



STRATEGIC PLAN — 2019-2024

*Creating connections to
your river valley*





Table of Contents

Background	3
Proven Success	5
Our Pillars	6
Strategic Initiatives	7
Completion of Infrastructure	7
Funding	8
Land acquisition	9
Supporting Use	10
Broadening Our Reach	18
Conclusion	20

BACKGROUND

The River Valley Alliance (RVA) is all about connecting people to the river valley – and through the river valley – by making it easier to access and enjoy by all.

It is an alliance of seven municipalities working together for the single goal of regional connectivity. This alliance is one of the most innovative and creative endeavors ever undertaken; in fact, it's a model that's never been duplicated in all of North America.



**OUR RIVER VALLEY COVERS 18,000 ACRES OF LAND
— 10 TIMES THE SIZE OF STANLEY PARK**



PURPOSE

The purpose of the RVA is to develop a world-class continuous and connected regional trail system along the North Saskatchewan River Valley from Devon to Fort Saskatchewan, and in doing so improve quality of life through access and enjoyment of the river valley.

The RVA aims to create a single river valley park system that includes a combination of primary, secondary and adventure trails, pedestrian bridges, and boat docks/launches for year-round recreational activity.

BE A PART OF SOMETHING BIGGER.

Being a part of the RVA is quite simply an opportunity to be part of something bigger than just one municipality—in fact, at 18,000 acres in size, it's about creating and celebrating one of the largest metropolitan river valley park systems in the world.

Being part of a bigger picture is contributing to a legacy of river valley infrastructure that will be enjoyed by generations to come.

Seven municipalities working together to connect the river valley has created a sense of pride and ownership of the great work that has been done. This work could not be undertaken by a single municipality.

PROJECTS

The projects undertaken by the RVA are:

- Beside the river (trails)
- To the river (boat docks)
- Over the river (pedestrian bridges)

And our ultimate goal is to connect the entire river valley trail system all the way from Devon to Fort Saskatchewan – that's approximately 100 km of trail.

FUNDING MODEL

The RVA speaks on behalf of its shareholders as one voice to both provincial and federal governments for grant funding, which allows the municipalities to undertake large infrastructure projects that benefits their community as well as the whole region.

The RVA's funding model enables municipalities to access provincial and federal grant dollars that make large infrastructure projects affordable. The RVA funds two thirds of the project costs by securing federal and provincial funding. Municipalities bear up to one third of the cost of the project with the remaining funds coming from provincial and federal grant dollars.



PROVEN SUCCESS

From 2012 to 2017, the RVA and its shareholders undertook 13 projects in the Phase I Capital Plan, for a total of \$90 million in capital spend. These projects included:



Terwillegar Foot Bridge (Edmonton)



100 street Funicular (Edmonton)



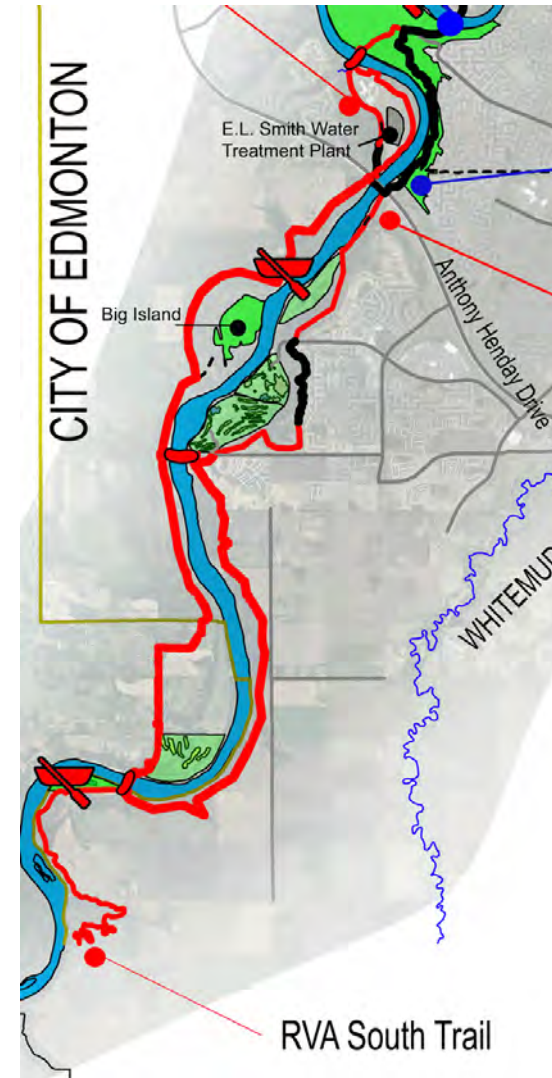
70 km of new trails throughout the region



