



2026 LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY SURVEY REPORT

SAFETY. SUPPORT. BELONGING.

SEPTEMBER 2026

**A community-informed
assessment of LGBTQ+
experiences in Richmond—what
we heard, what we learned, and
how community voice is helping
shape what comes next.**



**OFFICE OF
EQUITY AND
INCLUSION**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Richmond’s Office of Equity & Inclusion conducted the 2026 LGBTQ+ Community Assessment to establish a baseline understanding of how LGBTQ+ community members experience safety, support, and belonging in Richmond. The assessment was designed not simply to collect data, but to better understand residents’ experiences, identify community priorities, and inform how the City and its partners can strengthen LGBTQ+ inclusion and belonging moving forward.

The assessment combined a citywide community survey with open-ended feedback and four facilitated community conversations. This mixed approach allowed the City to examine both what participants reported through the survey and the experiences and context behind those responses.

ASSESSMENT AT A GLANCE

- 708 survey responses
- Nearly 400 open-ended responses
- Four community conversations
- Survey conducted April 27–June 1, 2026
- Community conversations conducted throughout June 2026
- Quantitative data, written responses, and community conversation findings analyzed together

Participation in the assessment was voluntary and should not be interpreted as a representative estimate of Richmond’s entire LGBTQ+ population. Survey respondents were predominantly White, and some communities were less represented in the survey. These participation patterns informed additional targeted community engagement and remain important context for interpreting the findings.

ASSESSMENT AT A GLANCE

Across the survey, open-ended responses, and community conversations, several consistent messages emerged.

Safety is about more than physical safety.

Participants connected safety and belonging to access to housing, healthcare, mental health support, employment, transportation, economic stability, and other basic needs.

Trust is built through everyday experiences.

Participants emphasized that interactions with public systems and service providers matter. Respectful, affirming, culturally responsive experiences can strengthen trust, while inconsistent or harmful interactions can undermine it.

Visibility matters—but it must be sustained.

Participants valued visible LGBTQ+ representation and public support while emphasizing the importance of commitment throughout the year, not only during Pride Month.

Community connection is essential to belonging.

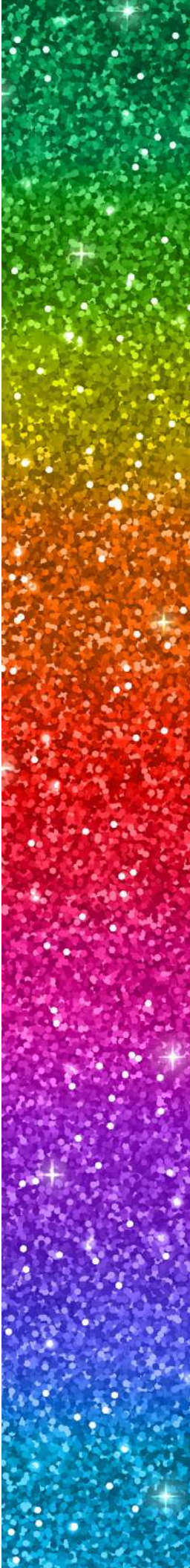
Participants described trusted organizations, gathering spaces, relationships, events, and opportunities for connection as important sources of support and belonging.

LGBTQ+ residents do not experience Richmond in the same way.

The assessment highlighted the importance of intersectionality. In particular, the dedicated conversation with Black and Brown LGBTQ+ community members elevated concerns related to equitable funding, authentic representation, housing, economic and wealth-building opportunities, community-owned spaces, and historical invisibility.

Listening must lead to action.

Across the assessment, participants expressed a desire for transparency, continued engagement, measurable progress, and evidence that community feedback will influence what happens next.



RICHMOND'S ROADMAP TO BELONGING

Taken together, the findings informed Richmond's Roadmap to Belonging: A Community-Informed Framework for LGBTQ+ Safety, Support, and Belonging. The Roadmap reflects what LGBTQ+ participants in this assessment identified as important conditions for being able to feel safe, supported, connected, and able to thrive in Richmond.

The Roadmap is specific to the experiences and priorities shared through this LGBTQ+ Community Assessment. It is not intended to define belonging for every Richmond community.

- **Build the Foundation** — Basic needs come first.
- **Build Safe Systems** — Every interaction matters.
- **Make Support Visible** — Visibility builds trust.
- **Strengthen Community Infrastructure** — Belonging needs places to grow.
- **Center Those Facing the Greatest Barriers** — Equity requires intention.
- **Turn Commitment into Action** — Residents want accountability.

FROM FINDINGS TO ACTION

The findings also identified six LGBTQ+ Community Priorities for Action:

- Strengthen access to basic needs and essential services
- Build inclusive and trusted public systems
- Demonstrate visible, year-round commitment
- Invest in community infrastructure and connection
- Advance equity through intentional investment
- Build accountability through ongoing partnership

These priorities are not presented in order of importance. They are interconnected and together provide a framework for translating community voice into strategic actions, partnerships, timelines, and measures of progress.

MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER

This assessment establishes a baseline; not an endpoint. The Office of Equity & Inclusion will use the findings to support continued collaboration across City departments and with LGBTQ+ organizations, service providers, community leaders, and residents. The work ahead includes identifying opportunities to operationalize the priorities, strengthening existing community assets rather than duplicating them, maintaining opportunities for community feedback, and establishing ways to measure and report progress over time.

Future engagement will also require intentional efforts to reach LGBTQ+ residents whose voices were less represented in this assessment and to continue learning how experiences differ across race, gender identity, age, disability, economic circumstances, and other intersecting identities.

The goal is not simply to know more about Richmond's LGBTQ+ community. It is to use what we have learned—alongside continued community partnership—to help build a Richmond where LGBTQ+ residents do not simply feel welcomed, but have the opportunity to safely thrive and belong.

THE FINDINGS ARE NOT THE FINISH LINE. THEY ARE THE STARTING POINT FOR MEANINGFUL ACTION, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND LASTING CHANGE.

ABOUT THE ASSESSMENT

WHY WE CONDUCTED THIS ASSESSMENT

The City of Richmond's Office of Equity & Inclusion launched its first LGBTQ+ Community Assessment to better understand how LGBTQ+ residents experience safety, belonging, and support in our city. While Richmond has made important strides in advancing policies and public commitments to LGBTQ+ inclusion, we recognized the need to hear directly from community members about their lived experiences.

The assessment was designed to establish a baseline that can help inform future planning, partnerships, and decision-making. Rather than assuming what residents need, the City sought to create multiple opportunities for LGBTQ+ individuals to share their experiences, identify priorities, and offer recommendations for building a more welcoming and inclusive Richmond.

Our goal was not simply to collect data—it was to begin building a stronger relationship between the City and the LGBTQ+ community through listening, transparency, and shared learning.

INTENTIONAL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

One of the core principles guiding this assessment was the recognition that the LGBTQ+ community is not a monolith.

Experiences of safety, belonging, and inclusion are shaped by multiple identities, including race, ethnicity, gender identity, age, disability, income, housing status, and other lived experiences.

Because early survey participation indicated that some communities were underrepresented—particularly Black, Latino/a/x, and other LGBTQ+ people of color—the City intentionally created dedicated opportunities to hear from these residents in spaces where their experiences could be centered.

These targeted conversations were not intended to separate communities but rather to ensure that perspectives that are often underrepresented in broader public engagement efforts were intentionally included in this assessment.

