



To: Yi-An Huang; City Manager

From: Maura Pensak; Housing Liaison
Carolina Almonte; Executive Director, Cambridge Human Rights and LGBTQ+ Commissions
Phoebe West; Project Coordinator, Office of the Housing Liaison

Date: November 12, 2024

Re: City Manager's LGBTQ+ Friendly Housing Task Force
Final Report

On behalf of the members of the LGBTQ+ Friendly Housing Task Force, we are pleased to release this final report of findings and recommendations regarding housing and the LGBTQ+ community.

Co-chaired by Carolina Almonte; Executive Director; Cambridge Human Rights and LGBTQ+ Commissions, Maura Pensak; Housing Liaison and Phoebe West, Project Coordinator for the Office of the Housing Liaison, the Task Force convened in the Spring of 2023. Charged with developing recommendations to advance LGBTQ+-friendly housing in Cambridge, members adopted a broad approach by evaluating how physical spaces, policies, materials, applications and practices could enhance the housing and community experience of LGBTQ+ residents.

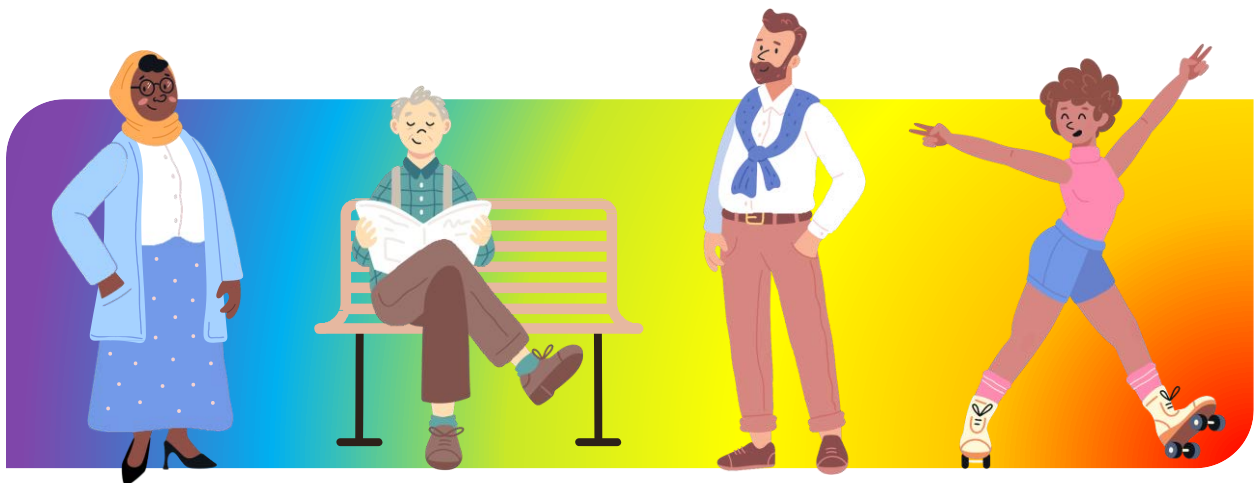
The Task Force's research, complemented by the expertise of its members, and supported by survey and focus group responses revealed several key insights into ideas and practices that result in creating LGBTQ+-friendly housing and community spaces. As a result, the recommendations outlined in the report range from small modifications in practices to deeper and more complex changes in policy and design.

We look forward to discussing next steps and action plans to implement these ideas as appropriate following your review.



City of Cambridge - City Manager's LGBTQ+ Friendly Housing Task Force Report

October 2024



Mission

The purpose of the Task Force was to develop recommendations to advance LGBTQ+-friendly housing and spaces in the City of Cambridge.

Task Force Members

Community Members

Deborah Morse

Elinor Brelis

Iris Lewis

Jesse Edsell Vetter

Linden Huhmann

Longjun Tan

R. Taylor Devane

Kevin Thaddeus Brown, Jr.

Thomas Worth

City Staff

Carolina Almonte, Executive Director of the Human Rights Commission, Commission on Immigrant Rights and Citizenship, and LGBTQ+ Commission, Task Force Co-Chair

Maura Pensak, Housing Liaison to the City Manager, Task Force Co-Chair

Phoebe West, Project Coordinator for the Office of the Housing Liaison, Task Force Co-Chair, Primary Report Author

Cassie Arnaud, Senior Manager for Housing Development, Community Development Department Representative

Facilitators

Ora Grodsky, Just Works Consulting

Elizabeth Aeschlimann, Just Works Consulting

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Summary

The City of Cambridge has a distinguished history of pioneering support and leadership for LGBTQ+ rights and inclusion.

In 2021, Councilor E. Denise Simmons introduced a policy order for the City Manager to establish an LGBTQ+-Friendly Housing Task Force ("Task Force") to look at the possibility of developing LGBTQ+-friendly housing and how housing broadly could be more friendly to LGBTQ+ people. The then City Manager, Louis DePasquale, appointed the heads of the Office of the Housing Liaison and Human Rights Commission to form a Task Force and spearhead the efforts. In 2023, Co-chairs by Maura Pensak and Phoebe West from the Office of the Housing Liaison, and Carolina Almonte from the Cambridge Human Rights Commission and the LGBTQ+ Commission, recruited members from the Cambridge community. Ten community members were chosen to participate, representing different LGBTQ+ identities, and lived and professional experiences and perspectives.

After the meetings began, the Task Force members self-selected into working groups; Community Engagement; Models, Approaches, and Practices for LGBTQ+-friendly Housing Infrastructure/Physical Space; and Current Practices and Gaps. Each group explored best practices, engaged with stakeholders, and tapped into their own expertise to understand Cambridge's current housing landscape as it intersects with the LGBTQ+ community and what could be improved for members of this community.

