

Edmonton Place Brand Strategy

Recommendation

That the April 12, 2021, Communications and Engagement report CE00235, be received for information.

Executive Summary

The Edmonton Place Brand Strategy 2021-2023 outlines eight strategies that the City will employ to deliver on the goals and objectives of Edmonton's place brand. It details the opportunities ahead, a timeline for delivery and describes the measures of success that will demonstrate the value of the place brand to Edmontonians.

These strategies are guided by ConnectEdmonton and The City Plan and align with the Edmonton Economic Action Plan. They support economic development and complement the initiatives of external partners and stakeholders who will help the City bring the place brand to life by amplifying messages, stories and anecdotes about Edmonton, as well as its attributes and benefits.

Report

For over 15 years, the City of Edmonton has implemented a number of approaches to place branding. National perception studies about Edmonton in the 2000s and 2010s prompted different initiatives, most notably the launch of Make Something Edmonton in 2013. This place brand initiative was driven by a volunteer group of Edmontonians, with oversight by the City and then, in 2014, Edmonton Economic Development Corporation. Make Something Edmonton validated initial local research that Edmonton and Edmontonians were open, collaborative, inventive and courageous. Independent national perception research completed by the City in 2019, confirmed, particularly in feedback from local business owners, those attributes are still a mark of Edmonton today.

The Edmonton Place Brand Strategy 2021-2023 (Attachment 1) is guided by and a companion to ConnectEdmonton, The City Plan and the Edmonton Economic Action Plan. It brings to life the ambition of ConnectEdmonton. It helps people become familiar with a healthy, urban and climate-resilient city growing to two million people that supports a prosperous region. It educates them about the many benefits of living, working, learning here, and building or expanding a business in Edmonton.

Why Does Edmonton Need a Place Brand Strategy?

A place brand strategy for Edmonton is an essential component to an economic development strategy. It supports the goals of economic development by raising awareness and underscoring the reasons and evidence of why Edmonton is a city where people and/or businesses can:

- expand and grow their operations;
- attend a post-secondary institution and/or gain credentials for skills learned internationally;
- pursue entrepreneurial ambitions after graduation;
- build a business or career and have a fulfilling life; and
- invest with confidence of a solid return on investment.

As Edmonton recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic and overcomes the additional challenges related to a prolonged economic recession and historically low energy prices, a place brand strategy is needed more than ever.

Goals of the Edmonton Place Brand Strategy

The goals of the Edmonton Place Brand Strategy 2021-2023 are to:

- embed the Edmonton “personality” in all brand related communications;
- raise awareness of and build brand affinity to Edmonton;
- build trust among key business audiences so they consider Edmonton as a viable place to grow and invest;
- support attracting and retaining talent; and
- partner with key stakeholders for brand alignment and consistency and so they are a source for and amplify local voices and stories.

Achieving these goals requires collaboration with partners and stakeholders across Edmonton. As such, Administration will collaborate with organizations, including Edmonton Global, Innovate Edmonton, Explore Edmonton, post-secondary institutions and will work in harmony with their brand and marketing objectives.

Strategies and Timelines

The eight strategies of the Edmonton's place brand are informed by research and build on historical and current programs and assets from the City, EEDC and other partners. The following is a list of the strategies and the timelines for their implementation:

1. Profile stories and case studies: Profile people, organizations and institutions that capture the best of Edmonton and embody the city's attributes of openness, collaboration, inventiveness and courage. *Timeline: Q3 2021 and ongoing*
2. Manage library of shareable assets: A variety of photos, raw and fully produced videos and written narratives that describe Edmonton will be available in an

online library. It will be updated regularly to ensure assets are current. The assets will be available for organizations that are promoting Edmonton to easily access and use. *Timeline: Q2 2021 and ongoing*

3. Place brand support, resources and advice: The City will be a resource for its employees and external clients seeking advice and assets to support their specific Edmonton marketing efforts. Administration will promote consistency in how Edmonton is described and positioned. *Timeline: Q2 2021 and ongoing*
4. Support Edmonton's pandemic recovery: A pandemic recovery campaign will support the goals of the Economic Action Plan and ConnectEdmonton and help to entice Edmontonians to reconnect with their city and spark renewed civic pride and engagement. *Timeline: Q3 2021 to Q1 2022*
5. Develop and deliver place brand media relations and marketing communications and advocacy campaigns: Media relations activities targeting national and international mainstream, business and trade media, and targeted marketing communications (marcom) and advocacy campaigns. *Timeline: Q2 2021 (planning); Q3 and ongoing (deployment)*
6. Develop Indigenous strategies and actions: Aligned with the City's Indigenous Framework, develop specific strategies and actions to reflect the Indigenous voices and experiences in the overall place brand strategy. *Timeline: Q2 to Q4 2021 (planning); 2022 and ongoing (deployment of plan)*
7. Awards, rankings and recognition: Develop and deploy a set of criteria to guide applications for national and international awards, recognition and city rankings. *Timeline: 2022 and ongoing*
8. Review Edmonton's place brand-related physical assets: Inventory impermanent assets (e.g. cityscape flags, signage in public spaces, naturalization and seasonal beautification efforts) and investigate options to update these. This will ensure Edmonton's brand is reflected when these assets are replaced or updated. *Timeline: 2022 and ongoing*

Collaboration & Shared Benefit

Administration will implement these place brand strategies in collaboration with the City's partners and stakeholders. The City of Edmonton, Edmonton Global, Explore Edmonton, Innovate Edmonton, the Edmonton International Airport and Edmonton's post-secondary institutions will all receive the reciprocal benefits gained by our individual and collective efforts to market Edmonton.

Measures of Success

As different strategies are being developed and deployed, measurement tools and baselines will be put in place so that progress can be tracked. The following are some

measurements that could be used to better define success and indicate the need for adjustments:

- Number of downloads of brand assets and how each asset is being used
- Place brand web page engagement (average time on page, bounce rate, session duration, scroll depth, returning visitors, etc.)
- Social media engagement, particularly from users outside of Edmonton
- Number, range and type of profiles/stories/testimonials produced
- Stakeholder satisfaction surveys relating to brand team’s service provision
- Number and type of inquiries for support
- Third party measures through stakeholders: change (increase) in sales leads; growth of foreign student enrolment;
- Achievement of individual and annual campaign goals and strategies
- Changes in national perception survey responses; specifically improvements to public perception and attitudes toward Edmonton
- Number of awards sought and won

Corporate Outcomes and Performance Management

Corporate Outcome(s): Edmonton has a globally competitive and entrepreneurial business climate			
Outcome(s)	Measure(s)	Result(s)	Target(s)
Effectiveness and utility of brand assets	Number of downloads of brand assets and how each asset is being used	Baseline to be established in 2021	15% increase from baseline (2023)
Business, community, academic, arts and cultural leaders and builders profiled	Number, diversity and type of profiles / stories / testimonials produced	Baseline criteria to be established in 2021	15% increase from baseline (2023)
Corporate Outcome(s): Edmonton Region is a catalyst for industry and business growth			
Outcome(s)	Measure(s)	Result(s)	Target(s)
Edmonton’s positive image and reputation is known nationally and internationally	Changes in national perception survey responses; improvements to public perception and attitudes toward Edmonton	2019: 24% of Urban Canadians have a positive impression of Edmonton. 26% of Urban Canadians are familiar with Edmonton	15% point increase in both measures in 2024 survey

Attachment

1. Edmonton Place Brand Strategy 2021-2023

Others Reviewing this Report

- S. McCabe, Deputy City Manager, Urban Form and Corporate Strategic Development