West River's Edge Pavillion (Fort Saskatchewan)

WHAT'S NEXT

Only 30 kilometres of additional trail are needed to reach full connectivity of the river valley from Devon to Fort Saskatchewan.



OUR PILLARS



SOCIAL

- Connect people, communities and attractions by creating new pathways and access to the river.
- Make the river valley accessible to all, regardless of socio-economic status or mobility circumstances.
- Enhancing the urban experience by opening up green space in high densification areas will help combat social issues such as urban isolation and emotional health.

ECONOMIC

- Enhance the reputation and quality of life for all people living and working in the metro Edmonton region.
- Create incentives for business location, investment, and tourism, contributing positively to job creation.
- Increase area tourism by leveraging opportunities for adventure-based and river-based events, activities, and attractions.
- Ensure that plans and project priorities provide ongoing economic benefits and opportunities for future generations by regularly reviewing the benefits and costs of creating this park system.

ENVIRONMENTAL

- Balance the importance of the natural flora and fauna of the river valley while accommodating a variety of uses in the valley.
- Minimize impact to the natural area in the design of trail alignment and trail construction.
- Enhance the public's understanding of the environmental health and importance of the river valley.
- Locate active recreational and social activities primarily in areas that are compatible with the intended use and management of these lands.



2019-2024 STRATEGY

COMPLETION OF INFRASTRUCTURE

The first phase of the RVA's Capital Program created 70 km of trail towards the 100 km needed to build full regional connectivity. Subject to funding from Provincial and Federal governments, as well as the ongoing commitment of the seven shareholder municipalities, Phase II of the Capital Program will consist of 13 projects that were prioritized by the municipalities to generate both greater connectivity and access.

With the success of Phase I, only 30 km of the 100 km of trail system remains to be completed. Most of this work is located in the southwest corner of the Edmonton Metropolitan Region and is therefore an area of high priority for the RVA over the next five years.

FUNDING

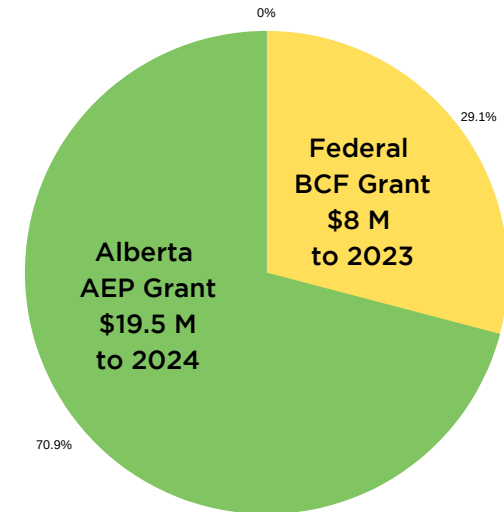
From the grants extended to the RVA, \$19 M remains from the provincial government and available to December 2024, while \$13 M is available from the federal government to December 2023. The RVA has earmarked certain projects to deploy this capital with the remaining funds available for opportunistic projects that meet the criteria and timelines for construction completion.

A grant application was submitted to the Government of Alberta under the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP) grant. This grant, if approved, is automatically matched by the federal government, with each municipality funding up to one third contribution of the projects in their boundaries. The RVA will also look to other sources of funding to achieve its infrastructure goals.

Over the next five years the RVA will be increasing its communication and engagement with government partners. This will ensure they continue to be informed and involved as active participants in the RVA's milestones, successes, and positive citizen impacts that are resulting from creating one of the largest river valley park systems in the world.

