

### Advancing Recommendations to Combat Anti-Black Racism

The Anti-Black Racism Action Plan<sup>1</sup> encompasses over 130 recommendations from Black communities across 12 key themes including safety, arts and heritage, race-based data, social development, and entrepreneurship:

- Forty three recommendations are directly related to other orders of government (e.g. policing, housing and education) or External Civic Agencies (e.g. arts, culture, and sports), and require co-ordinated advocacy with Community.
- Fifty recommendations are already part of City initiatives (e.g. Economic Action Plan, Affordable Housing, Sustainable Procurement Policy), and there is an opportunity to strengthen outcomes for Black communities.
- Thirty eight recommendations involve new activities for City business areas.

In a meeting on May 17th, 2024 between Black community representatives, Mayor Amarjeet Sohi, and City Manager Eddie Robar, the City was asked to prioritize the following four themes: hiring equity, communications, Black businesses, and City procurement.

The Anti-Black Racism Action Plan recommendations closely mirror those previously received from Indigenous communities, the Safer for All Report, and the Muslim community's testimony to the Senate of Canada, demonstrating a significant alignment in concerns across Black, Indigenous, and other racialized communities. This strong convergence underscored the need for a unified strategy to address anti-racism across the City.

The Corporate Anti-Racism Action Plan addresses all four priorities and includes many of the specific recommendations made by Black communities.

### Commitment, Municipal Leadership, Transparency and Accountability

The Anti-Black Racism Action Plan (ABRAP) emphasizes that all subsequent recommendations depend on increasing Black community representation in decision-making. The ABRAP also recommends that the City establish formal

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<sup>1</sup>

<https://www.edmonton.ca/sites/default/files/public-files/EdmontonAnti-BlackRacismActionPlan.pdf?cb=1717451918>

accountability mechanisms to the Black community. Administration's approach to Sections One and Two of the ABRAP focus on the following:

- In 2023, Administration established the High Level Office for Reconciliation and Anti-Racism to challenge and enable the City to advocate for the voices of Indigenous, Black and racialized communities in the planning and delivery of City services. The Office is responsible for guiding Administration in achieving the seven Commitments to Anti-racist Systemic Change, which were informed by the ABRAP. The Office is staffed by seven professionals of varied lived experience, with expertise in reconciliation, anti-racism, intersectionality, research, evaluation, events, and public engagement.
- In 2023, the Administration shared plans for a collaborative convening table to oversee the progression of the ABRAP's recommendations (November 7, 2023, Office of the City Manager report OCM02002). To facilitate this, Administration partnered with the Council for Advancement of African Canadians in Alberta, who assembled a diverse group representing Black communities. This group convened almost monthly from December 2023 to March 2024 to develop a Terms of Reference and lay the groundwork for the convening table.
- The Office of the Mayor facilitated meetings on the ABRAP on May 17, 2024 and October 24, 2024, where some Black community leaders indicated a need for more inclusive approaches to involving Black residents in decision-making, shared their priorities for the ABRAP, and stated that alternatives were needed to the current convening table model.
- At a Facilitated Conversation on April 5, 2025, leaders further clarified that Black communities need meaningful structures to hold government officials accountable for their actions, and that this requires the powers and influence of a Council mandated Civic Agency such as a Council Advisory Committee, and not a convening table. The model should be similar to City Council's Anti-Racism Advisory Committee, but be dedicated to combatting anti-Black racism.
- Administration committed to annual Town Halls to provide updates on the Anti-Black Racism Action Plan progress and solicit community feedback.
- An anti-racism dashboard will be published this summer to provide regular updates on ABRAP progress.

### Progress Update

This report shares an update on how the Corporate Anti-Racism Action Plan is advancing the four anti-Black racism priorities.

#### Hiring and Employment

City actions on Section 3 of the ABRAP focus on improving employee experiences and enhancing representation from Black and racialized employees:

- In 2022, new anti-racism courses were introduced. The ELS learning series now includes: a) Introduction to Anti-Racism; b) Anti-Racism Leadership; and c) Anti-Racism Allyship.
- The City's Civic Youth Fellowship provides equity-deserving youth a ten -week placement in the offices of City Councillors and senior Administration. Youth are provided an opportunity to gain leadership skills, grow their professional networks and pursue careers in the municipal civil service. The program was launched in 2023, and is delivered in partnership with Canadian Race Relations Federation, IslamicFamily, Africa Centre, and kihêw waciston.
- In 2024, Employee and Legal Services (ELS) completed an Employment Systems Review (ESR) to identify systemic barriers to employment and advancement for equity-deserving groups. Administration is developing a Corporate plan to advance ESR recommendations.
- The City partnered with the University of Alberta on a free new online course, Black Canadians: History, Presence, and Anti-racist Futures<sup>2</sup>. The course was launched in March 2024 and provides a baseline education for employees, professionals, and the general public. The City has committed to training 1,000 employees.
- In December of 2024, a new Black Employee Resource Network was created. The network aims to create and foster a safe space for Black Employees to develop professionally and raise awareness of issues experienced by Black communities.

