 15-minute walking, bicycling and transit trip.

Participants emphasized how our built environments, our planning processes, and our communication and engagement methods must be inclusive, diverse, and support belonging. Participants shared how they want to see land use and transportation integrated in their communities. This included an emphasis on walkability, accessibility, cycling, transit, sidewalk widths and lower speeds. They also expressed a desire for communities to be more diverse, with a mix of built forms, incomes, and affordable housing options integrated with or close to amenities, grocery stores, schools, recreation and multifunctional spaces. The importance of parks, open spaces, biodiversity and connections to the River Valley were also mentioned.

District Planning is anticipated to commence throughout 2021, with a detailed record of engagement activities to follow.

Zooming out to the neighbourhood and district scale helps us explore the things that people need in their communities, and reveal the importance for a sense of identity, place, and value. If our city is a puzzle, neighbourhoods are the pieces waiting to be put together by residents and developers at a parcel level through zoning.

How This Information Will Be Used

Feedback from the Community Conversations will be used to develop the GBA+ and Equity Toolkit. While this summary provides a high level overview of the major Communication Barriers and Historical Negative Externalities, specific regulations and solutions shared will be incorporated into a series of tools that the City of Edmonton administration will reference as they undergo the regulation writing process. Feedback shared will also help to inform and shape the launch of District Planning in 2021 which will support the implementation of The City Plan.

Sub Appendix

Table 1.0: List of Topics Explored

Topics			
1.	Ableism	9.	Indigenous Peoples
2.	Affordable Housing	10.	Mobility
3.	Aging-in-Place	11.	Places of Worship
4.	Black, Indigenous, People of Colour	12.	Public Spaces
5.	Climate Justice	13.	Sexual Identity
6.	Community Participation	14.	Small Business
7.	Diverse Housing	15.	Women
8.	Health	16.	Youth

ZONING BYLAW RENEWAL INITIATIVE

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