



2025 VISION

Waco Pride Network commits itself to pursuing a Waco with:

- Physical Spaces that are committed to the use of the LGBTQ+ community
- Safe Spaces that are readily available and easily identifiable
- Resources that are identified as accessible and safe
- Regular community engagement through events and a thriving digital community
- The greater Waco community acknowledging the issues faced by the LGBTQ+ community
- An LGBTQ+ community that feels supported by the Waco community, at large

TO THE COMMUNITY

Thank you

Thank you to everyone who participated whether through social media, completing the survey, or joining us at the public meeting. Your input is invaluable to us. When we sat down to look at the responses we received, we decided to focus on the words people were using. The graphic to the right is a word cloud from those responses.

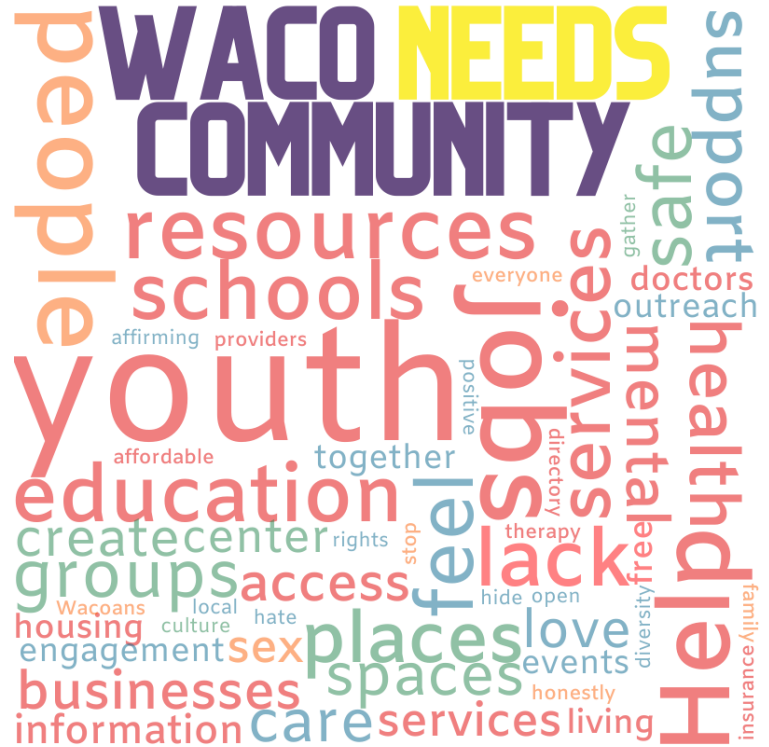
Three words immediately jumped off the page: Waco needs community. Suddenly all the needs, fears, and dreams that had been expressed centered themselves around that message. Waco needs community. Waco needs community space. Waco needs community resources. Waco needs community support.

We had originally asked for your feedback on a collection of issues: education, healthcare, financial stability, community engagement, etc. This new focus, however, seems to transcend these groupings. It isn't that people need **healthcare** resources, it's that people need resources, period.

As a result our thinking has changed. The following document lays out a community vision for the next five years grouped into three categories: spaces, resources, and support. In our survey we asked people to organize their thoughts around what they saw lacking in Waco (the need), what they wanted to see change about Waco (the vision), what they thought Waco Pride Network could do (the work), and what they thought the greater Waco community could do (what you can do). We have organized the categories along those lines as well. Where possible we have used the words of the community.

We appreciate any time you can give this document as well as any feedback on what this vision says or how we pursue it.

We look forward to the next five years and we hope you do too,



The Waco Pride Network Board and Volunteers



WACO NEEDS COMMUNITY...SPACES

"We need places to be together."



THE NEED

"There aren't enough safe spaces (both literally and figuratively) for youth to congregate and be heard"

"I don't feel there are enough free or easy [to] access places for youth to engage in real talk."

"No official space for the community to meet up."

We lack both committed spaces (those reserved for the explicit use of the LGBTQ+ community) and identified safe space (where LGBTQ+ people are welcomed and affirmed in an open and inviting way).

THE VISION

"Build a safe and welcoming Community area"

"I would love it if there was an LGBT rec center!"

"More hangout spaces, especially family friendly places that don't require you [to] be 21+ and drinking."

In five years, Waco will have physical spaces that are committed to the use of the LGBTQ+ community and safe spaces that are readily available and easily identifiable.

THE WORK

"Identifying places in the community that would lend meeting rooms or safe spaces."

"Develop a plan for a rec/info center"

"It would be great if affirming places had a sticker or some kind of notification that it is an inclusive and safe space."