The groups also unpacked the limitations of focusing on an LGBTQ+ friendly development, because Fair Housing Laws do not allow housing applicants to be screened out - or in - due to their gender or sexuality. With this understanding, the groups sought examples of how to make developments in the City's affordable housing pipeline as well as market housing more friendly by looking at models of best practice and community feedback. The group also investigated the applications and materials related to the City's housing programs through the lens of gender and relationship diversity.

The working groups found that the overall experience of LGBTQ+ folks in Cambridge was primarily positive. However, many ideas for areas improvement were generated and resulted in the recommendations identified in this report. In fact, while the original intention of this work may have been to develop a LGBTQ+ housing development in Cambridge, the Task Force found that the City's impact could be broader and deeper in scope. As such The Task Force's recommendations represent areas of improvement across the housing spectrum from application processes to staff training, welcoming community spaces and current and future housing design, marketing and access.

The recommendations that the Task Force found are as follows. (1) Create an LGBTQ+ Community Space in Cambridge. (2) Develop and administer a City of Cambridge LGBTQ+

Friendly Housing Accreditation. (3) Develop guidelines for future city funded housing developments to be more welcoming. (4) Increase LGBTQ+ visibility through public art. (5) Adopt measures to increase inclusivity of gender and relationship diversity in all housing programs. (6) Consider a specific study around homelessness and LGBTQ+ identity. (7) Continue to prioritize affordable housing that meets the needs of diverse family and relationship configurations. (8) Identify and direct appropriate city departments to implement recommendations.

Background

The City of Cambridge's history has included numerous milestones such as the first gender-affirming surgery in Massachusetts (1972), the election of the first openly gay Black mayor (Kenneth Reeves, 1992), and the issuance of the first same-gender marriage license (2004) that show its commitment to being on the forefront of LGBTQ+ inclusion and rights. Additionally, Cambridge Rindge and Latin School established the first school-based Gay/Straight Alliance, now known as Project 10 East, and the City School District created the first LGBTQ+ Family Liaison. Despite the City's history and commitment to the LGBTQ+ community, Cambridge has not pursued LGBTQ+-friendly Housing or LGBTQ+-specific spaces.

In recent years there is a rising awareness of LGBTQ+ housing issues, driven by community feedback that underscores the challenges LGBTQ+ individuals face in securing supportive and inclusive housing both in Cambridge and throughout the country. National studies have found that LGBTQ+ individuals face higher barriers to housing than heterosexual individuals. For instance, a nationwide study by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development ("HUD") revealed that same-sex couples received far fewer email replies compared to heterosexual couples when inquiring about available housing from the same provider.¹ Additionally, a national survey on discrimination against transgender and gender non-conforming individuals, titled *Injustice at Every Turn: A Report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey*, found that 19% of respondents had been denied housing and 11% had been evicted due to their gender identity or expression.²

Over the past decade, there have been discussions about exploring the development of housing specifically designed for LGBTQ+ individuals, inspired by similar initiatives in other cities such as Boston, Philadelphia, and San Francisco. The Housing Committee of the Cambridge City Council, a standing committee of the Council, initiated an exploration in June 2015. In 2016, the LGBTQ+ Commission surveyed Cambridge Housing Authority staff about policies and practices related to LGBTQ+ senior residents, and issued recommendations to increase training, sponsor programming, collect anonymous data about sexual orientation and gender identity, and clarify procedures for discrimination complaints.³ In 2016-2017, during E. Denise Simmons's second mayoral term, a small advisory committee investigated the possibility of LGBTQ+ housing.

¹ M. Davis and Company, Inc., *An Estimate of Housing Discrimination Against Same-Sex Couples* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2013), available at http://www.huduser.org/portal/Publications/pdf/Hsg_Disc_against_SameSexCpls_v3.pdf.

² National Center for Transgender Equality and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, *Injustice at Every Turn: A Report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey* (Washington, D.C.: National Center for Transgender Equality and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, 2011).

³ Elysia Chandler, *LGBT Inclusive Housing for Older Adults in Cambridge Part I: A Review of the policies and Practices of the Cambridge Housing Authority* (Cambridge, MA: The Cambridge GLBT Commission, 2016), available at: www.cambridgema.gov/-/media/Files/glbtccommission/glbtccommissionlgbtinclusivehousingpt1cha.pdf.

Like the findings of other municipalities, City of Cambridge determined that making rental or sales decisions based on a person's gender identity or sexual orientation would violate the Cambridge Fair Housing Ordinance and the Federal Fair Housing Act, which is designed to prevent housing discrimination and ensure equal access for all individuals, regardless of specific characteristics, including sexual orientation and gender identity/expression. The Cambridge Fair Housing Ordinance also protects individuals from discrimination in housing based on color; sex; age; religious creed; disability; national origin or ancestry; marital status; family status; military status; and source of income.

Following the 2020 Supreme Court ruling in *Bostock v. Clayton County*, which recognized that discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity falls under sex discrimination, the HUD issued guidance that the federal Fair Housing Act *also* prohibits such discrimination in housing.

This means it is illegal to refuse to rent or sell housing, set different terms and conditions, or advertise in a way that discriminates against someone based on their sexual orientation or gender identity. Although the law aims to protect marginalized communities, it does not permit exclusive housing that discriminates against others outside the specified group.

Notwithstanding these limitations, while the law will not allow housing providers to create housing that is available only to the LGBTQ+ community, there is nothing that prevents housing providers and others from making housing that is intentionally friendly and welcoming for LGBTQ+ residents. As a result, it was determined that the City of Cambridge could explore the possibility of encouraging the development of housing that is friendly and welcoming for LGBTQ+ individuals.

