

Targeted Engagement Summary

Administration conducted targeted consultation with select City of Calgary boards, committees, and commissions and community advocacy groups, guided by an Equity Analysis. The process involved an exploration of the direct, indirect, and interrelated consequences of expanding the income eligibility criteria for the Fair Entry program, especially for Calgarians belonging to equity-denied groups. Overall, there was a high degree of consistency across the groups' feedback.

Participants brought up a range of systemic and situational factors that result in a greater need for the Fair Entry program overall, both for those who are currently eligible and those who fall outside the current income eligibility. The sustained affordability and housing crisis was frequently mentioned. It was noted that Calgarians living with low income (both inside and outside of the Low Income Cut-off's definition) are increasingly required to make difficult choices, such as buying groceries or keeping the heat on.

Participants also emphasized that impacts are not felt equally, and that an equity lens is needed both when attempting to understand the current situation and planning for a possible expansion of Fair Entry eligibility. Examples included:

- Seniors, especially those on fixed incomes, struggle with increasing rents and utilities, despite not meeting the eligibility criteria for support programs (including Fair Entry).
- People with disabilities not only face additional challenges generating income, but often contend with higher living expenses, further straining their financial situation.
- Equity-denied people and groups may experience higher rates of un- or underemployment, exacerbating financial struggles.
- Despite not being considered low income, people earning moderate incomes still struggle to afford housing, especially in urban areas like Calgary, due to disparities in wages and living costs.

Benefits:

Overall, the potential of expanding the income eligibility of Fair Entry was viewed as contributing to:

- Supporting people through the affordability crisis
- Facilitating accessibility and mobility
- Enhancing quality of life
- Improving employment opportunities and workforce participation due to increased access to transit
- Increasing transit ridership overall (potentially leading to more frequent service)
- Increasing access and social inclusion for structurally vulnerable populations
- Reducing social isolation
- Fostering community connectedness and well-being
- Furthering equity and inclusion goals