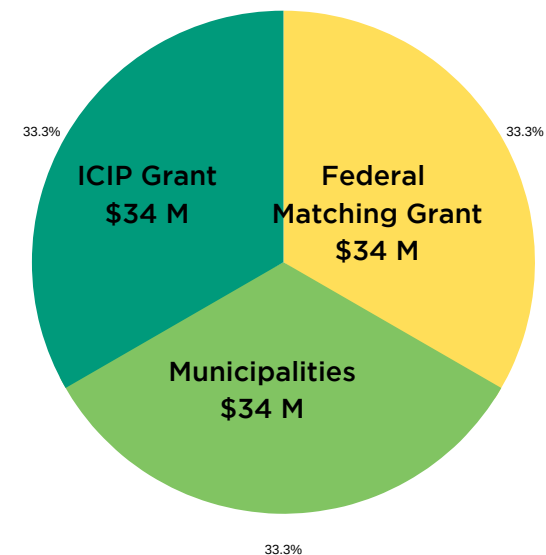
FUNDING - Available as of 2019

Grant dollars remaining to 2024



FUNDING - FUTURE

Funding request for Phase II Capital program



RIVER VALLEY LAND OWNERSHIP



Access to land is critical for the RVA to complete regional connectivity. Approximately 40% of the 18,000 acres of river valley park lands is privately held.

In the southwest quadrant there are 12 landowners who's lands we are seeking access to, a priority area for regional connectivity over the next five years.

The RVA is thankful and appreciative of those landowners who have already granted us a right-of-way onto their land, recognizing the part they are playing making a connected and accessible river valley park system possible.

The RVA will continue to build positive relationships with landowners through communication and engagement to ensure they remain informed about the RVA's work and the opportunity to play a positive role in this big picture, legacy-building initiative.

SUPPORTING USE

Over the next 10 years, the RVA will enhance river valley user experience by supporting use of the river valley. This includes:

1. Boat access
2. Access to amenities
3. Tools and resources
4. Trail marking and naming
5. Events

*TO SIMPLY BUILD
THE TRAIL SYSTEM IS
NOT ENOUGH – WE
NEED PEOPLE TO
USE AND ENJOY IT.*

Map of Edmonton Metro Region River Valley Use



Legend

- | | |
|-----------------|--------------|
| Walking/running | Skiing |
| Boating | Snowshoeing |
| Dogs off-leash | Horse riding |
| Cycling | Fishing |

