

Edmonton

# EVENT GROWTH & ATTRACTION STRATEGY



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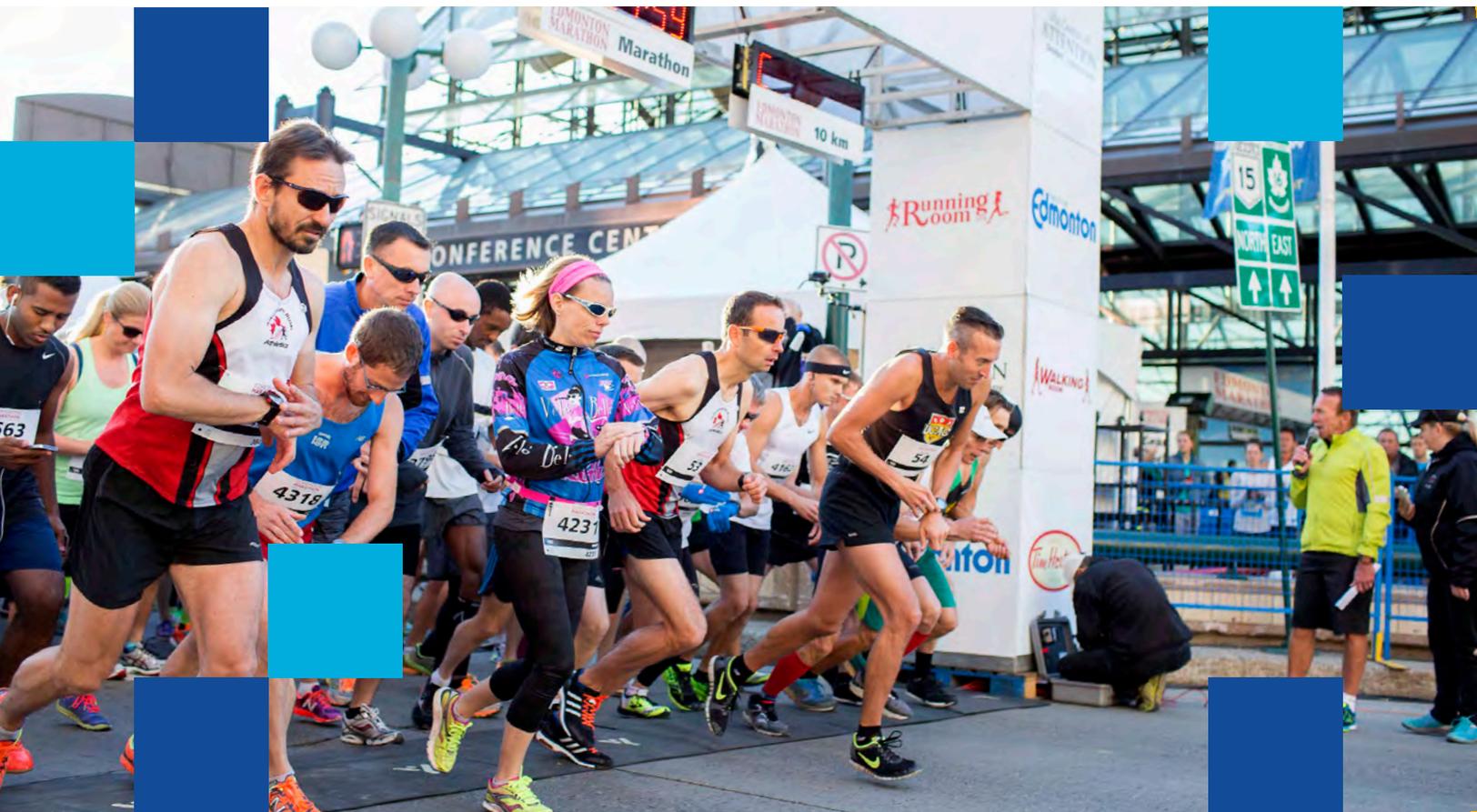
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# INTRODUCTION

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*Events are a catalyst to bring people together.*

No matter how far or near they have come, the experience of a game, a festival, or a performance can forever tie them to a city. Visitors leave with stories they will recount to their friends, family and colleagues. Residents make new connections, experience another side of their community and recognize the city as a home in which they can build a life. Events alone create this unique energy.