This approach reflects the City's commitment to equity by recognizing that equitable engagement sometimes requires creating spaces where individuals with shared lived experiences can speak openly about issues that may not emerge in larger or more generalized discussions.

ASSESSMENT PROCESS

THE ASSESSMENT WAS CONDUCTED IN TWO PHASES.

PHASE ONE: COMMUNITY SURVEY

The online LGBTQ+ Community Survey was open from April 27 through June 1, 2026, and received 708 completed responses from individuals who live, work, study, worship, or spend time in Richmond.

The survey explored residents' experiences related to:

- Safety
- Sense of belonging
- Community support
- Awareness of City resources
- Priority community needs
- Opportunities for City improvement

In addition to multiple-choice questions, respondents were invited to share their perspectives through open-ended questions, providing valuable context and recommendations that could not be captured through quantitative data alone.

PHASE TWO: BEYOND THE DATA COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

Recognizing that survey findings cannot fully capture the complexity of lived experiences, the Office of Equity & Inclusion hosted four facilitated community conversations following the close of the survey.

These conversations were intentionally designed to move "beyond the data" by creating opportunities for residents to:

- Reflect on survey findings
- Share personal experiences
- Discuss community strengths and challenges
- Explore solutions and priorities
- Build relationships across the LGBTQ+ community

Rather than validating survey results, these conversations helped explain why residents answered the way they did and added important context to the quantitative findings.

HOW THE FINDINGS WERE ANALYZED

THE FINDINGS PRESENTED IN THIS REPORT DRAW FROM THREE COMPLEMENTARY SOURCES OF INFORMATION:



SURVEY DATA

Responses to structured survey questions were analyzed to identify overall trends and establish baseline measures related to safety, belonging, support, awareness, and community priorities.



OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

Nearly 400 respondents also provided written comments describing their experiences and recommendations. These responses were reviewed using thematic analysis to identify recurring topics, concerns, strengths, and opportunities raised by participants.



COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

Notes and summaries from each Beyond the Data community conversation were reviewed to identify recurring themes, areas of agreement, differing perspectives, and recommendations. Rather than treating each conversation separately, findings were synthesized across all sessions to better understand shared experiences and unique community perspectives.



Beyond the Data: LGBTQ+ Community Conversations

A space for LGBTQ+ residents and community members to share the lived experiences behind our recent survey, helping us better understand community needs and inform future City efforts.

JUNE 1 11:30am - 1:30pm
JUNE 14 3:00pm - 5:00pm
JUNE 16 6:30pm - 8:30pm
JULY 2 5:00pm - 7:00pm



Scan QR code to register!



UNDERSTANDING THE FINDINGS

Like all community engagement efforts, this assessment has important limitations.

Participation in the survey was voluntary, meaning respondents self-selected to participate. As a result, the findings should not be interpreted as a statistically representative sample of every LGBTQ+ resident in Richmond.

While the survey received a strong response, participants were disproportionately White, with approximately **79% of respondents identifying as White and 12% identifying as Black or African American**. Other historically marginalized populations—including Latino/a/x residents, transgender residents, older adults, and lower-income LGBTQ+ individuals—were represented in smaller numbers than their presence within the broader community may suggest.

To help address these limitations, the City supplemented the survey with facilitated community conversations, including intentionally designed spaces for communities whose experiences might otherwise be underrepresented in the survey findings.

Even so, no single assessment can capture the full diversity of Richmond's LGBTQ+ community. Rather than providing definitive answers, this report offers an important baseline and a snapshot of community experiences at a particular moment in time.

The City views this assessment not as the conclusion of community engagement, but as the beginning of an ongoing commitment to listening, learning, and working alongside LGBTQ+ residents to strengthen safety, belonging, and inclusion throughout Richmond.



WHO WE HEARD FROM

Understanding who participated in this assessment is essential to interpreting the findings. Demographic information helps us recognize whose experiences are reflected most strongly in the survey, where participation was more limited, and where additional engagement was necessary. Rather than viewing these characteristics simply as statistics, they help us understand both the strengths and limitations of the assessment and guide future outreach efforts.

GENDER IDENTITY

Nearly **one-third of respondents identified as transgender, nonbinary, or another gender identity** (recognizing responses were "select all that apply," so categories overlap). Specifically, 21.3% selected nonbinary/gender-expansive, 7.0% transgender woman, and 6.4% transgender man.

AGE

(63%) are in the 25-44 age range – Gen Z/Millennials

Younger adults were more likely to participate than older adults, suggesting that the experiences of LGBTQ+ older adults may require additional targeted engagement in future assessments.

Assessment participants represented a range of connections to Richmond—including people who live, work, attend school, and regularly spend time in the city. This broader community perspective helps us understand how LGBTQ+ people experience Richmond not only as residents, but also through work, education, services, community, and everyday life.

RACE & ETHNICITY

79% White – 12% Black

***Remaining respondents represented other racial and ethnic identities.*

While the survey received a strong overall response, White LGBTQ+ residents were represented at much higher rates than other racial and ethnic groups. Because Richmond is substantially more racially diverse than this respondent pool, these findings should not be interpreted as representing the experiences of all LGBTQ+ communities equally.

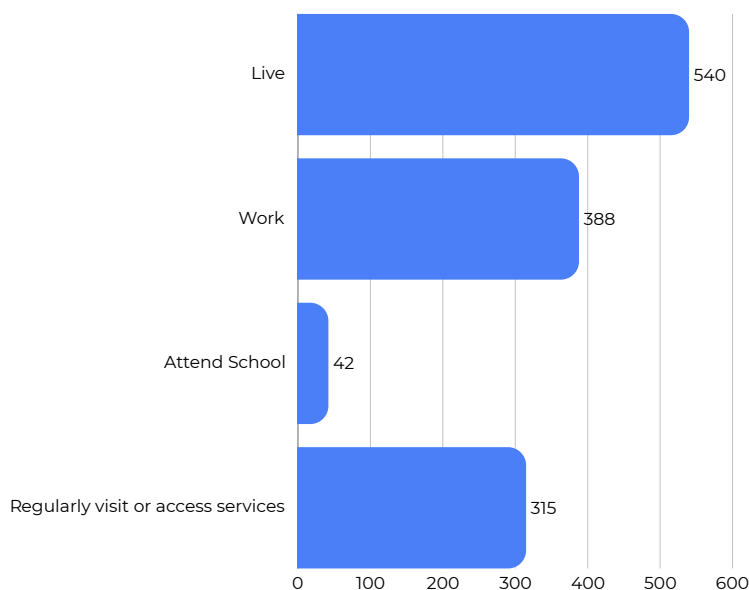
To better understand experiences that may not have been fully reflected in the survey, the City intentionally hosted a dedicated community conversation centered on Black and Brown LGBTQ+ residents.

FINANCIAL SITUATION

(59%) describe their financial situation as "comfortable"

Financial security influences nearly every aspect of well-being, including housing stability, healthcare access, transportation, and safety. Understanding participants' economic circumstances helps provide important context for interpreting community priorities identified throughout this report.

Do you live, work, or regularly spend time in the City of Richmond?



WHO WE MAY HAVE MISSED

Although more than 700 people participated in this assessment, no survey captures every experience within a community as diverse as Richmond's LGBTQ+ population.