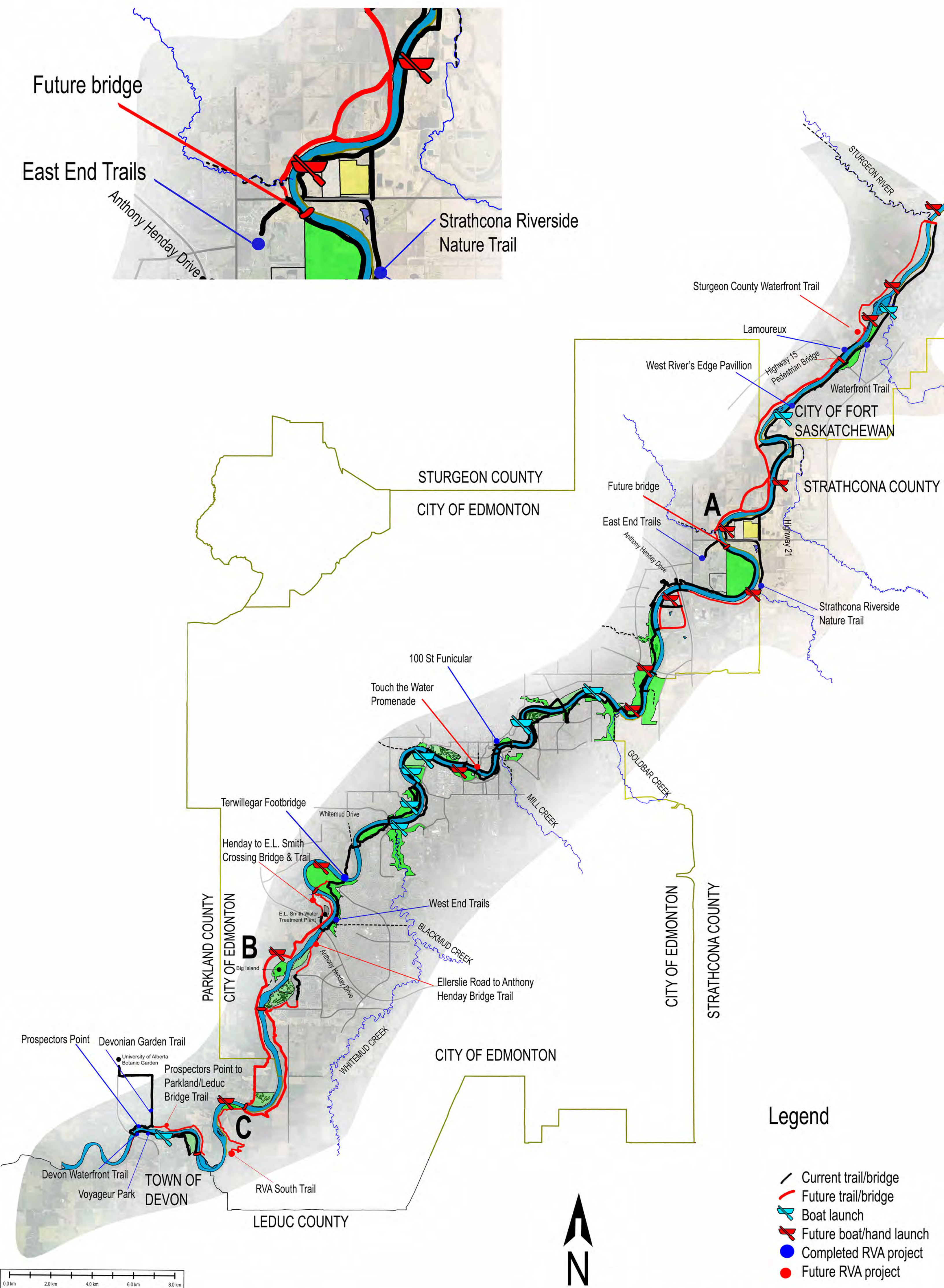


RIVER VALLEY ALLIANCE

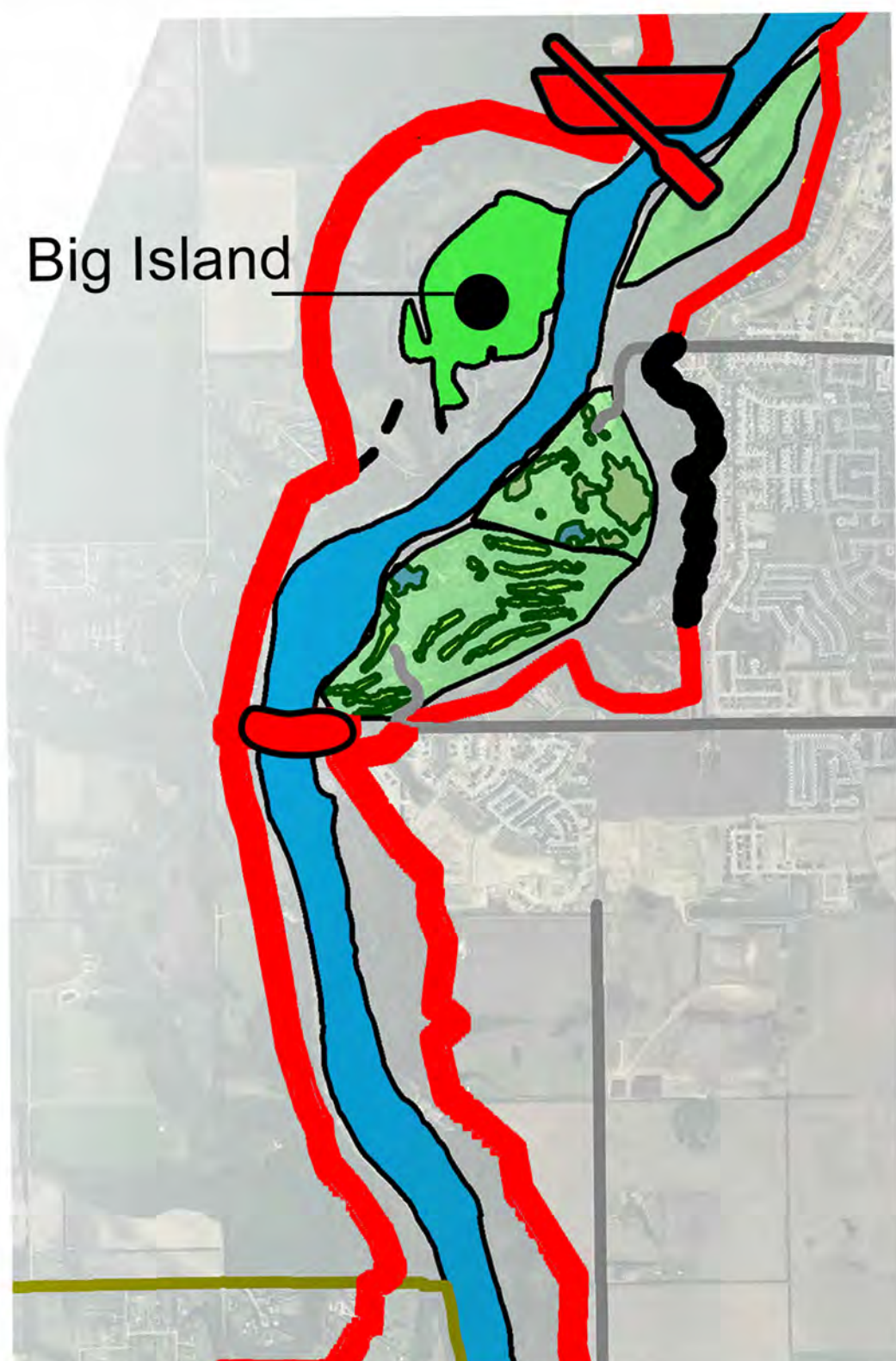
Map of Edmonton Metro Region River Valley Current as of June 2019