Waco Pride Network will work towards:

- Developing an LGBTQ+ community center in Waco
- Producing a way for local businesses and other spaces to identify themselves as safe and communicate about these safe spaces to make sure the community is aware of them

WACO NEEDS COMMUNITY...RESOURCES

"I'd love to see us get a Resource Center for the LGBTQ Community with all forms of Local resources"

THE VISION

"Develop new resources in partnership with other organizations to help guide our youths."

"At least some queer education in school because I had to learn everything on my own"

"I would love it if all the Waco area schools had GSA groups."

"Perhaps a free or nonprofit group of mental health workers and counselors that could be available for kids to meet with or call anonymously."

"Create a partnership with clinics to provide the essential services to our community"

"I would like to see more inclusive doctors speaking up and being outwardly supportive of the community and the unique needs."

"Increase visibility for providers willing to help with the above issues. Targeted emails or posts."

"Increased mental health services, mental health inpatient care to expand services for Wacoans, expansion of services for those without insurance and who cannot qualify for the Family Health Center"

"Hire a Queer!" campaign"

"Increased living wage employers in Waco and increased access to affordable housing"

"An LGBT directory to include gay-friendly/gay-owned businesses(sic)."

In five years, there will be identified resources in Waco that are accessible, and safe for the LGBTQ+, specifically resources focused on youth, trans healthcare, mental healthcare, and jobs.



WACO NEEDS COMMUNITY...RESOURCES

"I'd love to see us get a Resource Center for the LGBTQ Community with all forms of Local resources"

THE WORK

"Foster the Youth Council in setting up GSA's and educational resources, possibly online blogs or assembly speeches at schools or queer youth engagement events"

"Continue to create resources for the community and outreach."

"We need to get the city to work more with our community. Financially and supportive"

"Contacting doctors and having real conversations about how to best disperse information regarding LGBTQ+ care."

"Make an outreach board that can be in contact with the city offices and medical providers to help change the culture into being more positive."

"Advocacy and education on importance of providing living wage jobs and equity when it comes to access to jobs and housing for all Wacoans."

"Help gather the information and have a page that lists the companies that are LGBTQ+ positive, meh, and hostile. This way not only will we know who to apply to for jobs but who to take our business to."

"Help LGBTQ+ business owners get in touch with the city for any city loans and give the community a list of businesses that are community hubs."

Waco Pride Network will work towards:

- Continuing to support LGBTQ+ youth in finding their own voice and amplifying their self-advocacy through Youth Council
- Developing a listing of safe resources by asking for community recommendations, directly contacting resource providers, and advocating to resource providers on behalf of the community
- Gathering information from the community regarding the most pressing resource gaps
- Creating a "resource" hub through our physical presence at a community center and our digital presence online to help bridge any identified resource gaps
- Highlighting employers that are safe, identifying employers that are not safe, and advocating to employers on how they could be more affirming for their LGBTQ+ employees and customers



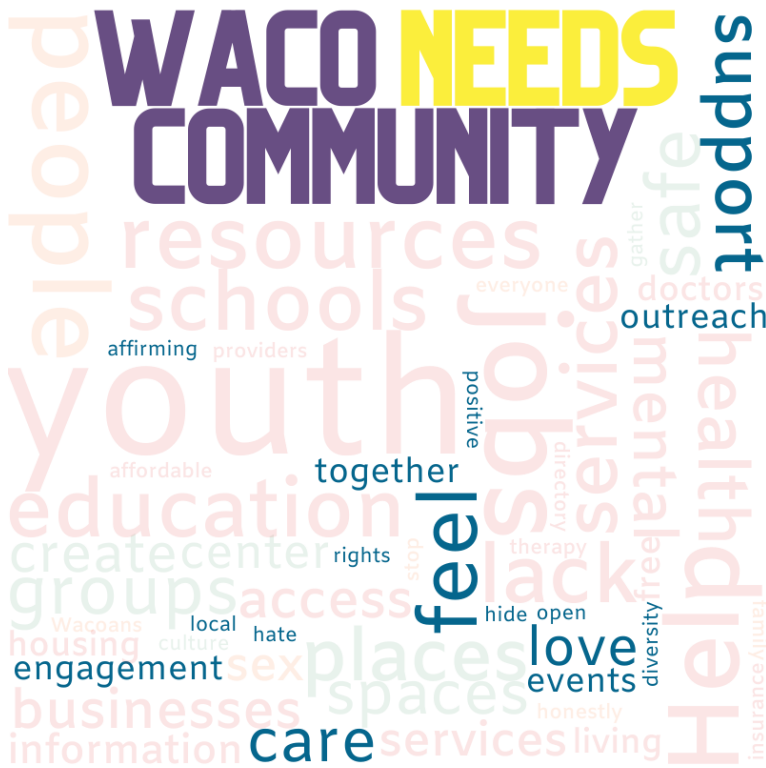
COMMUNITY RESOURCES

GET THE RESOURCES YOU NEED

WACO NEEDS COMMUNITY...SUPPORT

"There's still the stigma"

"Not having a firm connection to the LGBTQ+ community in Waco."



