

POSITION TO FOSTER SAFE AND ACTIVATED ENVIRONMENTS

RECOMMENDATION

That the June 29, 2022, Urban Planning and Economy report UPE00976, be received for information.

Report Purpose

Information only.

Executive Committee is being informed of current resources available, and those that could be added, to foster safe and activated environments in business and entertainment areas.

Previous Council/Committee Action

At the November 30, 2021, City Council Budget meeting, the following motion was passed:

That Administration explore establishing resources to collaborate with the Business Improvement Areas, business community and event organizers to foster safe and activated environments in our business and entertainment areas, and provide a report to Committee.

Executive Summary

- ConnectEdmonton and The City Plan provide a vision for connected, accessible, diverse and vibrant urban places where Edmontonians and visitors feel included and supported. People should be able to work and visit in a safe, engaging and attractive place.
- The hospitality and entertainment industry and the Business Improvement Area Associations are proponents for the promotion of safe and activated environments for businesses, employees and patrons. This report includes input provided by both groups.
- In 2019, Administration reported on support for the night-time economy, referred to in this report as the “hospitality and entertainment industry.”
- There are various levels of support that other jurisdictions provide to the hospitality and entertainment industry. The allocation of full-time resources is a trend in large international cities to respond to the challenges and opportunities in their night-time economies.
- The pandemic has greatly impacted the hospitality and entertainment industry.

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- This report presents resources beyond current resources that could be added to support the hospitality and entertainment industry.

REPORT

Background on Night-time Economy

On June 11, 2019, Administration provided report, CR_6992, Economy of Edmonton's Night Life to Urban Planning Committee, which outlined the history of support for the night-time economy in Edmonton and the background of Responsible Hospitality Edmonton (a previous initiative that combined public safety and compliance with local economy programming). In that report, Administration detailed how the work of Responsible Hospitality Edmonton was being incorporated into an "integrated corporate approach to working with businesses and Business Improvement Areas to support economic prosperity and vibrant, thriving commercial districts and streets without creating artificial distinctions between businesses that contribute to daytime and nighttime economy."

At the time, Council accepted the existing integrated approach of utilizing existing staff resources and functions, versus adding resources such as a position like a Night Mayor (a dedicated role to support and develop late-night economy) similar to that of other large international cities with vibrant hospitality and entertainment industries.

Other Jurisdictions

Details of the work of other jurisdictions on supporting their hospitality and entertainment industries, including the creation of a Night Mayor, are included in Attachment 1. At a high level, other municipalities such as Toronto and Ottawa have strategies or action plans focused on development of the night-time economy, while others such as Vancouver and Montreal are beginning to explore this. None of the Canadian cities included in the research conducted have created a dedicated position, but some provide this capacity through other resources already in place. In larger cities, like New York City (Night Mayor) and London, UK (Night Czar), there are dedicated positions providing support.

COVID-19 and the Hospitality and Entertainment Industry

The COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting health restrictions and public perception of safety negatively impacted the hospitality and entertainment industry. Capacity limits, restricted operating and serving hours, masking, full-closure orders and other measures have strained the revenue earning ability of businesses in this industry, and led to job reductions.

In the Government of Alberta's Labour Market Notes report from April 8, 2022, the Accommodation and Food Services sector is listed as the hardest hit through job losses directly impacted by public health measures. According to the report, more than 20,000 jobs have not yet been recovered since February 2020. In addition, the Government of Alberta's Economic Spotlight 2021: Alberta Economy Year in Review report showed that tourism-related revenues reduced drastically in March 2020, and remained under pre-pandemic levels until the summer 2021, before dropping again with new health measures that followed surging pandemic case counts.

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Current Support

Administration has integrated services available to enable the prosperity of entertainment and commercial districts. A summary of the work of Administration, partners and other regulatory bodies is included in Attachment 2. Additionally, ETS provides customized special event transit service and charter services to support events and festivals of all sizes.

Administration continues to enhance its support for Edmonton's businesses. The recently approved Business Licence Bylaw 20002 (UPE00381), which came into effect on January 17, 2022, has streamlined and simplified the City's permitting, licensing and regulatory processes. Other key initiatives supporting local economic growth include:

- Business Friendly Edmonton Initiative (UPE00895)
- Permitting and Licensing Improvement Project (UPE00910)
- Continued implementation of Actions 3, 10, and 24 of the Economic Action Plan
- The Zoning Bylaw Renewal Project

Additional implementation time is required to realize the full effect of these programs and their effectiveness. A performance measurement framework for the Economic Action Plan is under development and will help to demonstrate if this work is having the intended impact.