In September 2021, a policy order sponsored by current Mayor, then-Councilor, Simmons directed the City Manager to establish a Task Force to investigate the possibility of creating LGBTQ+-friendly Housing in Cambridge. The Task Force was charged with evaluating the existing housing landscape, identifying gaps and barriers to creating such housing, and developing actionable recommendations to overcome these obstacles to ensure that Cambridge is as welcoming as possible for LGBTQ+ residents. The Task Force was led through the joint efforts of the Human Rights Commission and the Office of the Housing Liaison. The Task Force worked to identify what types of measures would be most likely to foster a sense of inclusivity. Their recommendations are described in more detail below and include interventions ranging from the use of inclusive signage and representative public art to a scan of paperwork needed to access housing to identify opportunity to make language as gender neutral as possible. It is the hope of City staff and the Task Force that many of the recommendations will begin to take hold in the near future.

Task Force Composition

The Task Force was co-chaired by Carolina Almonte, Executive Director of the Cambridge Human Rights Commission and the Cambridge LGBTQ+ Commission; Maura Pensak, Housing Liaison to the City Manager; and Phoebe West, Project Coordinator with the Office of the Housing Liaison. The Office of the Housing Liaison and the Cambridge Human Rights Commission were chosen to lead this work as they both respond to everyday inquiries regarding housing concerns and tenant rights. In addition, both departments also have experience navigating affordable and market housing systems, as well as expertise in understanding Fair Housing laws.

Cassie Arnaud, Senior Manager for Housing Development, participated in Task Force meetings as a representative of the Community Development Department.

Ora Grodsky and Liz Aeschlimann of Just Works Consulting were engaged to provide process guidance and facilitation.

Task Force members were recruited from January 2023 through May 2023. Outreach efforts included the City's website and social media postings, direct outreach to affordable housing providers, agency partners, and LGBTQ+ specific organizations and persons. Task Force position posting is in Appendix A. All interested parties were interviewed by the Co-Chairs. Task Force members were selected based on their valuable and diverse experiences and perspectives, and represented a variety of LGBTQ+ identities, and professional and personal experience with housing and LGBTQ+ rights in the City of Cambridge.

Task Force Members:

Deborah Morse: Deb Morse is a seasoned professional in the field of real estate development, affordable housing and community sustainability. Deb is committed to this industry because of the direct and immediate impact that can be made to peoples' lives and communities. All her work, volunteer experiences, and civic engagement activities are grounded in the premise that policies, to be effective and relevant, must be created and deployed to strengthen communities. She has lived in Cambridge for a long time and has a daughter who is a senior at CRLS.

Elinor Brellis: Elinor (Ellie) is a storyteller who grew up in Cambridge and works in the City. Elinor brings skills in marketing and knowledge of real estate to the Task Force.

Iris Lewis: Iris is currently an employee of the Cambridge Public Health Department through the Agenda for Children. Iris has passion for housing justice- especially for young LGBTQ+ people.

Jesse Edsell Vetter Jesse Edsell-Vetter has worked in the non-profit sector for thirty years. Participating in the LGBTQ+-friendly Housing Task Force was an ideal way to blend their queer identity with their professional skills in affordable housing.

Linden Huhmann: Linden Huhmann has advocated for inclusivity for diverse families and households as a Cambridge LGBTQ+ Commissioner since 2019. They led the LGBTQ+ Commission's work to expand Cambridge's domestic partnership ordinance in 2021. They also led the Commission's work on a 2024 zoning amendment providing equal access to housing for households with residents who are not legally related.

Longjun Tan: Longjun lives and works in Cambridge. She has a strong commitment to social justice and brings her lived experience to the Task Force.

Taylor Devane: Taylor brings experience as a former consultant and has knowledge of LGBTQ+ life and housing all over the country and is passionate about using research to inform processes.

Kevin Thaddeus Brown, Jr.: Thaddeus is passionate about access to resources and services for marginalized communities and joined the task force to use his experience in research and analysis to support policy solutions that improve LGBTQ+ communities' housing experiences.

Thomas Worth: Thomas Worth is the managing partner of a small private development firm which constructs housing throughout New England. He has lived, studied, and worked in Cambridge for twenty years. He is also an advocate for reducing automotive dependency and reclaiming our streets one lane at a time.

Purpose and Desired Outcomes

The purpose of the Task Force was to develop recommendations to advance LGBTQ+-friendly housing and spaces in the City of Cambridge. While the original charge focused on creating an LGBTQ+-friendly housing development in Cambridge, the Task Force adopted a broader approach to creating LGBTQ+-friendly housing in Cambridge, looking at how all aspects of housing in Cambridge could be more LGBTQ+-friendly. This included evaluating how physical spaces, policies, applications, and neighborhoods could enhance the well-being and flourishing of the LGBTQ+ community.

The Task Force aimed to achieve the following outcomes:

- Identify best practices, policies, and procedures to make housing more welcoming to all, including LGBTQ+ people.
- Understand what other cities have done to specifically create LGBTQ+ identified, intentional spaces and the processes that were used
- Identify and assess possible approaches, models, and practices for LGBTQ+ friendly housing or spaces in Cambridge
- Identify effective approaches for working with public and private housing providers to promote LGBTQ+ inclusive practices.
- Develop a concise set of recommendations for the City Manager to consider.

Timeframe and Process

The Task Force began meeting in September 2023. After two meetings of the whole Task Force, members self-selected into three working groups that met monthly through May 2024. The working groups focused on three areas of inquiry:

1. **Community Engagement:** Understand the experiences, needs, and desires of LGBTQ+ people in Cambridge for safe and welcoming housing
2. **Models, Approaches, and Practices for LGBTQ+-friendly Housing Infrastructure/Physical Space:** Understand what other cities have done to specifically create LGBTQ+ identified, intentional spaces and the processes that were used, and identify possible approaches that might be implemented in Cambridge
3. **Current Practices and Gaps:** Understand Cambridge housing providers' current practices and gaps in support for LGBTQ+ inclusion

In May 2024, the full Task Force reconvened to consider and refine the working groups' recommendations based on their findings. Final recommendations were crafted by the Co-Chairs based on this input.