THE NEED

"Many youth feel isolated and have fears and apprehension about coming out."

"There's still the stigma, which in turn can and does lead to bullying and being left out. I haven't noticed it as much here as in the TX Panhandle, but it's there. Kids are worried about being seen as "different", especially when school is their only real safe haven. Quite a few have problems at home."

"More LGBTQ Support on locally owned businesses."

"I know that you can be fired, or not hired because they love who they love."

"Lack of queer exposure"

"Waco needs to be safer for all to interact as they wish."

"Waco does not empower our community"

"I got bullied in school, as I'm sure almost everyone has. Queer people are killed every day, and a lot take their own lives because they don't 'fit in.'"

"Waco is still a fractured community"

"There is not enough diversity when it comes to civic engagement in our community."

"Lack of diversity in leadership positions"

"LGBT adults do not know where/how to connect with others"

"It is extremely hard to meet other LGBT persons in Waco."

"COVID-19 makes it difficult to gather and build community"

The need here is deeply felt. Our community feels disconnected both from itself and the greater Waco community. This disconnect has only gotten worse with the onset of COVID-19. We do not see ourselves in business, community, or civic leadership. We do not feel that Waco is for us.

WACO NEEDS COMMUNITY...SUPPORT

"There's still the stigma"

"Not having a firm connection to the LGBTQ+ community in Waco."



THE VISION

"I would like to see more acceptance for the LGBTQ community in our local schools(sic) environments."

"I would like for this to be talked about like straight couples. We need sex education to be discussed and we need straight kids to know that it's okay to be queer."

"Acceptance from family and community and not just acting like it's accepted when deep down these groups still feel it's wrong or can be changed."

"More LGBTQ Owned Businesses"

"more queer community presence so there are no more comments like 'Waco has an LGBT community? really?'"

"city of waco to come out and show it's support first hand and actually do something"

"I would like to see ALL of Waco represented when it comes to civic engagement. I would like more diverse applicants when it comes to local elections"

"I would love to see active and regular groups or meet ups where people can feel safe and supported by the community."

"More interaction with youth so they have the support they need."

"Increased fairs and outdoor gatherings/events, increased community engagement and involvement in businesses"

In five years, Waco will have a thriving connected LGBTQ+ community where community engagement occurs regularly. LGBTQ+ folx will feel supported by the greater Waco community and believe that its issues are dealt with seriously by local institutions.

WACO NEEDS COMMUNITY...SUPPORT

"There's still the stigma"

"Not having a firm connection to the LGBTQ+ community in Waco."

THE WORK

"Create community functions encouraging youth to come and interact with other youth."

"more community outreach events/opportunities"

"Collaborate, grow, and engage a variety of entities."

"Continue to host events like Out on the Brazos and/or community events to increase awareness of needs for the LGBTQ+ community."

"We need to lift each other up instead of tear each other down."

"Asking nominees about their stance on LGBTQ+ issues"

"Increase understanding of open positions and how to go about voting/education on the issues."

Waco Pride Network will work towards:

- Continuing to host the OUT on the Brazos Pride Festival each year
- Hosting additional gatherings/events throughout the year
- Developing a digital community
- Encouraging and developing focused support groups and networks within the community, and communicating about these networks
- Creating "support and meeting" spaces in our community center
- Engaging with business, community and civic leaders regarding LGBTQ+ issues
- Advocating for the LGBTQ+ community on an issues basis