Based on participation patterns and community conversations, additional engagement is particularly important with:

- **Black LGBTQ+ residents**
- **Latino/a/x LGBTQ+ residents**
- **Indigenous LGBTQ+ residents**
- **Asian and Pacific Islander LGBTQ+ residents**
- **Older LGBTQ+ adults**
- **LGBTQ+ residents experiencing homelessness**
- **Low-income LGBTQ+ residents**
 - **Residents with disabilities**
 - **Residents without reliable internet access**
- **Individuals who may not trust government enough to participate**



An absence of responses should not be interpreted as an absence of need.

We know that sometimes people...

- don't trust government.
- don't hear about surveys.
- don't have transportation.
- are just surviving.
- simply don't think anyone will listen.

This assessment represents an important beginning—not a final answer. The voices represented in this report provide a valuable foundation for understanding the experiences of many LGBTQ+ residents. Just as importantly, the assessment highlights opportunities to strengthen future engagement so that an even broader cross-section of Richmond's LGBTQ+ community can help shape the City's work moving forward.

WHAT WE LEARNED

Key Quantitative Survey Findings

The 2026 LGBTQ+ Community Survey provides an important baseline for understanding how participants experience safety, support, and belonging in Richmond, as well as where they believe greater attention and investment are needed.

Across the survey, the findings reveal both areas of strength and clear opportunities for continued action.

Safety, Support, and Belonging

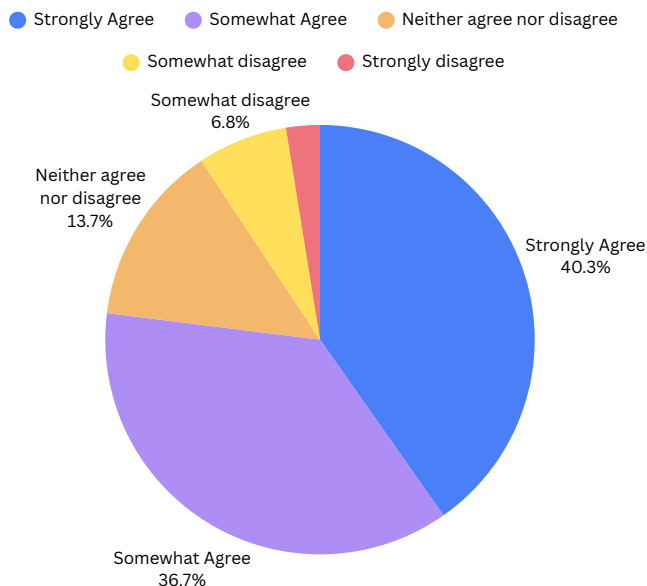
A strong majority of respondents reported feeling safe in Richmond as an LGBTQ+ person, with approximately 83% describing themselves as very or somewhat safe. At the same time, approximately 64% agreed that they feel supported by the City, revealing a notable difference between feeling safe in Richmond and feeling supported specifically by local government.

Belonging was also relatively strong: approximately 77% of respondents agreed that they feel a sense of belonging in Richmond as an LGBTQ+ person.

Together, these findings suggest that many respondents experience Richmond positively while also identifying opportunities to strengthen the City's direct relationship with and support of LGBTQ+ community members.

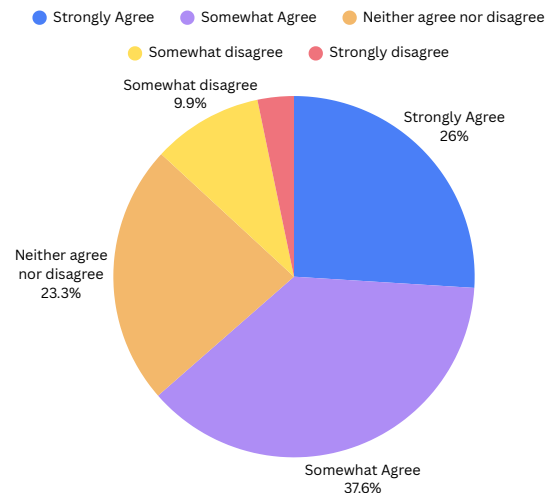
I feel a sense of belonging in the City of Richmond as an LGBTQ+ person.

(By "sense of belonging," we mean feeling accepted, respected, and valued in your community.)



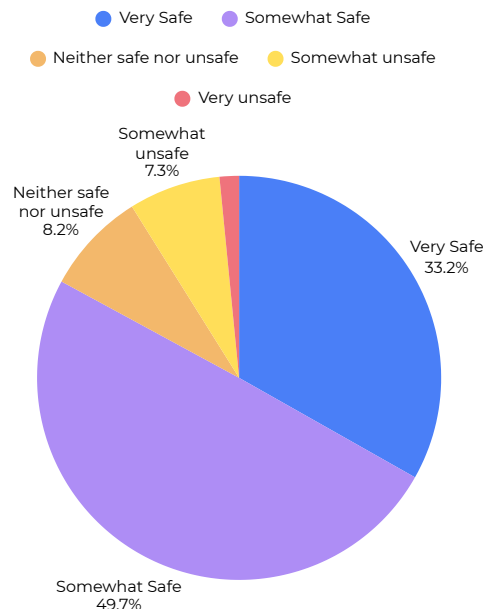
A 19-POINT GAP WORTH UNDERSTANDING

I feel supported as an LGBTQ+ person by the City of Richmond.



This distinction matters: creating a community where LGBTQ+ residents can thrive requires both a sense of safety and confidence that their local government sees, supports, and responds to them.

Overall, how safe do you feel in the City of Richmond as an LGBTQ+ person?

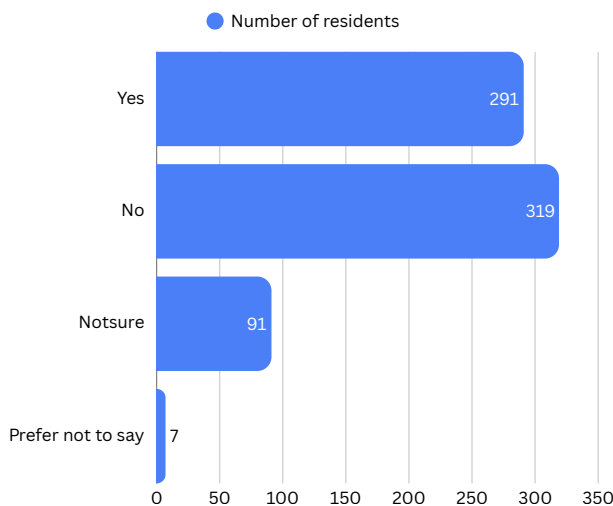


WHAT WE LEARNED

Discrimination Remains Part of the Experience

Positive perceptions of safety and belonging do not mean discrimination is absent. Approximately 41% of respondents reported that they had experienced or witnessed discrimination in Richmond related to sexual orientation or gender identity within the previous 12 months. This finding adds important context to the broader safety results and reinforces the need to consider everyday experiences of respect, inclusion, and equitable treatment alongside perceptions of overall safety.

In the past 12 months, have you experienced or witnessed discrimination in Richmond related to sexual orientation or gender identity?



While most respondents reported feeling generally safe in Richmond, experiences of discrimination tell another important part of the story. Safety and discrimination are not opposites: an LGBTQ+ person may feel generally safe moving through the city while still experiencing bias, exclusion, harassment, or unequal treatment. Understanding both helps provide a more complete picture of LGBTQ+ life in Richmond.