The Co-Chairs coordinated the work of the Task Force, convening the working groups and engaging with individual members to ensure their efforts were aligned with the Task Force's objectives. To maintain strategic oversight, the Co-Chairs met regularly with the consultants, ensuring that the process remained on track and effectively coordinated. The consultants facilitated Task Force meetings and a focus group.

Research and Data Collection

The working groups undertook a series of research and data collection activities to inform their recommendations. They began by attending a presentation to the Task Force by Amelia Joselow, the LGBTQ+ Commission Research Associate. Joselow provided an overview of previous research conducted in Cambridge, including the June 2015 report from the Housing Committee, the 2016 [Part 1 Report from the GLBT Commission on LGBT Inclusive Housing for Older Adults in Cambridge](#), and the [2022 Part 2 Report from the LGBTQ+ Commission](#) on the same topic.

The Models, Approaches, and Practices for LGBTQ+-friendly Housing Infrastructure/Physical Space was guided by three key areas of exploration; understand what other cities have done to specifically create LGBTQ+ identified, intentional spaces and what processes were used, identify and assess possible approaches, models and practices for what LGBTQ+ friendly housing or spaces could look like in Cambridge and what makes housing LGBTQ+ friendly in general. To gain further insight, a working group member interviewed a key stakeholder from [The Pryde](#), a dedicated LGBTQ+ friendly senior housing community in Boston. They also conducted research on several notable projects, including [Mercy Housing](#) and [Openhouse](#) in San Francisco, [Pride Place](#) in Seattle, and the Schwulenberatung [Living in Diversity](#) projects in Berlin. Additionally, they reviewed the publication [So You Want to Build LGBTQ+ Inclusive Housing?](#) from SAGE Advocacy & Services for LGBT Elders. Cassie Arnaud, a Task Force member and Senior Manager for Housing Development for the Cambridge Community Development Department (CDD), shared a presentation about the process of housing development in Cambridge.

To gather local perspectives, the Community Engagement working group designed and administered an online survey to solicit input from residents. The survey aimed to assess residents' housing experience in Cambridge as LGBTQ+ individuals, and identify specific changes or improvements in housing rules, policies, and programs. Questions were developed through discussions with the working group, Task Force Co-Chairs, and consultants. The survey questions were crafted to obtain information from all demographics, although the working group determined that a separate process would be more effective to obtain information from unhoused community members. The survey was disseminated through the City's weekly email via the Public Information Office and received 199 responses over two weeks in February 2024. The demographic breakdown of respondents was as follows: 54% identified as women/female, 27% as men/male, 18% as nonbinary, and 11% as transgender. Racially, 79% were White, with no other racial identity exceeding 6%. In terms of housing status, 51% were renters, 43% were homeowners, and 6% lived in public housing or used a public housing voucher. Financially, 80% reported having enough or more than enough to meet their needs, while 14% did not.

The Community Engagement working group also conducted an in-person focus group in May 2024 with residents from Cambridge Housing Authority buildings to better understand the

housing needs of LGBTQ+ individuals in public housing, as that data was not fully captured in the survey responses. The questions, developed by working group members, paralleled the public survey questions. Participants were asked to identify specific changes or improvements they believed would be most impactful to enhance the overall housing experience for the LGBTQ+ community in Cambridge. In a discussion following several rounds of questions, participants reflected on the common themes in their responses.

Working group members also reviewed application materials from several City of Cambridge housing programs, including the Inclusionary rental applicant pool, middle-income rental program, HomeBridge, down payment assistance, homeownership resale pool, and the home improvement program. Additionally, they considered the City of Boston's [guidelines](#) on the use of gender information in city programs.

Feedback was sought from City staff in the Housing Department of CDD. Additionally, the working groups explored current procedures and staff training related to LGBTQ+ awareness and inclusivity by surveying Cambridge housing providers and engaging in conversations with representatives from Homeowners Rehab, Inc., and the Cambridge Housing Authority.

Findings

The Task Force's research, complemented by the expertise of its members and supported by the survey responses, revealed several key insights into LGBTQ+-friendly housing. Overall, most survey respondents and focus group participants reported a positive experience with their housing in Cambridge regarding LGBTQ+ identity. Ninety-five percent of participants described their housing experience as neutral or positive. Additionally, most people viewed their living environments as inclusive and had not experienced discrimination based on LGBTQ+ identity. With that said, when asked about how Cambridge's housing ecosystem could be improved, respondents' answers had a couple of trends; community members mentioned a desire for a devoted LGBTQ+ space, increased affordability, and more consistent trainings for those working in housing on the unique needs of LGBTQ+ residents. These responses aligned with the conclusions of the working groups to think about overall improvements to the friendliness of the entire housing landscape.

The working groups found that fair housing laws impose significant limitations on creating LGBTQ+-dedicated housing. Providers cannot legally screen for LGBTQ+ identity and cannot legally prioritize or select residents based on this criterion. The Task Force found that The Pryde, for example, was unable to ascertain the number or percentage of LGBTQ+ residents due to Fair Housing Laws. Representatives from The Pryde conjectured that some individuals may have chosen to live there because it was an affordable, newly renovated option, not because they identified as LGBTQ+. This suggests that the way to have LGBTQ+ people choose to live in these spaces is through showing values through materials, programming, common spaces and cultivated culture. For example, the Pryde has a devoted community space, and marketing that shows that the development is friendly to members of the LGBTQ+ community. As the working groups looked at models, it became more evident that while the existence of these developments is great, the approaches to how to make a space friendly, cannot be exclusive to LGBTQ+ specific spaces.