Meetings, conventions, conferences, festivals, sporting and cultural events, tradeshow and exhibitions are examples of the variety of events that make up the fabric of what Edmonton offers. Each of these brings different benefits to the city, its residents, businesses, institutions and visitors. The combination provides a breadth of activity that energizes Edmonton in diverse ways. Residents find new opportunities for fun or learning while visitors can establish new business connections or have unique experiences they want to write home about. Regardless of event type, they bring people together to create a new level of energy that would not otherwise exist.

Events bring new money and investment to Edmonton. Visitors that come for a festival as part of their vacation or as a delegate to a conference spend dollars in Edmonton that would otherwise not exist. A meeting or convention can connect a visitor to a unique opportunity that leads to new long-term investments in the Edmonton business community.

Events raise Edmonton's profile in markets around the world. Some have an international broadcast presence, sharing Edmonton's energy with people on other continents. Others will bring experts to the city, allowing influencers to see, first hand, some of great work Edmontonians are doing in their industry and allowing them to export these stories back to their own cities. Whether they have come for a festival or a conference, visitors leave with a new appreciation for what Edmonton is building and how they can continue to connect. Person by person, visitor by visitor, event-goers carry Edmonton's story to locations across Canada and around the world. Events are the catalyst for all of these benefits.

Events are not solely about tourism; they create unique opportunities to engage citizens. People may not know that their dream job can happen in Edmonton until they learn about it through a conference they attend, or they may not appreciate the natural beauty of the city until a performance by their favourite world-renowned artist draws them into the river valley. Events create reasons for time with family and friends, the occasion to challenge themselves in a new sport or a way to share their knowledge at a meeting with industry experts from around the world.

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# CORPORATE OUTCOME ALIGNMENT



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*Festivals and Events are an important investment in our uniquely Edmonton culture and align with Council's Strategic Plan foundational components including Vision 2050, 10 Year Principles and 10 Year Strategic Goals, as outlined below.*

## **Vision 2050**

In 2050, Edmonton's creativity and community spirit are lights to the world. Edmonton starts at the heart; our people make everything possible. We are united as communities to create livability for all, where everyone has what they need to succeed. This unique perspective gives us the ability to energize new ideas, to find solutions and craft them for our communities and the world. We get stuff done here. We plant ideas. We grow business. Together we power the most dynamic and progressive northern city. We are on a shared journey. Our collective ancestors have guided our journey and we continue to be inspired by them to learn, lead, and steward our shared place. Edmontonians see their efforts and ideals reflected back to them in a city that was built to connect. Edmonton, that single word, has come to mean a community where it makes sense to plan our future together and build the meaning of our lives. It's 2050, and Edmonton is home for present and future generations. We spark an energy seen worldwide: a light in the northern sky.

## **10-Year Principle**

### **Connected**

We create as a community to connect people to what matters to them. We care about the impact of our actions on our social, economic, cultural, spiritual and environmental systems. We serve those here today and those who come after us.

## 10-Year Strategic Goals

### Healthy City

Edmonton is a city with community and personal wellness that embodies equity for all Edmontonians.

### Urban Places

Edmonton is a city with developed vibrant urban places and accessible communities where people and businesses thrive.

### Regional Prosperity

The Edmonton Metropolitan Region (Edmonton Metro) works together to ensure vitality of the region at the global level.

### Climate Resilience

Edmonton is a city that uses sustainable energy, is energy efficient and is adapting to climate change





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# OBJECTIVES

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***Events currently play an active role in driving economic impact and visitation. The following objectives have been developed to help the city of Edmonton meet its long-term vision.***

- Generate positive economic impact in the Edmonton Metro and return on investment for businesses, organizations and residents.
- Bring energy and vibrancy to Edmonton so residents and guests enjoy experiences in the city and have multiple opportunities throughout the year to have fun.
- Ensure the world, Canada and Alberta know the diversity of knowledge, opportunity, talent, activity, fun and experiences that exist in Edmonton.
- Engage people in the opportunities, activities, economy, communities and people that exist in Edmonton so every citizen feels a connection to their city.
- Enable residents to be physically and mentally active in the city to promote better health of residents.