Areas of strategic significance have been highlighted, labelled and enlarged

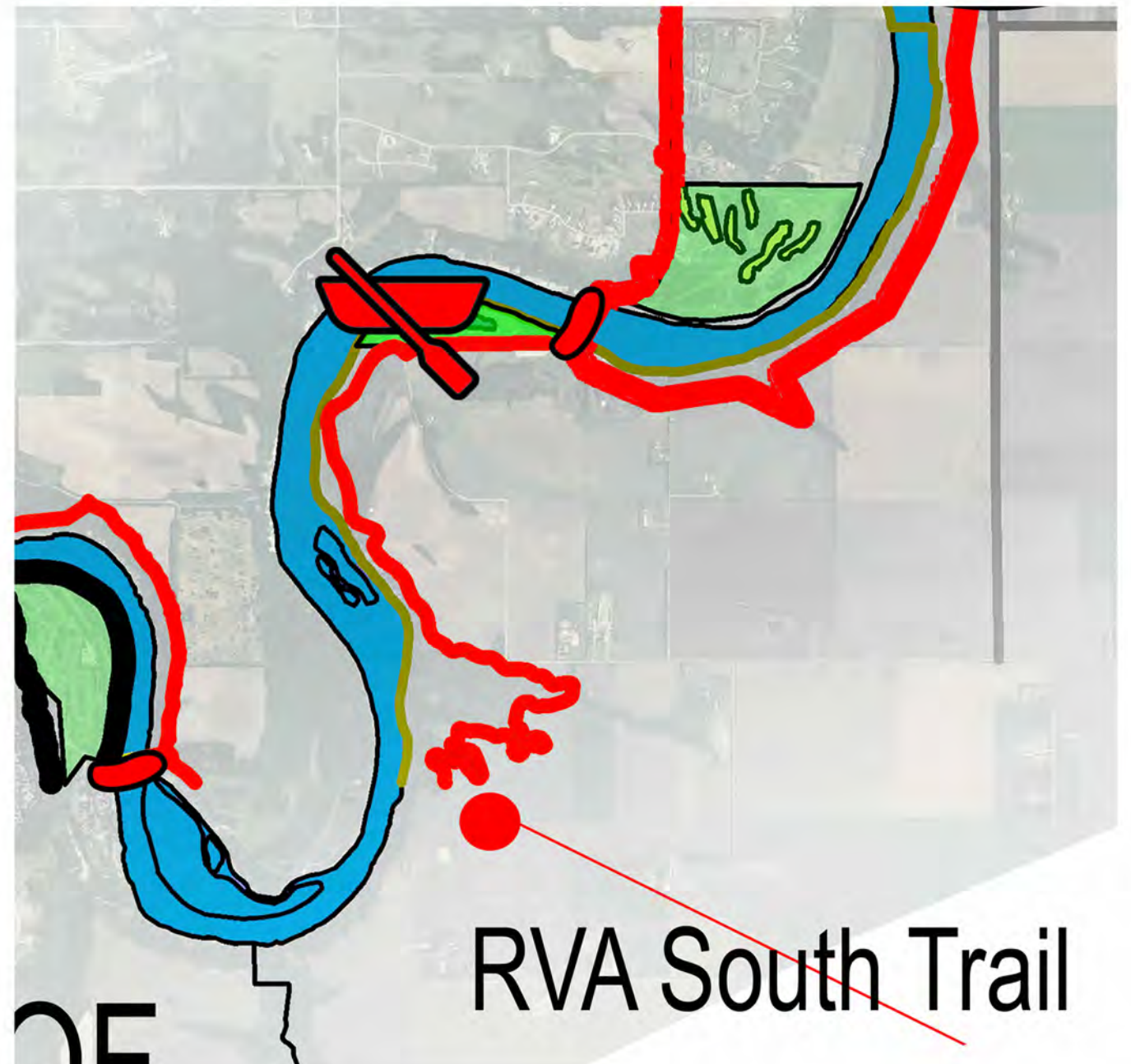
A. Northeast section



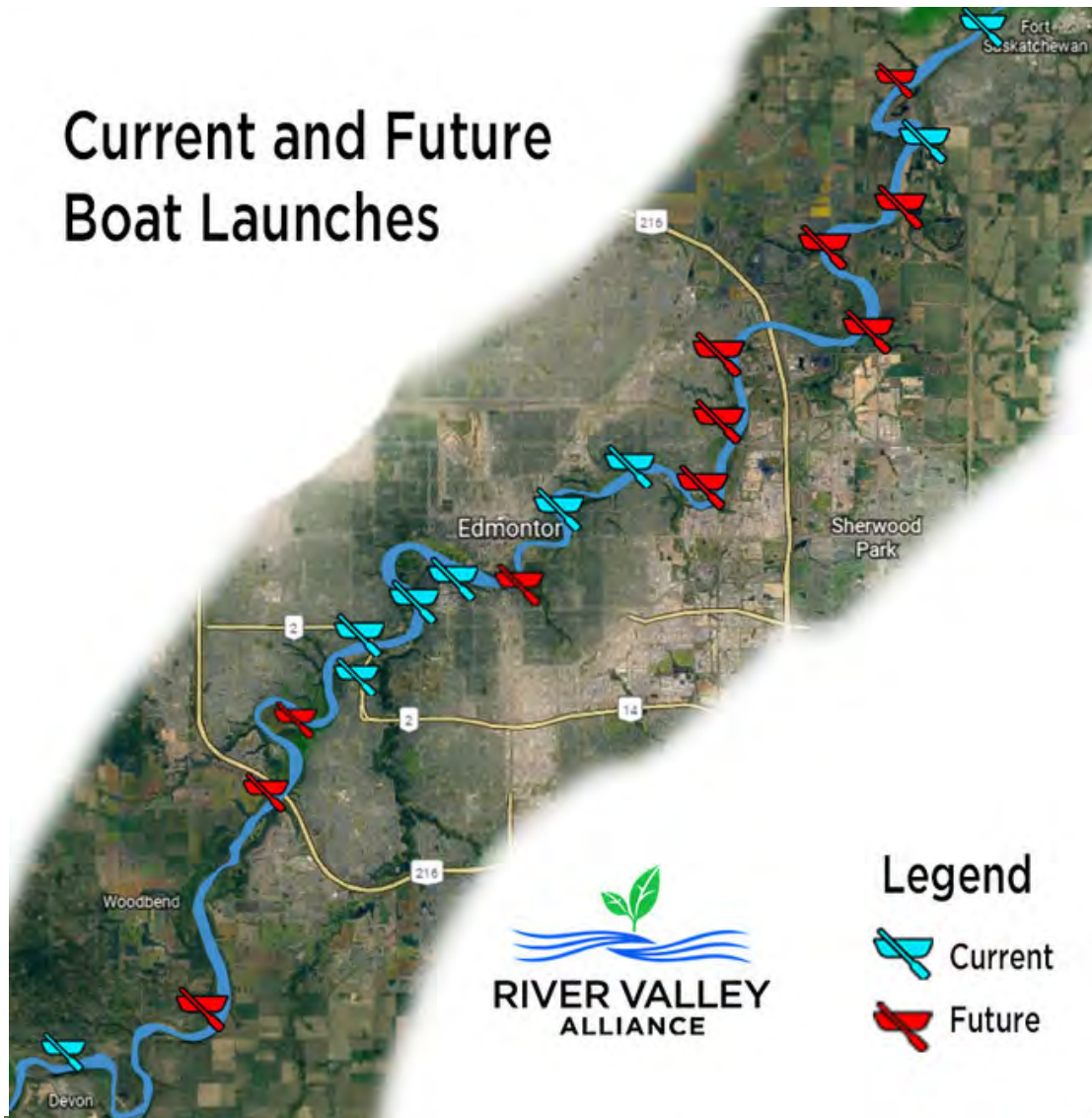
B. Southwest Trails in Edmonton



C. Southwest Trails from Devon to Edmonton



Current and Future Boat Launches



BOAT ACCESS

In 2018, five new boat docks were opened in west and central Edmonton, with 11 more contemplated throughout the river valley.

Incorporating boat access provides new amenities for both upstream and downstream boaters wanting more ways to get on the river, creating new opportunities for activities and events that celebrate the river and the trail system alongside it.

Boat access points are an easy way to connect users to the river valley. Following the successful opening of five new boat docks in 2019, we will continue this strategy of working with municipalities to identify locations and build additional access points.

68% of river valley users surveyed in 2019 said boating/paddling is their favourite river valley activity.



USER STRATEGY



Expanded Voyageur Park parking lot

PARKING

Access to the river and river valley is often impeded by a lack of parking. In its endeavors to promote active recreation in the river valley, more parking spaces need to be provided. Working with municipal partners, the RVA will identify and support the construction of more parking stalls close to trails for easier access.



Mechanized river valley access

ACCESSIBILITY

In order to build a connection between citizens and the river valley, they need to be able to access it. The RVA will work with shareholders to ensure that citizens with mobility challenges have greater access to the river through user amenities.



Washrooms at Prospector's Point

WASHROOMS

In keeping with its environmental pillar, the RVA, in concert with municipal shareholders, will identify and support the construction of washrooms in appropriate locations keeping in mind the logistics of sanitation and upkeep. Examples include washrooms at boat docks and strategic locations along the trails.