Basic Needs and Affirming Services Rose to the Top

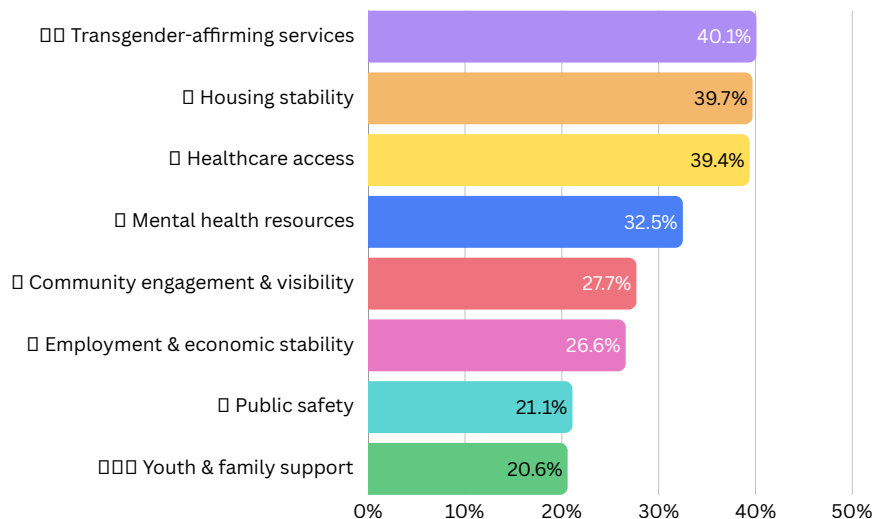
When respondents were asked where the City should focus first to better support LGBTQ+ residents, the most frequently selected priorities were transgender-affirming services (40.11%), housing stability (39.69%), and healthcare access (39.41%), followed by mental health resources (32.49%).

Respondents could select up to three priorities.

These results demonstrate that LGBTQ+ support is not understood solely through visibility or identity-specific programming. Participants connected their ability to thrive with access to affirming services and the fundamental conditions that support stability and well-being.

Community Priorities for Action

If the City were to focus on improving one area first to better support LGBTQ+ residents, which should it be?



WHAT WE LEARNED

Residents Identified Specific Systems for Greater Attention

When asked where follow-up listening or improvement should be prioritized, respondents most frequently selected housing-related services (39.55%), schools and youth-serving programs (39.41%), and public safety and law enforcement interactions (38.56%), followed by public spaces such as parks, streets, and lighting (31.78%).

Respondents could select up to two areas.

The findings reinforce that LGBTQ+ belonging is shaped across multiple systems and everyday environments rather than through the work of any single City department.

Awareness of Existing City Resources Is Low

The survey also identified a significant communications and visibility opportunity.

Roughly three-quarters of respondents were not aware that the City of Richmond has a Human Rights Commission that receives discrimination complaints.



75% Were Unaware of RPD's LGBTQ+ Liaison
Three out of four respondents did not know that the Richmond Police Department has an LGBTQ+ liaison—highlighting an opportunity to strengthen the visibility and awareness of existing LGBTQ+ resources and points of connection

These findings suggest that having resources in place is not enough if community members do not know they exist, understand their purpose, or know how to access them. Increasing awareness and visibility of existing resources represents an immediate opportunity for improvement.



WHAT WE LEARNED

In Their Own Words: What Residents Told Us

Numbers can tell us how LGBTQ+ community members responded to specific questions, but they cannot always explain why people feel the way they do or what they believe would make Richmond better. To create space for that perspective, the survey asked participants:

“In your own words, what would make Richmond feel safer or more supportive for LGBTQ+ residents?”

398 participants chose to respond, providing hundreds of written reflections, recommendations, concerns, and experiences.

From Individual Voices to a Shared Roadmap

While every response reflected an individual perspective, clear patterns emerged across the written feedback. The following pages highlight what residents consistently said, alongside direct quotes that preserve community members' own words.

These recurring messages became an important foundation for the six steps in **Richmond's Roadmap to Belonging: A Community-Informed Framework for LGBTQ+ Safety, Support, and Belonging.**

The Roadmap did not begin with six predetermined priorities. It grew from what LGBTQ+ community members told us.

The responses were reviewed for recurring ideas and patterns related to safety, support, belonging, access, community, equity, and accountability. These themes were considered alongside the quantitative survey findings and what we later heard through community conversations.

"Your queer residents must first feel taken care of and supported. By investing in resources related to human rights, such as healthcare, safety, housing. By investing in those, the more 'fun' things will follow, such as visibility and celebration and community building."

"Having our basic needs sufficiently met so that we can spend more time participating in the community. I am often concerned about being able to meet my housing, food, and medical needs."



START WITH THE FOUNDATION BASIC NEEDS COME FIRST

Residents consistently said:

You cannot separate LGBTQ+ safety from housing, healthcare, employment, transportation, food security, and mental health.

Before people can celebrate, they need stability.

"Better training for law enforcement. I have been misgendered by officers who literally have my driver's license with my gender marker on it in their hand."

"The city workers having more knowledge about queer/trans people in their interactions with folks, especially with schools and social services."

BUILD SAFE SYSTEMS: EVERY INTERACTION MATTERS



Residents consistently said to improve the competency of the entire system, including law enforcement, healthcare, city employees, schools, shelters, and the Human Rights Commission. Ensure accountability and staff training.

People don't experience "the City" as one organization—they experience it through everyday interactions.

"I feel like there are spaces for queer people... but I just don't hear a lot from the City itself about support. I had no idea that there was a commission that receives complaints and I've lived here for 16 years."

"More visible exposure of queer symbolism throughout the city (Pride flags, PSAs, etc.)."

Residents consistently said to consider public statements, city leadership, pride flags, public art, communications, representation in government, and ally business support.

Visibility tells people they belong.



MAKE SUPPORT VISIBLE: VISIBILITY BUILDS TRUST NOT PERFORMATIVE. CONSISTENT. YEAR-ROUND.

IN YOUR OWN WORDS, WHAT WOULD MAKE RICHMOND FEEL SAFER OR MORE SUPPORTIVE FOR LGBTQ+ RESIDENTS?

"More LGBTQ-centered spaces... spaces where the community can gather and live authentically are critically important."

"Spaces for LGBTQ+ folks to connect, socialize, and network."

"More community-run events to bring people together."



STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

Residents consistently said...

People don't just need services; they also need each other. They also want more places, not just programs. Spaces that are for us, to gather, socialize, and welcome truly all of us.

Belonging Needs Places to Grow

"The City should prioritize the most vulnerable residents, especially transgender, low-income, and residents of racial minorities."

"Working to improve the lives of Black transgender women will improve the lives of not only all queer people, but everyone else too!"

PRIORITIZE THOSE FACING THE GREATEST BARRIERS



Residents consistently centered... transgender residents, Black and Brown LGBTQ+ residents, youth, people with disabilities, and people experiencing poverty or homelessness.

Center the Most Vulnerable

"Representation matters, but so does action."

"More concrete/visible stance, more evidence of action instead of empty words."

"Meaningful public support from city leadership... Zero tolerance for discrimination with demonstrated follow-up and accountability."