An investment in events supports Edmonton's growth, promotion and citizen engagement. Events support the achievement of these objectives and deliver significant benefits to broad aspects of Edmonton's economy and quality of life. The four pillars identified on the following section will act as vehicles through which Edmonton will continue to attract and grow events while strengthening its event-hosting capacity.



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# PILLARS



# PILLARS

*The objectives identified are delivered through many types of events. Each is uniquely operated, attracted or developed while appealing to a range of audiences. The benefits they offer lend to the city's diversity and provide broad experiences for residents and visitors alike.*

The four pillars that represent this stable of events are illustrated in the diagram below:



### **Sport and Cultural Events**

Spectator focused or participatory, these events provide a range of experiences to citizens of Edmonton and visitors. Professional or amateur events are bid on and may cater to a more regional audience or could connect to a broader, international one. When hosted in Edmonton these take advantage of the breadth of sporting and cultural infrastructure, both indoor and outdoor. The attraction of sporting and cultural events to the city is the responsibility of Edmonton Events, the partnership between Edmonton Tourism and the City of Edmonton. Citizens may generate the initial idea to pursue an event and Edmonton Events then provides the expertise and leadership to build a business case for events being considered. Once an event is won, its operational delivery will be supported by Citizen Services as needed.

### **Festivals and Events**

Primarily locally developed and grown, Edmonton festivals provide year-round activity in which residents can partake, experience and enjoy. These may focus on local talent or attract international stars to entertain Edmonton audiences and the city's visitors. Many venues play host to Edmonton's multiple festivals, and in some instances, open spaces, parks or squares are turned into venues for unique experiences. Funding support for festivals in Edmonton primarily resides with the Edmonton Arts Council, while support for the delivery of city services resides within Citizens Services. Edmonton Tourism may provide promotion and growth support where opportunities for Tourism exist.

### **Meetings and Conventions**

Small meetings to city-wide conferences encompass what this pillar brings to Edmonton. Focusing on attracting events related to industry sectors that have a strong presence in Edmonton allows for greater connection across various segments of the city, such as corporate industry associations, academia and health & wellness. Residents benefit from connecting their interest or expertise in a subject to attendees from around the world. Edmonton Tourism leads the work on attracting meetings and conventions to Edmonton.

### **Tradeshows and Exhibitions**

These have long been part of the events scene in Edmonton, primarily attracted and delivered by Edmonton Northlands. With the recent transfer of Expo Centre to the Edmonton Economic Development Corporation, this will now become the fourth pillar of events considered under this strategy. This portion of the Event Growth & Attraction strategy will be built out in the coming year as Expo continues to solidify its operations under the new structure.



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# HOSTING PRINCIPLES

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*These are the principles and foundations by which Edmonton bids on, attracts, hosts and grows events.*

## **Stable and Consistent Funding**

There is an established, stable and consistent funding model to support the attraction, development growth and hosting of events. This stability allows event organizers to execute in the present and plan for the future while understanding the funding criteria and related process.

## **Open and Transparent**

Edmonton is open and transparent in the events it seeks to host, who is involved, how they are financed and the objectives they are meant to achieve. This is done for three primary reasons:

- All stakeholders in the city are aware of event-related decisions so there is clarity on how events of all types are supported.
- There is clarity about how events of various types are funded. The reasons are outlined for varying funding levels so all can be aware of differences in how events are financed and benefits achieved.
- There is a clear line between events that are hosted and the overall vision of the city. People connect that overall vision to the many events, across all types, that are hosted.

## **Regional Connectedness**

Edmonton leverages and brings together the strengths of people, infrastructure, initiatives and resources of the Edmonton Metropolitan Region. This minimizes duplication of infrastructure while ensuring the whole region can benefit from hosted events. This alignment also reduces bidding conflicts that could exist across the region. There is much to be gained through the diversity of Edmonton Metro and events are a perfect opportunity to bring those assets together to best support events hosted in Edmonton.

