

BUSINESS FRIENDLY EDMONTON

RECOMMENDATION

That the April 13, 2022, Urban Planning and Economy report UPE00895, be received for information.

Report Purpose

Information only.

This report provides an overview of Administration's approach to supporting businesses.

Executive Summary

- Business Friendly Edmonton is a new initiative to support Edmontonians who are opening a new business or expanding a business.
- Business Friendly Edmonton better coordinates business retention, expansion and investment attraction work, which should make it easier for businesses to interface with the City and improve the City's responsiveness. It also incorporates a new innovation intake process.
- Business Friendly Edmonton makes a significant contribution to the City's commitment of being welcoming, available to help, and easy to work with.
- The initiative implements Action 18 of the Edmonton Economic Action Plan, enhancing how the City delivers business retention, expansion and attraction.
- The Economic Action Plan articulates high level performance measures, and metrics are being developed for each element of the Business Friendly Edmonton suite of services.

REPORT

What is Business Friendly?

The Business Friendly Edmonton initiative was developed to integrate and refocus the support that the City provides to businesses so that it is easier to start, grow and invest in Edmonton. This relationship-based initiative delivers a customer-service oriented approach to supporting businesses, and a framework of specific programs and services. This initiative has been developed to complement and enhance important work being done across the City, including the efforts described

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in the cross-referenced April 13, 2022, report UPE00910 Permit and Licensing Improvement (PLI) Initiative. More information on the background and development of Business Friendly Edmonton can be found in Attachment 1.

Focus on Customer Service

Administration has heard that businesses need to see that their municipality understands and values the experience and the complexity of opening and operating a business. This business-friendly approach encourages Administration to step into the shoes of the business owner and considers what they will need to know and do to have a positive experience with the City.

When receiving services and support from the City, businesses can expect Administration to:

- Build relationships with them;
- Communicate clearly and ensure information will be relevant;
- Act with accountability;
- Treat them with empathy, respect, honesty and support; and
- Clearly articulate businesses' and the City's responsibilities.

Help Businesses at All Stages

The City works with businesses of all sizes, from entrepreneurs to large industrial operations and corporations. This work can include providing grants for mainstreet vibrancy, the remediation of contaminated properties, site selection, infrastructure improvements, and more. By centering the business in this work, the Business Friendly Edmonton team adapts to the unique circumstances of each business and provides tailored support (Attachment 2).

Support highlights include:

- Building on the successful One-on-One Business Support Program to guide business owners in understanding the regulatory journey so they have a clear picture of requirements, timelines, best practices and costs;
- Facilitating introductions to key contacts across the corporation, such as to the Client Liaison Unit, which provides enhanced service for major development projects;
- Creating focused programming in collaboration with organizations serving communities underrepresented in entrepreneurship;
- Educating businesses about their responsibilities in the regulatory stage, and the value in hiring a professional consultant where needed for support (e.g., an engineer);
- Providing site selection support to businesses to invest or expand in Edmonton often working in partnership with Edmonton Global;
- Maintaining and developing relationships with businesses in order to support their growth, expansion, and continued reinvestment within the City (often referred to as aftercare).

Steward Innovation

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Edmonton is a leading center for innovation and ingenuity. The Business Friendly framework identifies a stream of work dedicated to supporting organizations that wish to partner with the City of Edmonton to test their innovation on a larger scale, within a municipal context. This intake process will steward innovative projects from these businesses, leading to faster decisions, increased action, and a more consistent experience for the City's external partners.

Work with Partners

As a relationship-based City, Administration recognizes that important and strategic economic development is the responsibility of many partners, including City agencies, nonprofit organizations, post-secondary institutions, regional partners and the City of Edmonton itself. Through Business Friendly Edmonton, City partners can expect:

- Administration follows the agreement undertaken between Edmonton Global and all members of the region that outlines the protocols for investment attraction, information-sharing and other economic development activities;
- Facilitating business inquiries from Business Improvement Areas, Innovate Edmonton, Health Cities, Edmonton Screen Industries Office, Explore Edmonton, and others; and
- Ongoing communication and collaboration in the continuous improvement of Business Friendly Edmonton.

Measurement

Key performance measures for Business Friendly Edmonton are established by the Economic Action Plan. Through the ongoing evaluation of the program, these measures will be revisited to ensure they are measuring what the program intends to achieve.

COMMUNITY INSIGHT

Businesses will be able to reach the Business Friendly Edmonton team and resources through edmonton.ca, 311, and introductions from across the corporation including members of Council and their offices. Relationships with external stakeholders are also key throughout this initiative. Administration will build and preserve these relationships by maintaining constant and consistent communication to determine their needs in order to support one another. In an effort to continuously improve, Administration listens to, learns from and leads with individual businesses and the associations and organizations that represent them.

GBA+

As demonstrated through the guiding principles (Attachment 1), Business Friendly Edmonton incorporates and champions principles of equity and inclusion. By using an equity lens Administration can identify underrepresented entrepreneurs, provide customized support that addresses the accessibility needs of entrepreneurs, and work to reduce barriers to municipal services, resources, and regulatory information. More information on the specific inclusive economic development activities can be found in Attachment 3.

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ATTACHMENTS

1. Business Friendly Edmonton Background
2. Business Friendly Edmonton Program Activities
3. Inclusive Economic Development