Residents consistently said ...that listening is only meaningful if it leads to action. They called for the City to communicate openly, follow through on commitments, report back on progress, and remain engaged with the community through ongoing partnership rather than one-time consultation.

The community wants action, not just affirmation.



TURN COMMITMENT INTO ACTION: RESIDENTS WANT ACCOUNTABILITY

BEYOND THE DATA: GOING DEEPER WITH COMMUNITY

**The survey told us what.
Community conversations helped us understand why.**

The LGBTQ+ Community Survey provided an important baseline for understanding experiences of safety, support, belonging, discrimination, and community priorities. But percentages alone cannot fully explain why people feel the way they do, how those experiences show up in their everyday lives, or what meaningful change looks like from the perspective of community members.

To go deeper, the Office of Equity & Inclusion held four facilitated community conversations throughout June 2026. These conversations created space for LGBTQ+ community members to expand on the survey findings, share experiences in their own words, identify barriers and strengths, and discuss what would help them feel safer, more supported, and more connected in Richmond.

The conversations were also an important opportunity to hear more intentionally from communities whose perspectives were less represented in the survey. This included creating dedicated space to better understand the experiences of Black and Brown LGBTQ+ community members and the ways race, gender identity, economic circumstances, and other intersecting identities can shape experiences of belonging.

Why We Went Deep

The community conversations helped us:

- Add context to the numbers by understanding the experiences behind survey responses.
- Explore recurring themes more deeply, including basic needs, trust, visibility, community connection, and equitable access.
- Hear perspectives that may be less visible in aggregate survey data, particularly from communities underrepresented among survey respondents.
- Understand not only what needs attention, but why it matters in people's everyday lives.
- Identify opportunities for action grounded in community experience rather than assumptions about what LGBTQ+ residents need.

From Listening to Action

What we heard in these conversations was analyzed alongside the quantitative survey findings and open-ended responses.

Together, these sources informed **Richmond's Roadmap to Belonging** and the **LGBTQ+ Community Priorities for Action** presented later in this report.

**Going deeper allowed us to
move from knowing what
the data says to
understanding what it asks
us to do.**

COMMUNITY
CONVERSATIONS THAT
TELL US...

WHY IT MATTERS FOR RICHMOND

BELONGING BEGINS WITH MEETING BASIC NEEDS

The community consistently framed **safety as more than protection from discrimination or violence**. Participants described **safety** as the ability to **access stable housing, affirming healthcare, reliable transportation, employment opportunities, food security, and other basic needs** without fear of exclusion. These conversations suggest that LGBTQ+ inclusion cannot be achieved through symbolic support alone. Rather, **belonging begins** when residents have **equitable access to the resources** necessary to live healthy, stable, and self-determined lives.



TRUST IS BUILT THROUGH EVERYDAY SYSTEMS

Participants emphasized that **trust** in local government is shaped through **everyday interactions with frontline systems**, including law enforcement, emergency services, healthcare providers, shelters, schools, and other public-facing staff. Positive **policies alone** are **not** enough if residents **continue to experience misunderstanding, bias, or inconsistent treatment when seeking services**. The conversations reinforced that **cultural competency, visible accountability, and ongoing relationship-building** are essential to creating public systems where LGBTQ+ residents feel respected and safe.



COMMUNITY NEEDS PLACES TO GROW

Participants consistently described community as an essential component of well-being. While many valued Richmond's existing organizations and events, they also identified significant gaps in dedicated spaces where LGBTQ+ residents across generations could gather, build relationships, and access resources. Black and Brown participants, in particular, spoke about the importance of culturally affirming spaces where they could bring their full identities. These conversations demonstrate that belonging is strengthened not only through services, but through sustained investment in community infrastructure that fosters connection, leadership, and mutual support.

VISIBILITY CREATES CONFIDENCE

Throughout the conversations, participants described visibility as an important signal that LGBTQ+ residents are welcomed and valued within Richmond. Visible support—whether through Pride flags, inclusive messaging, LGBTQ+ history, public leadership, or affirming businesses—helps residents recognize that they belong in public spaces and civic life. Participants also distinguished between symbolic gestures and sustained commitment, emphasizing that visibility is most meaningful when it reflects authentic investment and year-round support.



BLACK AND BROWN LGBTQ RESIDENTS EXPERIENCE RICHMOND DIFFERENTLY.

The dedicated community conversation with Black and Brown LGBTQ+ residents revealed that **experiences of belonging** are shaped by the **intersection of race, sexual orientation, gender identity, and economic opportunity**. While many priorities echoed those raised throughout the broader assessment, such as housing, safety, healthcare, and community spaces, participants described **additional barriers** related to **representation, equitable investment, and access to resources** that were not as prominent in other conversations. They emphasized the **importance of Black-led organizations, culturally affirming spaces, wealth-building opportunities, and equitable funding**, while also describing the **historical invisibility of Black and Brown LGBTQ+ experiences within the broader LGBTQ+ movement**. These conversations reinforce that creating a more inclusive Richmond requires not only serving the LGBTQ+ community broadly, but intentionally investing in communities whose experiences have too often been overlooked or under-resourced.