### Safe and Inviting Environments

Safe and inviting environments for residents and visitors are provided around all events hosted in Edmonton. This is a priority both for the City as well as event hosts and rights holders. This ensures that visitors, delegates or guests can enjoy the experience of an event without concern for their safety or fear of discrimination.

### Sustainability and Environmental Stewardship

Events hosted in Edmonton aim to leverage energy-efficient buildings and practices to minimize the environmental impact of activities in the city. This ensures that events provide the best experience possible for all attendees and that the related environmental impact is minimized. This can impact the types of activities and experiences that are included and where events are hosted.

### Joint Decision-Making

The City of Edmonton and Edmonton Tourism, a division of Edmonton Economic Development Corporation (EEDC) jointly make decisions related to event attraction and leverage their financial frameworks and partnerships to make this happen.





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# EDMONTON ADVANTAGES

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***Edmonton Metropolitan Region is well situated to strengthen its position as a leading event host in all pillars.***

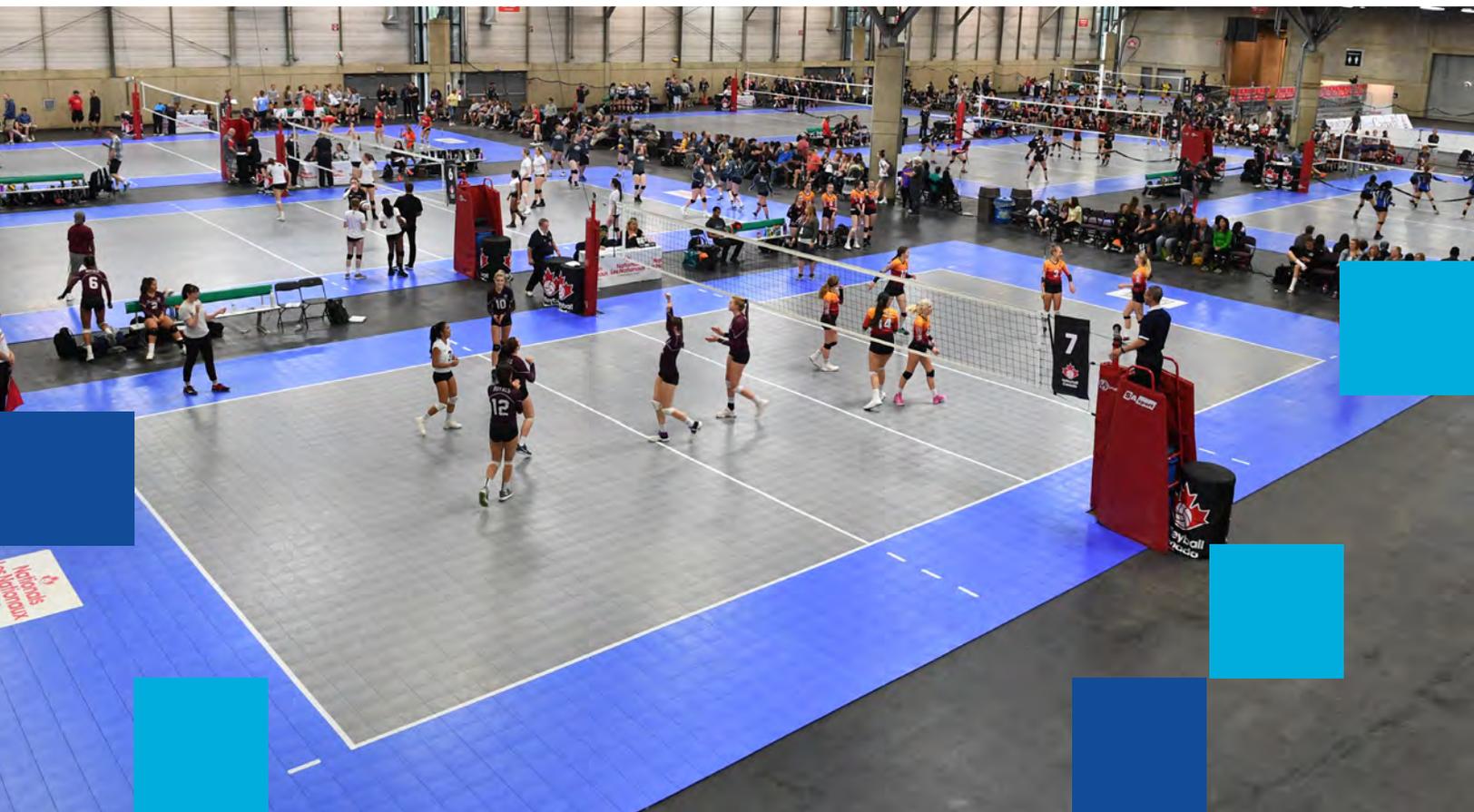
By continuing to align people, infrastructure, resources and research, Edmonton can use events to achieve the objectives outlined. Each pillar brings with it unique advantages that differentiate Edmonton and each will be outlined in their specific plan, but the following are general examples of Edmonton's strengths which create that strong position.