Another takeaway from the research done on LGBTQ+ housing developments, is that there needs to be a strong sponsor in place to advance the idea and who has the capacity to source a site, secure financing and develop and operate the property. In the case of the Pryde a non-profit was founded to lead the charge for the creation of the development including fundraising, planning and coalition building. They then partnered with an experienced affordable housing developer to move the project forward. Based on this, there is not a model of a municipality leading this work that could be replicated.

Through conversations with representatives in Community Development, task force members learned about the ways in which affordable housing can be developed in Cambridge as well as the developments that are in the pipeline to be developed using City money. It was suggested that if the task force could identify specific design elements that would make housing more LGBTQ+ Friendly, the City could look into ways to encourage the integration of those elements

in new housing developments. On that point, the working group found it challenging to identify specific design features that would be LGBTQ+ friendly (other than multiple bedrooms and increased affordability which would not benefit the community exclusively). Rather, the task force focused on interventions that could be applied to both affordable and market-rate housing and to both existing and new developments such as public art, trainings and improvements to materials.

In researching other models of LGBTQ+ housing, as well as community feedback, the Task Force found that while there are not specific design elements that make an apartment specifically friendly to members of the LGBTQ+ community, there are ways to make housing in Cambridge across the board more friendly. The Task Force used existing models, the results of outreach, and the investigation of the City's housing processes to make recommendations across the housing ecosystem, with a vision that housing applications, processes, affordable and market-rate housing and physical spaces represent the City's commitment to being LGBTQ+ friendly.

In the review of the City's affordable housing applications and materials, concerns about the inclusivity of current housing application processes were highlighted. The Task Force found that asking for gender data can pose risks for vulnerable groups and may hinder participation. Survey respondents noted that forms often limit gender identity options to binary selections and that housing programs frequently require applicants to choose a "head of household" or share bedrooms, which does not reflect diverse family structures, including egalitarian households and multi-partner arrangements. The Task Force learned from other cities, such as Boston, ways to address this that have informed recommendations below. The Task Force found that through increasing clarity, updating terminology and better aligning application questions/options with the gender and relationship diversity of the City's residents, the City could better represent its commitment to making its own housing programs LGBTQ+ friendly.

Task Force found that LGBTQ+ inclusivity is inconsistently addressed by Cambridge housing providers. While some offer LGBTQ+ training for staff, it is not uniform. The 2016 GLBT Commission report indicated that 62.5% of CHA staff desired training on the aging needs of LGBT seniors. Some focus group participants, all residents of Cambridge public housing, reported that they did not know how to find resources for addressing harassment or discrimination, and that staff sometimes lacked familiarity or sensitivity towards LGBTQ+ issues. However, providers interviewed by Task Force members expressed a willingness to adjust their practices to better support LGBTQ+ individuals. Task Force members themselves also commented on the power of representation both in physical spaces as well as programming as a way for spaces to show that they are LGBTQ+ friendly. This suggests that training as well as representation and celebration of LGBTQ+ identities would make housing spaces- both affordable and not- more friendly. The group concluded that it would be within the City's scope to cultivate a set of best practices that housing providers, developers and management companies could employ to show that they are LGBTQ+ friendly.

While no specific architectural models or design elements were found to make structures inherently LGBTQ+-friendly, several features can enhance the inclusivity of common spaces in

all housing. These include photographs representing diverse LGBTQ+ identities, gender-neutral bathrooms, art reflecting LGBTQ+ history, and rainbow flags.

The Task Force also noted that in the absence of a distinct gay neighborhood in Cambridge, there was a want for a communal space. The importance of communal spaces was underscored by the research. All other models of LGBTQ+ housing that were examined included such spaces, and their value was confirmed through both the survey and focus group. In the survey, "Community spaces designed for LGBTQ+ events and gatherings" was the second-most popular suggestion for improving the housing experience, after affordability measures. Respondents expressed a desire for LGBTQ+-related events, programming, small businesses, and an LGBTQ+ community center. Both survey respondents and focus group participants emphasized a need for spaces to gather, access resources, and connect with the LGBTQ+ community.

Finally, many features that the group found to support LGBTQ+ needs, also benefit non-LGBTQ+ individuals and families. In survey responses, the most frequently cited need was affordability to make Cambridge a viable option for long-term residence. It was also found that housing models with multiple-bedroom apartments not only support all families with children, but also polyamorous families, chosen families, committed platonic relationships and intentional communities. Continuing to invest in high quality, multi-bedroom affordable housing options with benefit families of all identities.

In conclusion, the Task Force found that the City should focus on making aspects across the housing spectrum to be more friendly. The Task Force's recommendations represent areas of improvement from the applications, training, physical spaces, current and future housing spaces and availability of housing broadly.

Recommendations

The Task Force recommends the following measures to make housing in Cambridge more LGBTQ+ friendly.

1. Create an LGBTQ+ Community Space in Cambridge

Establish a city-wide LGBTQ+ community space within one of the planned housing developments. This space would function as a central hub for resources and events. Resources would include information on commissions and city services, health and wellness, housing opportunities, and avenues for sharing information regarding how to address discrimination. It could also be used for LGBTQ+ cultural and social events such as clothing swaps, [SAGE Table](#) intergenerational meals, and celebrations.

To ensure effective programming and development of this space, the Task Force suggests that the City explore partnerships with an existing LGBTQ+ serving organization with a presence in Cambridge or the Greater Boston area.

2. Develop and administer a City of Cambridge LGBTQ+ Friendly Housing Accreditation

LGBTQ+ Friendly Housing Accreditation would include requirements for affordable and market-rate housing providers and property managers to meet certain standards for staff training, gender-inclusive and relationship-inclusive applications, gender neutral bathrooms, LGBTQ+-welcoming programming, and visibility. The City would curate and disseminate best practices, offer trainings, develop accreditation criteria and implement a process for providers and managements to obtain and maintain accreditation.