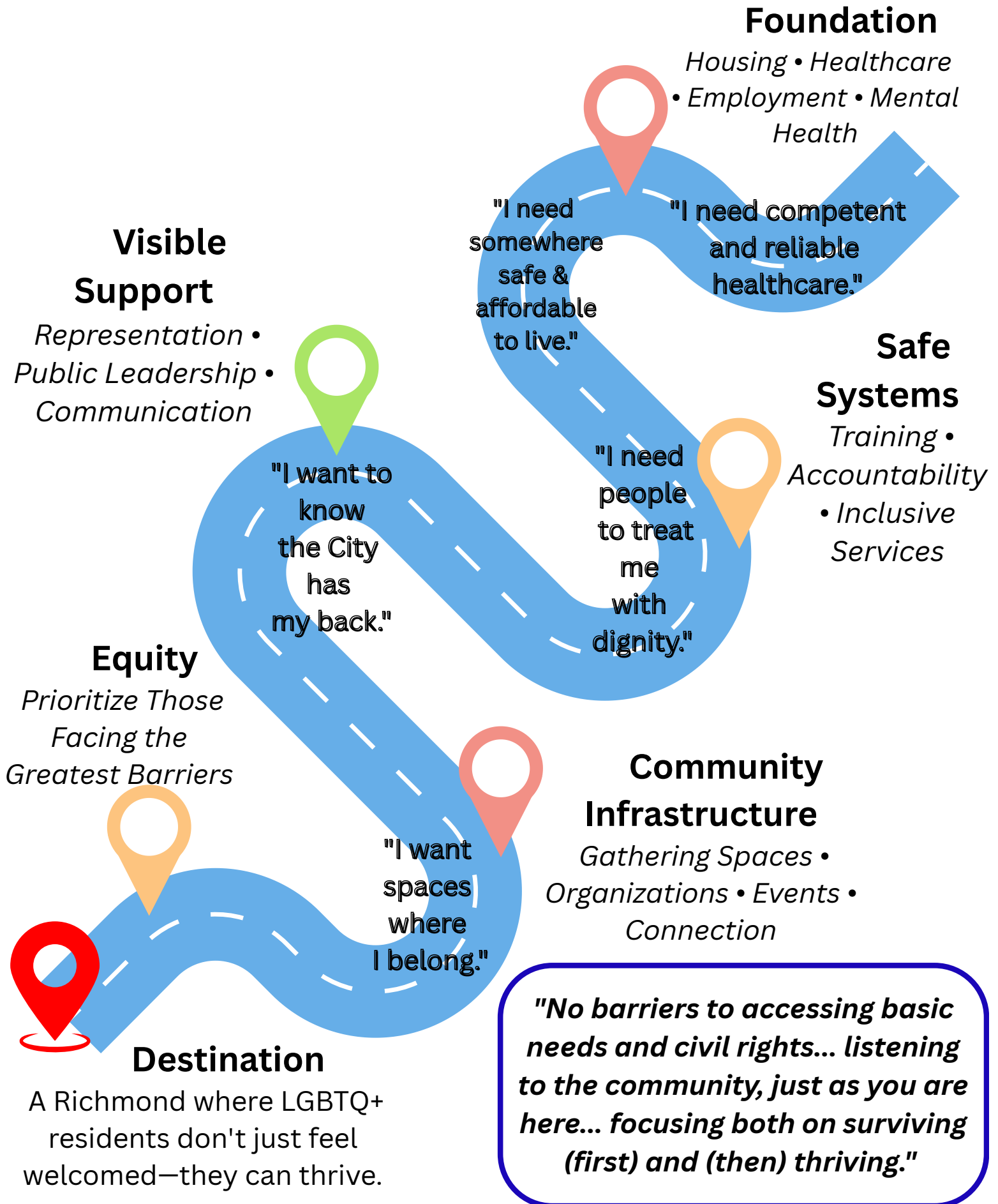


KEY INSIGHT

Equity is not achieved by treating everyone the same; it requires recognizing that Black and Brown LGBTQ+ residents experience Richmond differently and intentionally investing in the people, organizations, and spaces that reflect those lived experiences.



Richmond's Roadmap to Belonging



RICHMOND'S ROADMAP TO BELONGING

A Community-Informed Framework for LGBTQ+ Safety, Support, and Belonging

About the Roadmap

Richmond's Roadmap to Belonging brings together what we learned across the LGBTQ+ Community Assessment—the quantitative survey findings, nearly 400 open-ended responses, and four community conversations. Across these different forms of engagement, consistent messages emerged about what LGBTQ+ community members need to feel safe, supported, connected, and able to thrive in Richmond.

The Roadmap organizes those messages into six interconnected stops. These stops are not ranked, nor are they intended to suggest that belonging happens in a straight line. Instead, they reflect conditions that reinforce one another. Stable basic needs affect safety. Everyday experiences with systems shape trust. Visibility communicates belonging. Community infrastructure creates connection. Equity requires attention to those experiencing the greatest barriers. And ultimately, listening must lead to action and accountability.

This Roadmap is specific to Richmond's LGBTQ+ community and this assessment. It is not intended to define belonging for every community in Richmond. Rather, it reflects what LGBTQ+ participants told the Office of Equity & Inclusion through this assessment and provides a framework for translating those voices into priorities and practical action.



STOP 1: BUILD THE FOUNDATION

Basic Needs Come First

LGBTQ+ participants consistently connected safety and belonging to the basic conditions necessary to live stable, healthy lives. Housing, healthcare, mental health support, employment, transportation, food security, and economic stability were not described as separate from LGBTQ+ inclusion—they were part of it.

What this means:

A Richmond where LGBTQ+ people thrive must address both identity-based inclusion and the everyday conditions that allow people to live safely and with stability.

What It Calls Us to Do:

Integrate LGBTQ+ inclusion into the systems addressing housing, healthcare, mental health, employment, transportation, food security, and economic stability—not treat LGBTQ+ needs as separate from these fundamental issues. .

**Roadmap principle:
Before people can fully
participate, connect, and
thrive, they need a stable
foundation.**

RICHMOND'S ROADMAP TO BELONGING

Every Interaction Matters

Residents experience the City and other institutions through everyday interactions—with employees, law enforcement, schools, shelters, healthcare providers, emergency services, and other public-facing systems. Participants described how knowledge, respect, cultural competency, consistency, and accountability within these interactions can either strengthen or undermine trust.

Policies and statements of inclusion matter, but residents emphasized that they must also be reflected in how people are treated when they seek help, access services, report concerns, or interact with public systems.

Roadmap principle:

People do not experience “the City” as one organization—they experience it one interaction at a time.

STOP 2: BUILD SAFE SYSTEMS



What this means:

Inclusive systems require more than good policy. They require people, practices, training, and accountability that make inclusion visible in everyday service delivery.

What It Calls Us to Do:

Strengthen LGBTQ+ competency, consistency, and accountability across City services and other systems residents rely on, with particular attention to the everyday interactions that build—or erode—trust.



STOP 3: MAKE SUPPORT VISIBLE

What this means:

Residents should not have to search for evidence that their City supports them—or discover years later that a resource intended to serve them already exists.

What It Calls Us to Do:

Make LGBTQ+ support, resources, representation, and commitments easier to see and access throughout the year—and ensure visible support is reinforced by meaningful action.

Visibility Builds Trust

Participants consistently described visible support as an important signal that LGBTQ+ residents are welcomed and valued in Richmond. They pointed to public statements, Pride flags, inclusive communications, LGBTQ+ history, representation in government and leadership, public art, affirming businesses, and greater awareness of existing resources.

At the same time, residents distinguished between visibility that is symbolic and visibility that reflects sustained commitment. They wanted support that extends beyond Pride Month and is reinforced by meaningful investment and action throughout the year.

Roadmap principle:

Visibility is most meaningful when it is consistent, authentic, and backed by action.

RICHMOND'S ROADMAP TO BELONGING



STOP 4: STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

Belonging Needs Places to Grow

Residents described community connection as an essential part of well-being. They valued Richmond's existing LGBTQ+ organizations and events while also calling for more opportunities and spaces to gather, build relationships, socialize, network, access resources, and live authentically.

The community conversations added important depth to this finding. Participants emphasized that people need not only programs and services, but also relationships and places where community can grow. Black and Brown participants particularly emphasized culturally affirming spaces where they could bring their full identities

Roadmap principle:

People need services, but they also need each other.

What this means:

Strengthening LGBTQ+ belonging does not always require creating something new. It can also mean investing in, connecting people to, and strengthening the organizations, leaders, networks, and spaces already building community.

What It Calls Us to Do:

Invest in and strengthen the organizations, relationships, events, networks, and affirming spaces where LGBTQ+ people can connect, access resources, build leadership, and experience community.

Roadmap principle:

Equity is not achieved by treating everyone the same; it requires intentionally addressing the barriers experienced by those most often overlooked or under-resourced.

What this means:

Broad LGBTQ+ inclusion does not automatically produce equitable outcomes for everyone within the community. Strategies must account for differences in barriers, resources, visibility, and lived experience.

What It Calls Us to Do:

Use an intentional equity lens that recognizes different experiences within the LGBTQ+ community and directs attention and investment toward communities facing greater barriers or historical under-resourcing.

STOP 5: CENTER THOSE FACING THE GREATEST BARRIERS



Equity Requires Intention

The assessment demonstrated that LGBTQ+ people do not experience Richmond in the same way. Participants consistently called attention to transgender residents, Black and Brown LGBTQ+ residents, youth, people with disabilities, and people experiencing poverty or homelessness.