THE COMMUNITY'S CENTER

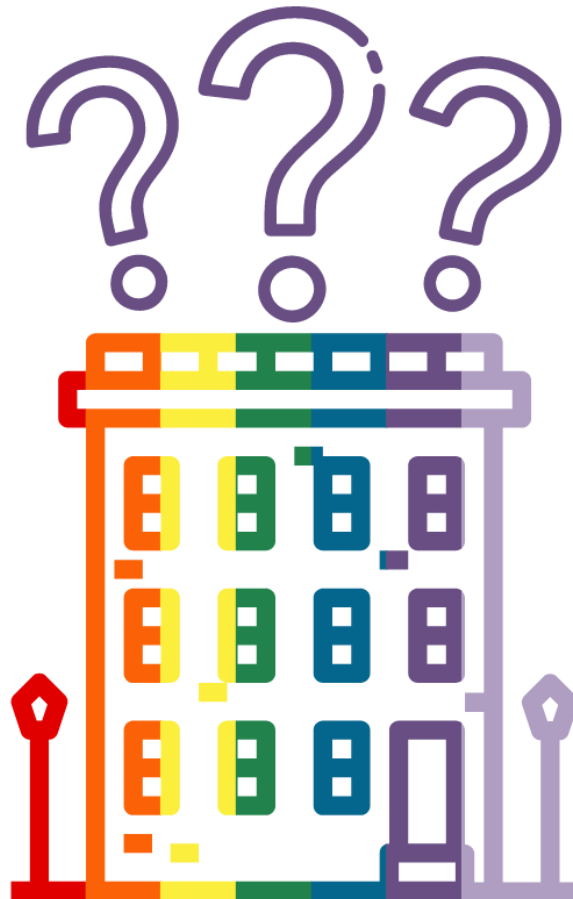
A Place FOR Us - in person and online

In working through this process, we noted that there was one goal that we seemed to encounter in every topic. The community needs places to come together, a center. A place on the map where members of the community know they can go, be welcomed, find support, and access resources with an active community online to match.

We believe that given the critical nature of this need it should be Waco Pride Network's first and top priority in the coming years. In some ways, we see all other goals as dependent upon this one.

This will be a **BIG** lift and we will need a lot of community support in this effort. We will be looking to the community for additional input on what the uses and features of such a center would be and we will need help in developing a plan and funding for such a center.

We believe this is a goal our community can accomplish and we are enlivened by the challenge it's pursuit presents.



What can YOU do?

"Come together and help develop resources to provide a healthy Community for our youths."

"Make our presence more known to help erase the stigma and hidden thought of Waco's queer community"

"[The Greater Waco community] should educate their kids about queer culture."

"The greater Waco community desperately needs to educate non-queer groups on why there is such a need to help the LGBTQI community through housing, education, social services, and compassion."

"Be more open minded."

"Donating services and/or space to create a welcoming environment that helps individuals thrive as they ARE. The kids should not have to feel they need to hide their LGBTQ+ flags or pins because they're in public in Waco."

"Join us and help build and support a Resource Center"

"Provide money... lots of money."

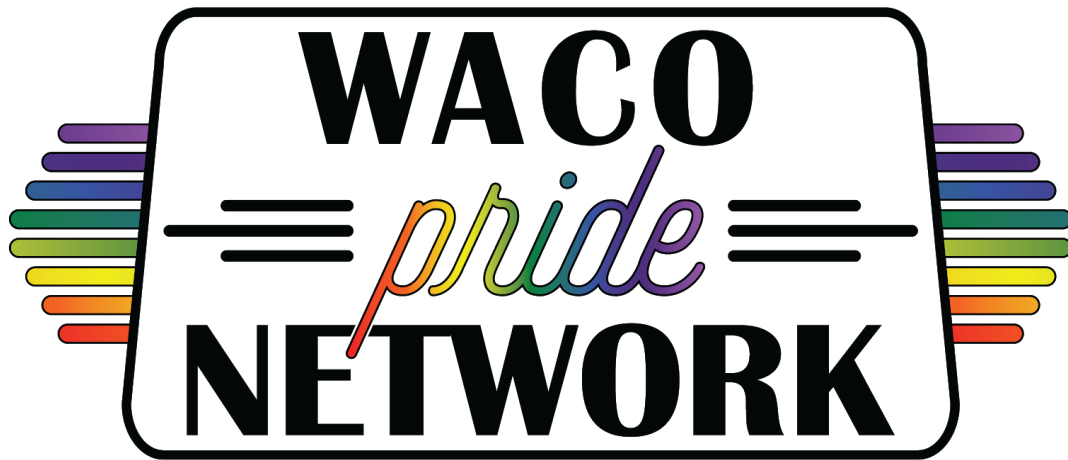
"Connect with locals and create events that are led by locals"

To Support Waco's LGBTQ+ Community:

- Keep an open mind
- Engage with the LGBTQ+ people you know
- Seek out education on LGBTQ+ culture and norms (know pronouns)
- Share what you know about LGBTQ+ culture and norms
- If you are welcoming and affirming...MAKE IT KNOWN
- If you are not welcoming and affirming consider thoughtfully why
- Hire an LGBTQ+ employee
- Serve an LGBTQ+ customer
- Fund an LGBTQ+ entrepreneur

To Support Waco Pride Network:

- Engage with us (follow us @wpridenetwork, sign up for the newsletter, check out the website, send us a message or email - board@wacopride.org)
- Volunteer your time
- Participate in our events
- Donate
- If you offer a service and are welcoming and affirming - let us know
- If you are hold an event that is welcoming and affirming - let us know
- If you have questions about what more you can do - let us know



Follow us @WPrideNetwork



www.wacopride.org