For the City and its residents, accreditation would support consistency and accountability to LGBTQ+ friendly housing goals. This program could become the first of its kind at the municipal level, offering Cambridge the chance to develop a rigorous and effective model that could be tested locally and shared nationally.

3. Develop guidelines for future city funded housing developments to be more welcoming

Guidelines would include implementing features such as gender-neutral bathrooms, display rainbow flags, and decorate with images of LGBTQ+ and racially diverse families to increase inclusivity. Encourage housing providers to host LGBTQ+-related activities and events. Additionally, provide LGBTQ+-inclusive materials—such as Pride month packages with rainbow flags and brochures from the LGBTQ+ Commission—to all housing providers.

4. Increase LGBTQ+ visibility through public art

Choose an affordable property from the City's development pipeline to host a public art installation celebrating LGBTQ+ history and culture. Partner with the Arts Commission and the LGBTQ+ Commission to select and fund an LGBTQ+ artist to create a compelling and meaningful installation.

5. Adopt measures to increase inclusivity of gender and relationship diversity in all housing programs

Revise city funded housing program applications and materials to enhance clarity and inclusivity, using the City of Boston's [gender-aware guidelines and standards](#) as a starting point. Measures would include the following: Request gender information only when necessary. Avoid limiting gender identity to binary male/female options; instead, allow individuals to self-identify their gender. Unless required by law, regulation, or other non-local funding source, do not restrict self-identification to what is specified on government documents. If documentation is needed, clearly specify the type required and provide a clear explanation of the intended use of any gender information collected. Update terminology to better reflect relationship diversity and employ language that clearly conveys the purpose of the question. See Appendix A for specific measures.

6. Consider a specific study around homelessness and LGBTQ+ identity

Because the needs and experiences of unhoused people are multiple and complex, the Task Force decided not to incorporate this population into our study. Consider a specific study around the needs and experience of unhoused members of the LGBTQ+ community in Cambridge.

7. Continue to prioritize affordable housing that meets the needs of diverse family and relationship configurations

Along with many communities, the LGBTQ+ community has expressed a strong need for more affordable housing in Cambridge. Furthermore, investing in living spaces with more bedrooms will serve people with diverse relationship statuses and family structures.

8. Identify and direct appropriate city departments to implement recommendations

Ensure there is staff capacity and resources to develop budgets and workplans to achieve these recommendations.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Specific Measures to increase gender inclusivity and relationship diversity in all housing programs

Gender Inclusivity

- The City of Boston has an excellent set of [guidelines](#) related to the use of gender information in city programs, which are suggested reading for context for the recommendations in this section.
- Only collect gender information when necessary. If it is not necessary to collect, but there is a desire to collect it to improve city programs, make the provision of this information optional.
 - Collecting gender information can increase risks for vulnerable groups and create barriers to participation.
- On each form that requires or requests gender information, clearly describe what this information will be used for.
 - For example, “The gender identities of all household members must be provided to meet federal government requirements. The federal government uses this information [for some purpose].”
- Unless explicitly required by a law or regulation, don't restrict a person's self-identification to what is on government documents. Clearly specify whether and what type of documentation is required.
 - For example, “The gender identities of all household members must be provided to meet federal government requirements. Gender identity is self-identified and does not need to match a household member's gender as specified on government IDs or other documents.”
- Do not restrict gender identity to binary male/female options and provide an option for individuals to self-specify a gender identity.
 - The City of Boston's [guidelines](#) provide example language for collection of gender information that may be a good starting point.
- For housing programs with language that only references binary gender categories, change this language if possible, and otherwise clearly specify how the program works for people of other genders.
 - Replace “opposite gender” with, for example, “different gender” to acknowledge the existence of more than two genders and clarify how program rules apply to nonbinary applicants.

Inclusivity of Diverse Relationship Structures

- Use “head of household” terminology only when required.
 - If possible “head of household” should be replaced with terminology that more clearly specifies what is meant. For example, if “head of household” is intended to designate the City's primary contact for the application, ask the applicant to designate someone to be the City's primary point of contact for the application rather than to designate a “head of household”.
- If/when “head of household” terminology is required, explain in the application why this information is collected and what it is used for. Let households know what options they have when choosing to designate a household member as “head of household.”
 - For example, “The federal government requires us to collect information about the ‘head of household’ for each household applying for this program. You may

choose any member of your household over the age of 18 to designate as 'head of household.' The federal government uses this information [for some purpose].

- When describing who is eligible for a housing program, state explicitly that household members do not need to be legally related.
- Ask for information about the relationships between household members only when required.
 - Like collecting gender information, collecting relationship information can increase risks for vulnerable groups and create barriers to participation.
- If/when information about the relationships between household members is required, state explicitly what the information will be used for.
 - For example, "Please indicate which, if any, members of your household are married to each other. The federal government requires people who are married to be allocated a single bedroom, while adults who are unmarried are allocated separate bedrooms."
- Share information up-front about how partnerships with more than two people are handled.
 - For example, "Couples are expected to share a bedroom. For polyamorous partnerships with more than two people, the household residents in each partnership are expected to share a bedroom up to a maximum of two adults per room."

Appendix B: Task Force Posting

Cambridge City Manager Yi-An Huang Seeks Volunteers For New LGBTQ+-Friendly Housing Task Force.

Cambridge City Manager Yi-An Huang is seeking volunteers to serve on a new LGBTQ+-Friendly Housing Task Force.

Project Goals

The Task Force will consider opportunities for new or revised practices and procedures to improve LGBTQ+ persons' access to, and inclusion in, existing housing. The Task Force will also evaluate possibilities for new housing to be more LGBTQ+-friendly. The Task Force will issue a final report with concrete recommendations and action plans for ensuring LGBTQ+ housing access, safety, and inclusivity in Cambridge.