Gaps in Current Support

Feedback from the Business Improvement Area Associations, industry and partner discussions (in Attachment 3) has indicated that there may be more that the City can do to support entertainment areas and businesses within them. Safety within districts that house entertainment and hospitality venues, especially after hours, remains a concern for businesses and event organizers. A safer environment is an enabler for attracting and retaining both patrons and events.

Feedback from the engagement indicates a need for additional support in entertainment and commercial areas across Edmonton, much like the vibrancy and safety support dedicated to the downtown area. Particularly, stakeholders would welcome resources to aid in placemaking, street activation and event planning. Other feedback has indicated that after hours on-call operational support (evening and weekends) would be beneficial to both event planners, business owners and the Business Improvement Areas.

Options for Additional Support

Council has recently approved the Community Safety and Well-being Strategy (OCM00991), which is anticipated to address many of the direct safety concerns shared by stakeholders. Given recent related Council direction and current support available to Edmonton businesses and the feedback from Business Improvement Area Associations, industry contacts, City partners and other stakeholders in the hospitality and entertainment industry, and a desire to incorporate GBA+ impacts into business support, Council may wish to consider additional actions for the development of this segment of the local economy.

Options based on stakeholder engagement:

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1. Work with relevant stakeholders to identify opportunities for streamlined regulations and policy support to advance the safety and growth of the hospitality and entertainment industry. This is consistent with Action 1 of the Economic Action Plan, which focuses on improving Edmonton's regulatory processes.
2. Provide capacity building and training for event planners and businesses with large-scale or community-focused events to be more self-sufficient in planning and delivering events. This need is also identified and explained in greater detail in the June 13, 2022 Community Services report CS00949 Festival Support and Growth. This would require more in-depth internal and external consultation to identify the specific training that would be appropriate, but it is anticipated that it would support the creation and attraction of more events that contribute both economically and culturally to the city.
3. The development of an after hours response system including routing and delegation of authority for non-emergency issues and city process resolution, and event support. This would acknowledge the unique operating hours and environment of this industry and contribute to a more predictable and responsive environment for venue operators and patrons.
4. The designation of a member of Council or other appointee/point person as a champion for the hospitality and entertainment industry. In other jurisdictions, this role has been called Night Mayor. While this may be primarily symbolic, it sends a clear signal that this segment of the local economy is important and that Council is committed to its growth and success.
5. Lead or work with partner organizations on the development of a hospitality and entertainment industry action plan. This would identify further opportunities that the City and partners could act on, the expected outcomes, and a roadmap for implementation. Explore Edmonton is a partner that Administration would look to participate in this work. The development of an action plan acknowledges the contribution of this industry to Edmonton's vibrancy and economy, and helps to set expectations for the City and partner organizations and industry in sustaining and growing it.

The changing nature of the hospitality and entertainment industry and the local economy dictates that regular engagement and communication with stakeholders will be required to ensure the needs of the industry are being properly addressed. The options described above would require further consultation and sufficient resourcing to implement. Administration would need to assess the budget impacts of each of the options. The designation of a champion on Council or other appointee/point person can also provide a channel for the industry through which to bring forward ideas, opportunities and challenges that need consideration.

COMMUNITY INSIGHT

Administration has collaborated with several internal and external partners to understand the support available to creating safe and activated environments that contribute to the vitality of the hospitality and entertainment industry. The Business Improvement Area Associations, the Edmonton Independent Hospitality Community, private businesses contributing to the local economy, and City of Edmonton subject matter experts were all included to gather a wide perspective on missing and potential resources.

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GBA+

Potential inequalities in the hospitality and entertainment industry in Alberta can be found when looking at the Alberta Accommodation and Food Services Industry Profile, 2020. It states that 57 per cent of the workforce in this industry is made up of women, and 40 per cent of staff are between 15 and 24. This leads to a larger portion of the workforce in this industry being younger females that may have inequities in their experience of safety in an industry that largely operates in the night-time hours. Using a GBA+ lens, there is an opportunity to ensure that all people working in the hospitality industry have an opportunity to feel safer during work, as well as when coming to and leaving the workplace. Additional support dedicated to this industry could help to balance real and perceived inequalities.

Administration commits to continued engagement with the Business Improvement Areas, the Edmonton Independent Hospitality Community and other public and private sector partners to help identify gaps to support under-represented groups in the hospitality and entertainment industry, staff, patrons and citizens that live in or visit hospitality areas.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Jurisdictional Scan: Night-time Support
2. Current Support for the Hospitality and Entertainment Industry
3. Proposed Resourcing Needs based on Stakeholder Feedback