TOOLS AND RESOURCES

People want to be in our beautiful river valley. The RVA is the organization that puts them there.

To encourage awareness and use of RVA-funded infrastructure, our marketing and communications efforts will focus on a) cultivating a desire to want to be in the river valley and b) providing tools and resources to make it easy to use the river valley park system.



MAPS

- Reconfigure a map of RVA projects with a proper south-west (upstream) to north-east (downstream) orientation, with a legend that easily identifies completed trails vs. trails yet to be built.
- Design and promote a "Trail Walk-in-a-Box" product that outlines interesting walks and experiences in the river valley.
- Create an enhanced interactive digital map available on desktop and mobile platforms that captures directional, historical and interpretive messaging anywhere on the trail.

BLOGS AND SOCIAL MEDIA

- Distribute "How To" content on social media and web platforms.
- Partner with blogging community and clubs/outfitters to actively engage the public in river valley-related social media activities.

SPEAKERS

- Encourage and support speaking opportunities for various organizations who want to learn more about the river valley.

TRAIL MARKING AND NAMING

Showcasing \$300M worth of infrastructure

A regional signage system and trail name is proposed that will link the park system together and create an overall visual identity and orientation by trail users. These markers will provide safety information, distance points, and a commemorative plaque for sponsorship opportunities that will subsidize the cost of placing the markers along the trail.

It will also be linked to a trail app that tells stories in several categories about the North Saskatchewan river valley. The goal will be to have complete end-to-end markers in place by 2025.