Who Should Apply?

Applicants are sought from various backgrounds and stakeholder groups, including, but not limited to:

- Affordable housing providers,
- Private real estate developers,
- Individuals who have worked on LGBTQ+-friendly housing efforts in other municipalities,
- Residents with lived experience as members of the LGBTQ+ community familiar with or searching for inclusive housing, and
- Residents with experience related to and/or regarding housing inequity who seek to participate in developing LGBTQ+ inclusive housing opportunities.

The City of Cambridge is committed to advancing a culture of antiracism, diversity, equity, and inclusion. Members of the LGBTQ+-Friendly Housing Task Force will represent a diverse cross-section of the community and must have the ability to work and interact effectively with individuals and groups with a variety of identities, cultures, backgrounds, and ideologies. Members of the LGBTQ+ community, women, minorities, and persons with disabilities are strongly encouraged to apply.

What are the Membership/Meeting Expectations?

The Task Force is anticipated to be approximately 15 members, with two co-chairs appointed by the City Manager. The full Task Force will meet eight to ten times between March 2023 and January 2024. Smaller working groups may investigate specific topics and report back to the full

Task Force. Working groups are anticipated to meet more frequently. Meetings of the full Task Force will be open to the public.

How to Apply

If you are interested in being considered for the LGBTQ+-Friendly Housing Task Force, please apply online at www.cambridgema.gov/apply. Paper applications are available in the City Manager's Office at Cambridge City Hall, 795 Massachusetts Avenue. When applying, please submit:

- Cover letter or brief statement of interest, and
- Résumé or summary of relevant experience.

The application deadline is Monday, February 6, 2023.

Please contact Jennifer Mathews, LGBTQ+ Commission Executive Director, at jmathews@cambridgema.gov or 617-349-3355, or Maura Pensak, Housing Liaison, at mpensak@cambridgema.gov or 617-349-6337, with any questions about the LGBTQ+-Friendly Housing Task Force or application process.

Appendix C: Survey Questions and Results

City of Cambridge

LGBTQ+ Friendly Housing Task Force (“LGBTQ+ Task Force”)

A Community Survey

Introduction

Thank you for participating in our survey. The LGBTQ+-Friendly Housing Task Force (“LGBTQ+ Task Force”) is seeking information from LGBTQ+ community members regarding housing in Cambridge. The primary mission of the LGBTQ+ Task Force is to develop recommendations to the City Manager in an advisory capacity for the establishment of policies, procedures, and practices that result in LGBTQ+-friendly housing and LGBTQ+ friendly spaces in the City of Cambridge.

The purpose of this survey is to hear from community members about their experiences and their ideas and hopes for LGBTQ+ friendly housing and spaces in Cambridge. This survey is open to any LGBTQ+ person who has lived in Cambridge or currently lives in Cambridge. Survey responses are anonymous. The survey results will be used to inform the recommendations provided by the LGBTQ+ Task Force.

Definitions

- **LGBTQ+** - an acronym that stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer or Questioning, with the plus sign (+) representing a broader, inclusive umbrella term for various sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions that may not be explicitly covered by the initial letters.
- **Sexual Orientation** - An inherent or immutable enduring emotional, romantic or sexual attraction to other people. Note: an individual’s sexual orientation is independent of their gender identity.
- **Gender Identity** - One's innermost concept of self as male, female, a blend of both or neither – how individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves. One's gender identity can be the same or different from their sex assigned at birth.
- **Discrimination** - a policy or practice that by design or effect segregates, creates unequal status, separates or has a disproportionate impact based on a protected class.

Demographics/Anonymity

Only the LGBTQ+ Task Force and City staff will have access to individual survey responses. The LGBTQ+ Task Force and City staff will use the responses to produce a summary of themes. Individual responses will be anonymous.

Demographics (or About You)

4. Do you live in Cambridge?
 - a. Yes, currently
 - b. I have in the past
 - c. I would like to in the future
 - d. None of the above
5. For current residents, how long have you lived in Cambridge?
 - e. Less than 3 years
 - f. 3-10 years
 - g. 10 - 20 years
 - h. More than 20 years
6. Do you identify as LGBTQ+?
 - i. Yes
 - j. No
 - k. Unsure
 - l. Choose not to disclose
7. What is your age?
 - m. Under 18
 - n. 18 - 30
 - o. 30 - 55
 - p. 56 - 70
 - q. 71+
8. What is your gender or gender identity? (Choose all that apply) **[multiple response option]**
 - r. Female/woman
 - s. Male/man
 - t. Non-binary/gender non-conforming (Gender is not exclusively female or male and/or does not fit into one gender category)
 - u. Transgender (Sex assigned at birth is different than gender [Not cisgender])
 - v. Cisgender (Sex assigned at birth is the same as gender [Not transgender])
 - w. Questioning
 - x. Other, please specify **[open response]**
 - y. Choose not to disclose
9. What is your race (Choose all that apply) **[multiple response option]**

- z. White
 - aa. Black/African American
 - bb. American Indian and Alaska Native
 - cc. Asian
 - dd. Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander
 - ee. Two or more races
 - ff. Other, please specify [open response]**
 - gg. Choose not to disclose
10. What is your general financial situation?
- hh. Enough to meet my needs
 - ii. Not enough to meet my needs
 - jj. More than enough to meet my needs
 - kk. Choose to not disclose
11. Do you rent or own your home/condo/apartment?
- ll. Rent
 - mm. Own
 - nn. Other, please specify [open response]**
 - oo. Choose not to disclose
12. Do you live in public housing or use a housing voucher?
- pp. Yes
 - qq. No
 - rr. Choose not to disclose