The dedicated conversation with Black and Brown LGBTQ+ residents further demonstrated how race, sexual orientation, gender identity, and economic opportunity intersect. Participants raised issues including representation, equitable investment, culturally affirming spaces, Black-led organizations, wealth-building opportunities, equitable funding, and the historical invisibility of Black and Brown LGBTQ+ experiences.

RICHMOND'S ROADMAP TO BELONGING

Residents Want Accountability

Residents consistently communicated that listening is meaningful only when it leads to action. They called for visible follow-through, transparency, communication, accountability, progress reporting, and continued partnership rather than one-time consultation.

This is particularly important for an assessment of this scale. Community members invested their time, experiences, and ideas in this process. Closing the feedback loop means communicating what was learned, what will happen as a result, where progress is being made, and where additional work remains.

Roadmap principle:
The community wants action, not just affirmation.



STOP 6: TURN COMMITMENT INTO ACTION

What this means:

The completion of this report is not the completion of the work. Accountability requires a continuing relationship between listening, action, measurement, and reporting back.

What It Calls Us to Do:

Create a visible cycle of listening, action, measurement, communication, and reporting back so community members can see how their input influences decisions and where progress is being made.

Where the Roadmap Leads

LGBTQ+ Richmonders Thriving and Belonging

The destination is not simply a Richmond where LGBTQ+ people are welcomed. It is a Richmond where LGBTQ+ people have the conditions, resources, relationships, visibility, trust, and opportunities necessary to safely thrive and belong.

The Roadmap recognizes that no single program, department, organization, or policy can create belonging on its own. Progress requires coordinated effort across City government and sustained partnership with community organizations, service providers, businesses, institutions, leaders, and LGBTQ+ residents themselves.

Most importantly, the Roadmap provides a bridge between what we heard and what we do next.

The six stops will inform the LGBTQ+ Community Priorities for Action that follow—connecting community voice to strategic actions, partnerships, timelines, and measures of progress.

The Destination

A Richmond where LGBTQ+ residents do not simply feel welcomed, but have what they need to safely thrive, participate, connect, and belong.

WE LISTENED → WE LEARNED → NOW WE ACT



Everyone Has a Role: Practical Actions You Can Take Today

If you serve Richmond, you serve LGBTQ+ Richmonders. Every interaction is an opportunity to strengthen trust, safety, and belonging.



Employers

- ✓ Adopt and communicate inclusive workplace policies.
- ✓ Provide LGBTQ+ cultural competency training.
- ✓ Review benefits and leave policies for equity.
- ✓ Celebrate LGBTQ+ inclusion year-round—not just during Pride.
- ✓ Support employee resource groups and affirming workplace culture.



Healthcare Providers

- ✓ Use affirming language.
- ✓ Create welcoming physical environments.
- ✓ Connect patients with LGBTQ+-affirming resources.
- ✓ Continue education on LGBTQ+ health needs.



Service Providers

- ✓ Ask and use people's correct names and pronouns.
- ✓ Display visible signs that LGBTQ+ people are welcome.
- ✓ Review forms and processes for inclusive language.
- ✓ Connect clients with affirming community resources.
- ✓ Ensure staff receive ongoing inclusion training.



Schools & Youth Orgs

- ✓ Create environments where LGBTQ+ youth feel safe and supported.
- ✓ Partner with affirming organizations.
- ✓ Train staff to recognize and respond to bullying and discrimination.
- ✓ Celebrate diverse identities throughout the year.



Community Organizations

- ✓ Partner rather than duplicate efforts.
- ✓ Ensure leadership reflects the communities served.
- ✓ Make events accessible and welcoming.
- ✓ Include LGBTQ+ voices in planning and decision-making.
- ✓ Collaborate across organizations to strengthen community impact.

Community Priorities for Action

The priorities outlined in this report are grounded in the voices of more than 700 LGBTQ+ residents and community members who participated in the survey and community conversations. They represent the most consistent themes that emerged across the assessment and provide a roadmap for strengthening safety, belonging, and inclusion throughout the City of Richmond.

This assessment establishes a **baseline**, not an endpoint. While not every priority can be addressed immediately, the City is committed to using these findings to inform planning, strengthen partnerships, and guide future investments. Implementation will require collaboration across City departments, community organizations, elected officials, and residents.

To promote transparency and accountability, each priority includes proposed strategic actions, an anticipated implementation timeline, and measures of progress. These are intended to provide a shared framework for tracking how community feedback informs City action over time.

The Office of Equity & Inclusion is committed to regularly reporting on progress, continuing to engage LGBTQ+ residents through ongoing dialogue, and using future community assessments to measure change, identify emerging needs, and refine priorities. Accountability is not achieved through a single report, but through sustained partnership, open communication, and a willingness to learn, adapt, and respond to the community we serve.

Our Commitment

*You shared your experiences. We commit to sharing our progress.
This report marks the beginning of an ongoing cycle of listening, action,
measurement, and continued partnership with
Richmond's LGBTQ+ community.*

Strengthen Access to Basic Needs and Essential Services

Residents consistently identified housing, healthcare, mental health, transportation, and economic stability as foundational to safety and belonging.



Strategic Actions (Years 1-3)

- Expand partnerships with organizations providing LGBTQ+-affirming housing, healthcare, and supportive services.
- Develop and maintain a centralized LGBTQ+ resource directory for City and community services.
- Incorporate LGBTQ+ equity considerations into cross-department planning related to housing, health, and human services.

Measures of Progress

Year 1

- Complete a comprehensive LGBTQ+ resource directory.
- Establish formal partnerships with key service providers.
- Identify baseline data on LGBTQ+ access to City-supported services.

Years 2-3

- Increase community awareness of available resources.
- Expand cross-department collaboration on LGBTQ+ service delivery.
- Demonstrate improvements in residents' awareness of and access to affirming services through future community assessments.

Build Inclusive and Trusted Public Systems

Residents consistently identified trust in public systems as being built through respectful, affirming, and culturally responsive interactions with City services.



Strategic Actions

- Implement LGBTQ+ cultural competency training across public-facing City departments.
- Strengthen relationships between City departments and LGBTQ+ community organizations.
- Increase awareness of LGBTQ+ liaison roles and reporting mechanisms.

Measures of Progress

Year 1

- Increase the number of departments completing LGBTQ+ competency training.
- Public awareness campaign launched.
- Baseline trust measures established.

Years 2–3

- Increased resident awareness of City resources.
- Improved trust ratings in future assessments.
- Increased participation in community engagement opportunities.

Demonstrate Visible, Year-Round Commitment

Residents consistently identified visible, year-round demonstrations of support as critical to fostering belonging, increasing awareness of resources, and reinforcing the City's commitment to the LGBTQ+ community.



Strategic Actions

- Maintain consistent year-round engagement with LGBTQ+ residents beyond Pride Month.
- Expand City communications highlighting LGBTQ+ initiatives, events, and resources.
- Celebrate LGBTQ+ history, culture, and contributions through partnerships and public recognition.

Measures of Progress

Year 1

- Develop an annual LGBTQ+ engagement calendar.
- Increase year-round LGBTQ+ communications across City platforms.
- Expand participation in City-supported LGBTQ+ events.

Years 2–3

- Increase public awareness of LGBTQ+ initiatives.
- Strengthen participation in year-round programming.
- Measure residents' perceptions of visibility and belonging through future assessments.