Edmonton is fortunate to have a broad range of infrastructure to host a variety of events across the city. Whether a conference centre is needed or a large, open-air plaza, Edmonton has a versatile listing of options. As events of all types continue to seek unique experiences and venues, it becomes more important to be flexible in how spaces are used. The river valley, parks, pedways, office buildings, lobbies or neighbourhoods now become potential event venues, better positioning Edmonton as an event host into the future.

Edmonton's breadth of people talent strongly supports event hosting. For meetings and conventions, it can mean connecting industry expertise or academic research to an event being hosted to provide delegates additional sources of new knowledge. For sporting events, technical sport expertise is invaluable to ensure an event can be planned smoothly and in-step with the needs of a rights holder. Edmonton's talented artistic community can take part in the many festivals and events hosted and create connections to artists from elsewhere that help elevate the experience provided. This broad skill base is an incredibly valuable asset in Edmonton's event hosting landscape.

Strong partnerships exist within Edmonton that support it as a great venue and host for events. The Edmonton Arts Council is a strong supporter of festivals in Edmonton while Edmonton Events brings together Edmonton Tourism and the City of Edmonton to work in tandem to bring sporting and cultural events to the city. The Meeting and Conventions team is developing connections to centres of influence able to provide value-added expertise to industry conferences held in the city. Continuing to build these partnerships, and establishing others to support all pillars, will make Edmonton a valued and differentiated host amongst other competing cities.

Relationships are crucial to the success of anything, and they play a vital role when hosting events in Edmonton. For Meetings and Conventions, strong, existing connections with meeting planners, venues and industry sectors allow there to be great value and flexibility in what can be offered to an organization looking to come to Edmonton. For Festivals, their connections with the numerous long-standing events, as well as new ones looking to grow, are a foundational reason Edmonton is known as a festival city. Sporting and cultural event attraction require strong ties to groups across the country and around the world. Edmonton Events has built strong relationships with regional, national and international sports and cultural organizations to help position the city as an ideal location in which to host events.





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# INVESTMENT

# Investment

## ***A clear, stable funding model is crucial to identify, manage, develop, grow and attract events to Edmonton.***

As more large events open bids many years out, knowing that funding, based on a viable business case, will be there to support event attraction and operation better positions Edmonton on national and international stages as a qualified and serious host. For existing events and festivals, stable funding ensures these events can grow and become drivers of activity, engagement and visitation.

A strong funding model also provides additional stability to ensure oversight of short and long-term plans that will support Edmonton's objectives through events. This oversight can provide City Council, administration and citizens confidence that the four pillars are delivering on their objectives and are benefiting the city of Edmonton.

Options to enhance the existing Destination Marketing Fee as a funding source for events that we bid on and festivals with tourism marketing potential are being explored through the Big City Charter negotiations and will include an oversight and evaluation process.

### **Notes**

The use of the word 'events' in this document implies all of festivals and events, sporting & cultural events, meetings and conventions, tradeshow and exhibitions.

The use of the word 'visitor' in this document includes leisure travelers, meeting delegates, spectators, sports event participants and other guests who visit Edmonton.



Edmonton