Questions

Housing Experience

13. How would you rate your overall housing experience in Cambridge, MA as an LGBTQ+ individual?
- ss. Very Positive
 - tt. Positive
 - uu. Neutral
 - vv. Negative
 - ww. Very Negative
14. How would you rate the inclusivity of your neighborhood/community for LGBTQ+ individuals?
- xx. Very Inclusive
 - yy. Inclusive
 - zz. Neutral
 - aaa. Exclusive
 - bbb. Very Exclusive
15. How would you rate the inclusivity in your building for LGBTQ+ individuals?
- a. Very Inclusive

- b. Inclusive
- c. Neutral
- d. Exclusive
- e. Very Exclusive

5. Have you ever felt discriminated against or faced bias in your housing search or living situation in Cambridge, MA due to your LGBTQ+ identity?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Not sure
- d. If yes, please describe the incident(s) briefly **[open response]**

16. Have you ever encountered safety concerns or harassment in your neighborhood due to your LGBTQ+ identity?

- ccc. Yes
- ddd. No
- eee. Not sure
- fff. If yes, please describe the incident(s) briefly **[open response]**

Housing Aspirations

17. What specific changes or improvements would you like to see in housing rules or policies in Cambridge, MA to support LGBTQ+ individuals better? **[Open ended response]**

18. What is the single most important change that Cambridge can make to support LGBTQ+-friendly housing and spaces? **[Open ended response]**

19. Which of these specific changes, improvements, initiatives or programs do you believe would be most impactful to enhance the overall housing experience for the LGBTQ+ community in Cambridge, MA?

[Choose your top 4 ideas from this list]

- Developing affordable housing initiatives
- Supporting mentorship programs connecting experienced LGBTQ+ homeowners with potential buyers
- Collaborating with LGBTQ+ organizations to create outreach programs for housing resources
- Implementing inclusive language in housing advertisements and documentation
- Providing sensitivity training for housing professionals on LGBTQ+ cultural competency
- Promoting the city's reporting mechanism for discrimination, ensuring swift and appropriate action
- Community spaces designed for LGBTQ+ events and gatherings
- LGBTQ+ cultural and historical displays within residential areas
- Regular educational workshops on LGBTQ+ issues and allyship for community members

- Establishing a centralized LGBTQ+ housing support center to address unique challenges and provide resources
- Implementing affirmative measures to promote LGBTQ+ representation in housing agencies and decision-making bodies

Comment: (comment box)

Resources

1. Were there any groups, agencies, or City departments that assisted you in navigating housing challenges in Cambridge, MA?

[open response]

20. Did you feel these groups, agencies, or City departments were LGBTQ+-friendly?

[open response]

21. Is there anything else you would like to add about LGBTQ+-friendly housing and LGBTQ+-friendly spaces in the City of Cambridge?

[open response]

Closing statement

Thank you for taking the time to take this survey!

Appendix D: Focus Group Facilitator Guide

LGBTQ+ Housing Task Force Focus Group Listening Sessions Facilitator Guide

Welcome/Introduction: (10 min)

Facilitator: Welcome everyone! Thank you for taking the time today to attend this listening session. Our conversation will focus on the LGBTQ+-Friendly Housing in Cambridge.

The purpose of our time together is to seek information from LGBTQ+ community members regarding housing in Cambridge. The primary mission of the LGBTQ+-Friendly Task Force is to develop recommendations to the City Manager in an advisory capacity for the establishment of policies, procedures, and practices that result in LGBTQ+-friendly housing and LGBTQ+ friendly spaces in the City of Cambridge.

The purpose of this focus group is to hear from community members about their experiences and their ideas and hopes for LGBTQ+ friendly housing and spaces in Cambridge. We have asked that you participate because you have indicated that you are a member of the LGBTQ+ community who has lived in Cambridge or currently lives in Cambridge.

The notes from this conversation will be used to inform the recommendations provided by the LGBTQ+ Task Force. The identity of participants will be anonymous.

We want to let you know this session will be recorded so that we can be sure we are accurately capturing the themes and suggestions shared to form recommendations to the City Manager. The recording will be audio only and not be publicly available. In a moment, I will read a statement and then ask you all to verbally agree. If you are not comfortable being recorded, please log off now/ leave the session and email Carolina (who is one of the co-chairs of the Task Force) to set up another time to give feedback.

As a participant in this conversation, you are providing consent to the City of Cambridge to use the recording in accordance with its mission. If you understand and agree to this, please say "I agree".

Group Agreements: (3 min)

Task Force Member: Review group agreements.

- The facilitator will guide the process but not participate in the content. Everyone else is an equal participant.
- We're here to learn and grow.
- Share airtime.
- Practice generous listening.
- One person speaks at a time.
- Share from your own experience.
- It's OK to pass.

Ask what questions there are or if anyone wants to add to our list. Ask the group to give agreement to follow these guidelines.

Opening:

Task Force Member: Introduce opening question.

Name and why you decided to participate.

Question One:

Which specific changes or improvements do you believe would be most impactful to enhance the overall housing experience for the LGBTQ+ community in Cambridge, MA?

Question Two:

What is the single most important change that the city could make to improve *your experience* of housing and space as an LGBTQ+ person in Cambridge?

Open Discussion:

Invite people to take a minute to reflect on what they heard and jot down questions they might have for each other.

“Let’s start with any questions of genuine curiosity you have for others about what you’ve heard from them. This is an opportunity to learn more about what your neighbors are thinking rather than share with them what you are thinking. I’d like to ask you to start with questions and curiosity about what others said. Then we will discuss these ideas further.”

Common Themes (if time):

The facilitator invites the group to summarize the themes they heard...

“Now that we’ve had this conversation, what are some common themes you heard?”

Write down the top 5.

If there is time, ask the group to prioritize or rank people’s favorite suggestions.

Closing and Next Steps: (5 min)

Facilitator: Thank you everyone for participating. If you have any questions, email calmonte@cambridgema.gov