Invest in Community Infrastructure and Connection

Residents consistently identified affirming community spaces, trusted organizations, and opportunities for connection as essential to reducing isolation and strengthening a sense of belonging.



Strategic Actions

- Strengthen partnerships with LGBTQ+ organizations serving Richmond residents.
- Support opportunities that foster connection, belonging, and community building.
- Improve coordination and promotion of existing LGBTQ+ programs, organizations, and gathering spaces.

Measures of Progress

Year 1

- Expand collaboration with community organizations.
- Increase promotion of existing community resources and events.
- Identify opportunities to strengthen community connections.

Years 2–3

- Increase participation in community events and initiatives.
- Expand organizational partnerships.
- Improve resident awareness of available organizations, programs, and spaces.

Advance Equity Through Intentional Investment

Residents consistently identified the need for intentional investments that address the unique experiences and barriers faced by Black and Brown LGBTQ+ residents, transgender residents, and other historically underserved communities.



Strategic Actions

- Prioritize engagement with historically underrepresented LGBTQ+ communities.
- Strengthen partnerships with organizations serving Black and Brown LGBTQ+ residents, transgender residents, youth, older adults, and other marginalized populations.
- Incorporate equity considerations into funding, partnerships, outreach, and program planning.

Measures of Progress

Year 1

- Expand targeted outreach efforts.
- Increase representation of historically underrepresented communities in City engagement activities.
- Review partnership and investment opportunities through an equity lens.

Years 2-3

- Increase participation from historically underrepresented residents in future assessments.
- Expand partnerships with diverse community organizations.
- Demonstrate broader representation across City initiatives and collaborations.

Build Accountability Through Intentional Investment

Residents consistently emphasized that listening is only meaningful when it leads to visible action. Participants called for the City to follow through on commitments, communicate openly about progress, remain engaged with LGBTQ+ communities, and create opportunities for continued partnership rather than relying on one-time consultation.



Strategic Actions

- Create an ongoing LGBTQ+ community feedback loop.
- Build and maintain an LGBTQ+ Community List.
- Report back on progress.
- Strengthen cross-sector partnership.
- Measure change over time.

Measures of Progress

Year 1

- Launch the LGBTQ+ Community List and share initial progress back with the community
- Establish ongoing mechanisms for community communication and engagement
- Continue convening and strengthening relationships with community and City partners

Years 2–3

- Continue community engagement and partnership opportunities
- Review measures and implementation across the six priority areas
- Prepare for and conduct the next LGBTQ+ Community Assessment on the established assessment cycle



Moving Forward Together

The 2026 LGBTQ+ Community Assessment provides Richmond with an important baseline for understanding how LGBTQ+ community members experience safety, support, and belonging. More importantly, it provides a foundation for what comes next.

The findings, Roadmap to Belonging, and Community Priorities for Action are not intended to represent the completion of this work. They establish a direction for continued partnership, action, learning, and accountability. Creating a Richmond where LGBTQ+ people can safely thrive and belong will require sustained effort across City government and continued collaboration with the people, organizations, businesses, institutions, and community leaders already contributing to LGBTQ+ life in Richmond.

The findings are not the finish line—they are the starting point for meaningful action, accountability, and lasting change.

Immediate Next Steps

Following the release of this assessment, the Office of Equity & Inclusion will begin moving the findings into implementation. Initial efforts will focus on sharing the results across City government and with the community, strengthening awareness of existing resources, identifying opportunities for collaboration, and working with departments and partners to advance the priorities identified through the assessment.

Not every action will happen at once, and not every solution will belong to the City alone.

The first phase of implementation will help identify where the City can act directly, where stronger coordination is needed, and where the most meaningful role may be to support, connect with, or amplify work already happening in the community.

Continued LGBTQ+ Community Engagement

The assessment reinforced that meaningful engagement cannot be limited to a single survey, listening session, or annual event. OEI will continue creating opportunities for LGBTQ+ community members to remain connected to this work, share emerging experiences and priorities, and participate in conversations about implementation.

The **LGBTQ+ Community List** will provide one mechanism for maintaining that connection by helping residents, organizations, businesses, leaders, and other interested community members receive updates and learn about opportunities to engage and partner with the City.

Continued engagement will also seek to intentionally include voices that were less represented in the 2026 survey and recognize that experiences within Richmond's LGBTQ+ community differ across race, gender identity, age, disability, economic circumstances, and other intersecting identities.



City and Community Partnerships

The assessment made clear that belonging cannot be created by one office, one City department, or government alone.

OEI will work across City government to connect the findings to departments and systems whose work intersects with the priorities identified by community members. At the same time, the City will continue strengthening relationships with LGBTQ+ organizations, businesses, service providers, institutions, community leaders, and other partners.

This work will prioritize **strengthening and connecting to existing community assets rather than unnecessarily duplicating them**. Where effective resources, programs, relationships, and expertise already exist, the City can explore opportunities to increase awareness, improve connections, strengthen collaboration, and support their continued impact.

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK LOOPS

Community members should be able to see what happens after they share their experiences.

OEI will work to establish an ongoing feedback loop that connects
listening → action → progress → reporting back → continued engagement.

This means creating opportunities not only to gather community input, but also to communicate how that input has informed decisions, what actions have been taken, what remains in progress, and where challenges or opportunities remain.

Feedback loops will also allow the City to hear about emerging issues between formal assessment cycles and adjust its approach as community needs and conditions change.

YOU SHARED YOUR EXPERIENCES. WE COMMIT TO SHARING OUR PROGRESS.

MEASURING AND REPORTING PROGRESS

**The 2026 assessment
establishes a baseline against
which future progress can be
understood**



As the Community Priorities for Action move forward, OEI will track implementation through the measures identified throughout this report, including actions taken, partnerships strengthened, engagement opportunities created, resources made more visible, and other indicators of progress.

Progress reporting should reflect both accomplishments and areas where additional work is needed. **Accountability** is not simply demonstrating that activities occurred; it is **understanding whether those efforts are helping create the conditions for LGBTQ+ people to feel safer, better supported, more connected, and able to belong.**

FUTURE ASSESSMENT

The full LGBTQ+ Community Assessment is not intended to be an annual survey. Meaningful changes in experiences such as safety, support, belonging, trust, and discrimination take time, as do many of the actions intended to influence those experiences.

The City anticipates repeating the assessment on a **multi-year cycle**, allowing sufficient time for implementation while maintaining the core measures necessary to understand change over time. The 2026 findings will serve as the baseline for future comparison.

Between assessment cycles, OEI will continue gathering community perspectives through engagement, partnerships, and other feedback mechanisms rather than waiting for the next formal assessment to hear from LGBTQ+ community members.



OUR COMMITMENT TO ACCOUNTABILITY

This assessment began by asking LGBTQ+ community members to share their experiences with Richmond. Accountability requires that the City honor that participation by doing more than publishing the results.

OEI is committed to carrying community voice forward into implementation, building partnerships around the priorities identified, communicating progress, acknowledging where gaps remain, and creating opportunities for LGBTQ+ community members to continue shaping the work.

*The destination is not simply a Richmond where LGBTQ+ people are welcomed. **It is a Richmond where LGBTQ+ people have the conditions, resources, relationships, visibility, trust, and opportunities necessary to safely thrive and belong.***

**WE LISTENED. WE LEARNED. NOW WE ACT—
AND WE WILL CONTINUE REPORTING BACK.**