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<sup>2</sup>

<https://www.ualberta.ca/en/admissions-programs/online-courses/black-canadians-history-presence-and-anti-racist-futures.html>

### Communications and Media

The City is enhancing communication strategies to better engage Black communities:

- Since 2023, City has begun to advertise with diverse media like Diversity Magazine, Ladies Corner, and the Nod.
- In 2024, the Chief Communications Officer initiated the "Civic Engagement: Public Engagement Awareness" project to promote understanding of the City's engagement methods and encourage broad participation for non eurocentric audiences in decision-making.
- Since 2024, the City has been updating its visual materials to better represent Edmonton's diversity in its communications.

### Black Business

The City is supporting Black businesses and cultural festivals, providing economic development funding opportunities, and diversifying procurement:

- In July 2022, City Council endorsed an updated social procurement<sup>3</sup> policy, recognizing that every purchase can be leveraged to create economic, environmental and social impacts. The City has been offering training to racialized businesses on how to participate in City procurement.
- The Sustainable Procurement program has developed a Sustainable Low Value Purchase Guideline that provides Administration with guidance on procurements valued at less than \$75,000. The Guideline references supplier directories such as the Black Business Global for City purchasers
- In June 2024, the City held the "Purchase with a Purpose" inaugural procurement networking event, to enable diverse and Indigenous-owned businesses to make connections, explore new opportunities and learn all about selling to the public sector buyers and the City of Edmonton.
- Black Business Edmonton and Action for Healthy communities represent the black business community and newcomer entrepreneurs on the City of Edmonton's Sustainable Procurement Advisory Committee.
- Urban Planning and Economy began creating a list of ethnocultural and equity-deserving entrepreneurs and organizations for regular engagement within the Industrial Investment Action Plan (IIAP) in 2023. This supports IIAP Action 6, which aims to remove barriers for equity deserving groups,

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.edmonton.ca/sites/default/files/public-files/C556B.pdf?cb=1657164538>

including the Black community, in Edmonton's industrial sector.

Administration will collaborate with various entities to support startups, investors, developers, and the retention and expansion of industrial businesses.

- The City supported Black community organizations through the application for the Edmonton Edge Fund, which aids technology and innovation for businesses, with consideration for equity-deserving groups. UpRow<sup>4</sup>, an immigrant settlement app by Edmontonian Kelise Williams, as well as black-owned/operated businesses Canchuks Corrosion Inc. and International Renewable Energy Systems Inc. received Edge Fund support in 2024.
- The City hosted a booth at the Black Business Edmonton Trade Fair to promote its sustainable procurement program and Business Friendly Edmonton services to Black-owned businesses.
- Business Friendly Edmonton provides customized support to entrepreneurs, including pathfinding and regulatory support, referrals to City programs, and collaboration on innovation pilots. The Business Friendly team proactively engages with entrepreneur support programs (eg. the Africa Center and RBC Black Entrepreneurship Center) to ensure diverse business owners are aware of the support and services available. The team has increased engagement with the Black business community since 2023.

### Advocacy and Outreach

As the processes for joint advocacy efforts are being developed, Administration has already proceeded with initial meetings to share and discuss the ABRAP with external City partners including:

- The High Level Office shared the ABRAP with Edmonton Arts Council and Edmonton Heritage Council in 2023, highlighting recommendations to showcase and support Black artists and Black arts throughout the City. Initial discussions touched on issues such as suitable public spaces, galleries, and community centers where Black arts can be prominently displayed and celebrated.
- The City first partnered with the Africa Centre to formally support Black History Month programs in 2023. In February 2024, the City partnered with Africa Centre, Edmonton Heritage Council, and the Edmonton Community

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<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/edmonton-based-app-aimed-at-newcomers-makes-navigating-resources-easier-1.7329666>

Foundation to launch the Black History Month Initiatives Fund. The Fund provides ongoing support for locally-driven activities across Edmonton, as well as a formal launch ceremony for Black History Month. The fund promotes and celebrates the significant contributions and achievements of Black Canadians throughout the city's history.

- In September 2024, the City met with the Minister of Justice to discuss mutual commitments to addressing and combating racism. They discussed the importance of the ABRAP and explored ways the City of Edmonton and the Government of Alberta can work together to implement the recommendations.
- In October 2024, the High Level Office presented the ABRAP to a sub-committee of the Edmonton Police Commission, conveying Black communities' significant concerns regarding accountability and reporting for incidents like use of force, police complaints, and hate crimes. Additionally, it encouraged the Edmonton Police Commission to consider the recommendations under the Justice theme.