



# ACaDSiP GBA+ Public Engagement

## Executive Summary

The 2022 engagement process for the Alcohol Consumption at Designated Sites in Parks (ACaDSiP) project was designed with a special focus on the GBA+ process and to capture the thoughts and ideas of those who were not previously aware of the pilot project or who might not have been engaged during earlier phases of the project. It was not meant to be an exhaustive approach to garnering feedback from Edmontonians at large, but rather a chance to hear from those who are harder to reach and often go unheard in public processes, such as this. For the purpose of this project, the GBA+ process focused on the quality of conversations rather than quantity, to gain a deeper understanding of minority and equity-seeking groups' perspectives.

While the GBA+ work primarily engaged those in opposition to the program, a parallel marketing research process undertook engagement with a more representative sample of the overall population in Edmonton. Using the list of 'Disapprovers' as identified in the Advanis marketing results report, the GBA+ process intentionally sought the feedback and insights of those who more broadly made up the 'Disapprover's' group by socio-demographic markers. This allowed the GBA+ process to focus on the experience of public spaces from the lens of those with less dominant identities, who were typically in greater opposition to the pilot.

The ACaDSiP engagement process gathered feedback from 149 participants. The opportunities for these individuals to share their comments, questions and insights on alcohol consumption at designated sites in parks were through the following:

- A. An online workshop with Alberta Health Services and Edmonton Public School Board, two organizations who have previously expressed interest in the project. (4 participants)
- B. Intercept surveys with members of the public who are marginalized or under-represented as identified through the GBA+ process (134 participants)
- C. In-depth interviews with individuals representing a cross-section of identities including mothers, Muslim, Indigenous and LGBTQ2S+ persons. This included one CSAB member (11 participants)

In general, there was less support for the ACaDSiP program from these targeted groups than was heard from the broader public (as collected in the Advanis marketing report for ACaDSiP). Although the feedback was not entirely negative or in opposition to alcohol consumption in parks, most

respondents had some fears or unease associated with the potential of ACaDSiP being a full fledged program of the City.

There were also differences in feedback between the organizations and groups who were identified for workshops and interviews, versus those who were randomly selected for intercept survey participation. Where intercept surveys saw a mix of opinions and perspectives, workshop and interviewee participants were far more critical of the initiative.

### **Intercept Survey Response Highlights**

Overall, 39% of respondents said that the designated sites for alcohol consumption in parks would negatively affect their use of parks. When asked why it would have this effect, responses were tied to both real experiences and anticipated threats. These concerns, whether real or perceived, varied. An overall emphasis on safety, with fear of undesirable behaviours including public disturbances from intoxication (i.e. fighting and noise) to the impact on children as alcohol becomes commonplace. Ideas for limiting negative impacts included the implementation of security and monitoring sites, restricting use and enforcement, improved signage, isolation of alcohol designated sites within the park, as well as more presence of garbage and recycling receptacles. That said, 12% of respondents don't believe risks can be mitigated and are completely against alcohol being allowed anywhere in parks.

### **Interview Response**

Interviewees expressed that existing in public can already be a difficult experience for marginalized individuals, without the added stress of how intoxicated people might perceive and interact with them. Most interviewees spoke to the struggle of wondering 'what intersectionalities or identities they can safely express in public space. With the prevalence of racism and sexism, among other bigoted views, those with minority identities or intersectionalities feel an enhanced sense of vulnerability in public as it is. Many suggested that adding alcohol consumption at parks would further increase their likelihood of being a target of violence and hate, leading them to avoid parks altogether.

Other major reasons for avoiding park use due to alcohol consumption included the exposure of alcohol to children, particularly the normalizing of such activity around kids and the concern of inadequate monitoring of parks with designated sites, feeling that there are not enough measures in place to keep everyone safe.

While most interviewees fully disapprove of the program and do not see it as a tool for supporting responsible drinking, they did offer some insight on how it could be improved to limit negative impacts. Some improvement suggestions from interviewees included:

- Provide porta-potty access at or near designated sites
- Provide drinking water fountains at or near designated sites
- Display clear signage with simple direct language (consider digital access only a barrier)
- Connect this initiative to the Boyle Street Program
- Provide an after-hours monitoring program

- Delineate specific areas of the park for alcohol consumption, isolate those from other non-alcohol related park activities
- Ensure public transit serves all designated parks

### **Organizational Representatives Workshop Response**

In the workshop conversation, similar concerns were raised around the increased risk of undesirable behaviours and activities, especially around school sites, and the negative influence that alcohol consumption has on youth and children who use public parks. The organizational representatives who participated wearing their public service provider hats highlighted that public park spaces should continue to promote healthy lifestyles and recreation and that there could be some municipal liability for the impacts of alcohol use in a public space. For instance, it was noted that there is a major misalignment between the ACaDSiP program and public health research regarding the harms associated with alcohol and alcohol consumption.

Despite the group being against the adoption of ACaDSiP as a full-fledged program, they offered some ideas to mitigate concerns. These suggestions mostly involved municipal interventions such as strengthening policies, installing signage, increasing municipal staff/security presence, and offering public education on the harmful impacts of alcohol consumption. Ultimately their preference is discontinuing the ACaDSiP program.