



June 9, 2026

Edmonton City Council
c/o Office of the City Clerk
City of Edmonton
1 Sir Winston Churchill Square
Edmonton, Alberta, T5J 2R7

To Mayor Knack and City Council:

Re: Item 7.1 Edmonton's Economic Development Strategy Refresh on June 10, 2026

The Edmonton Downtown Business Association (EDBA) strongly supports City Council's recognition of economic development as a strategic priority and appreciates Administration's efforts to refresh Edmonton's Economic Development Strategy in response to evolving market conditions. We agree that Edmonton faces several significant challenges and are encouraged to see the strategy acknowledge three important realities that: Edmonton has a business-unfriendly perception, there is limited awareness of the city's competitive advantages, and there is an imbalance between residential and non-residential growth.

While this Economic Development Strategy is led by the City, the successful implementation and growth of our economy rely on continued partnership with Edmonton's business community and our economic ecosystem. As representatives of downtown businesses, we offer the following perspectives on key areas of the strategy.

Building a Business-Friendly Edmonton

The EDBA is encouraged by the strategy's commitment to support businesses and entrepreneurs by reducing barriers to growth and improving Edmonton's reputation as a place where businesses can launch, operate, and expand successfully. Our members consistently identify regulatory complexity, construction impacts, public realm challenges, and concerns related to safety as factors that influence investment and business decisions. While progress has been made in several of these areas, continued efforts are required to create an environment where businesses feel supported and confident investing for the long term.

We encourage the City to approach business friendliness holistically and consider what it means in practice, not just in policy. Business attraction and retention are shaped by everyday experiences, how efficiently permits are obtained, how construction impacts are managed, whether streets feel welcoming, and how customers and employees move through business districts. Perception matters, and it influences consumer spending, investment decisions, and Edmonton's reputation as a place to do business.

Supporting existing businesses must be a central component of this work. Protecting and strengthening Edmonton's current business base preserves jobs, maintains economic activity, and demonstrates a commitment to long-term economic growth. It is far more effective and cost-efficient to help existing businesses remain and expand than it is to replace those that leave. A strong focus on business retention sends a clear message to current and prospective investors that Edmonton values its business community and is willing to work collaboratively to address challenges. By prioritizing

business resilience and sustainable growth, the City can safeguard existing economic assets while fostering an environment that encourages new and expanded investment.

Strengthening the Edmonton Brand

The EDBA strongly supports the strategy's focus on marketing Edmonton's value proposition. While downtown serves as Edmonton's front door for visitors, investors, conventions, major events, and talent attraction; Edmonton's strengths extend well beyond the core. A coordinated and compelling citywide brand can help showcase Edmonton's entrepreneurial spirit, cultural assets, skilled workforce, innovation ecosystem, and quality of life.

The success of this pillar will depend on meaningful collaboration among the City, economic development agencies, business organizations, post-secondary institutions, commercial real estate firms and other industry leaders. A shared and consistent message about Edmonton's strengths will help improve external perceptions and position the city more effectively in competitive markets.

Driving Investment and Economic Growth

The strategy's emphasis on attracting investment is equally important. Downtown Edmonton remains a key destination for commercial, residential, institutional, and mixed-use development. We support efforts to leverage Edmonton's land, infrastructure, and talent advantages to attract private-sector investment and expand the non-residential tax base.

Increasing non-residential assessment growth is critical to Edmonton's long-term fiscal sustainability and will help reduce pressure on residential taxpayers. Investment attraction efforts should focus not only on securing new investment but also on creating the conditions that encourage businesses already operating in Edmonton to reinvest and expand.

Downtown Action Plan and Community Revitalization Levy

The EDBA strongly supports the strategy's commitment to continuing implementation of the Downtown Action Plan and the Community Revitalization Levy (CRL) plans for Downtown and The Quarters. These initiatives have been instrumental in creating the conditions necessary for private-sector investment, attracting new residents and businesses, and improving the vibrancy and competitiveness of Edmonton's core.

As Council prepares for the 2027–2030 budget cycle, we encourage continued and sustained investment in these programs to ensure that the momentum achieved over recent years is not lost. Downtown revitalization requires long-term commitment and predictable funding. Without continued support, private-sector confidence may weaken, investment opportunities may be delayed or redirected elsewhere, and progress toward a thriving and economically resilient downtown could stall.

Economic Development Enablers

The EDBA welcomes the inclusion of Economic Development Enablers within the Refreshed Economic Development Strategy and agrees that these issues are fundamental to creating the conditions necessary for sustained economic growth. While the strategy identifies these areas as complementary to economic development and notes that they are being addressed through other City strategies and government initiatives, downtown businesses experience them as direct drivers of investment decisions, customer activity, and business confidence.

We support the focus on improving public safety, enhancing Edmonton Police Service visibility,

increasing awareness of enforcement actions, improving transit access to major employment centres, coordinating construction activities more effectively, mitigating business impacts during major infrastructure projects, and maintaining clean, welcoming streets throughout the year. These are not secondary considerations for businesses; they are essential components of a competitive and investment-ready city.

As these initiatives move forward, we encourage Council and Administration to clearly demonstrate how an economic development lens will be applied to the enablers across different City branches. We ask for more clarity regarding the processes used to assess economic impacts and how those considerations are reflected in decisions on which services and programs are prioritized and funded. Some examples that require an economic assessment are construction sequencing, patio fee policies and transit service enhancements.

Continued coordination across City strategies and departments will be essential to realizing the full benefits of Edmonton Advantage. We encourage Council to ensure these enabling actions remain a priority, supported by clear accountability, measurable outcomes, and regular reporting from Administration.

Final Thoughts

As Council considers implementation of Edmonton Advantage and future budget decisions, the EDBA supports investments that will deliver measurable improvements in Edmonton's competitiveness, business attraction efforts, and non-residential assessment growth. We encourage Council to ensure that performance reporting remains transparent and focused on outcomes that matter to businesses, investors, and residents.

Downtown Edmonton plays a central role in the city's economic success. A vibrant, safe, and competitive downtown attracts investment, talent, visitors, and innovation that benefits the entire region. The EDBA looks forward to continuing to work with Council, Administration, and economic development partners to advance the goals of Edmonton Advantage and help position Edmonton as a leading destination for business, investment, and opportunity.

Sincerely,

Braede Harris

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cc James Robinson, Executive Director