For many trail users, understanding where they are and where trails lead is difficult in the metro Edmonton river valley. Gaining input from user groups and outfitters, the RVA will work with municipal shareholders to enhance trailhead signage that clearly explains directions, destinations and distances for trail users.



In conjunction with trail markers, a trail name is proposed similar to those in places where a trail traverses multiple jurisdictions and parks (i.e. West Coast Trail in B.C., Cabot Trail in Nova Scotia).

A task force will work through the issues of name criteria, public engagement, selection process and final decision-making authority. A trail name provides endless opportunities for marketing not only the trail but merchandising of souvenirs for both locals and tourists.

*"To be recognized as a trail, the infrastructure must be mapped and marked with signage." -
Exceptional Trails Guide,
Alberta Parks*

Artist concept image

EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

High profile events and community-based activities present an opportunity to not only raise awareness of the RVA's work and introduce people to different ways they can connect with the river valley.

They also help to position this expansive river valley park system as a unique tourist attraction.

In 2017, the RVA began executing on this concept with the launch of the annual EPCOR RiverFest. This event offers participants the opportunity to paddle the North Saskatchewan River in an organized raft float, ending their route at a municipal park where river valley-related land activities, organizations, and clubs are showcased.

The number of on-water participants nearly doubled from 2017 to 2018, and participants have shared that the event opens their eyes (and increases their appreciation) to the beauty of the river valley in a way they didn't expect.

The benefits of events like EPCOR RiverFest and other experiential activities include:

- Raising awareness about local river valley clubs, organizations, and business that support use and enjoyment of the river valley
- Introducing people to new ways of getting active in the river valley
- Raising awareness of current and future RVA infrastructure and the role municipalities play in creating this legacy for their citizens
- Showcasing the beauty and uniqueness of the river valley park system locally, nationally, and internationally



BROADENING OUR REACH

Once the full scope of the Plan of Action has been completed, the RVA is looking forward to working together with our alliance of municipal partners to identify new opportunities for connectivity and access projects that will add value and improve well-being for the lives of their citizens. This may include considering projects that are outside the original geographical boundaries set out in the Plan of Action.



The RVA will work with our respective shareholders in these regions to explore and evaluate the merits of each considered opportunity.

UPSTREAM

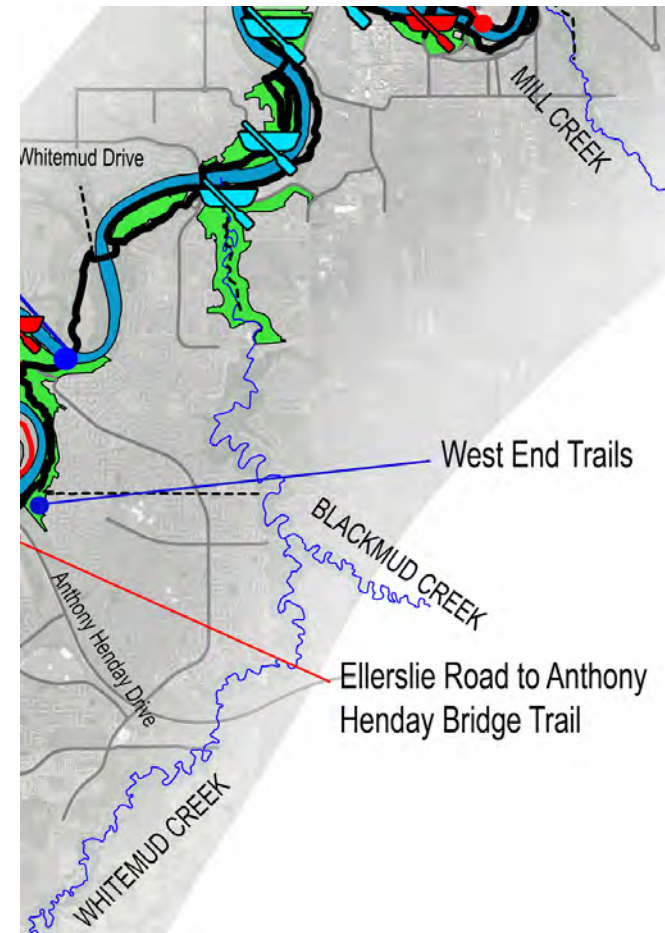
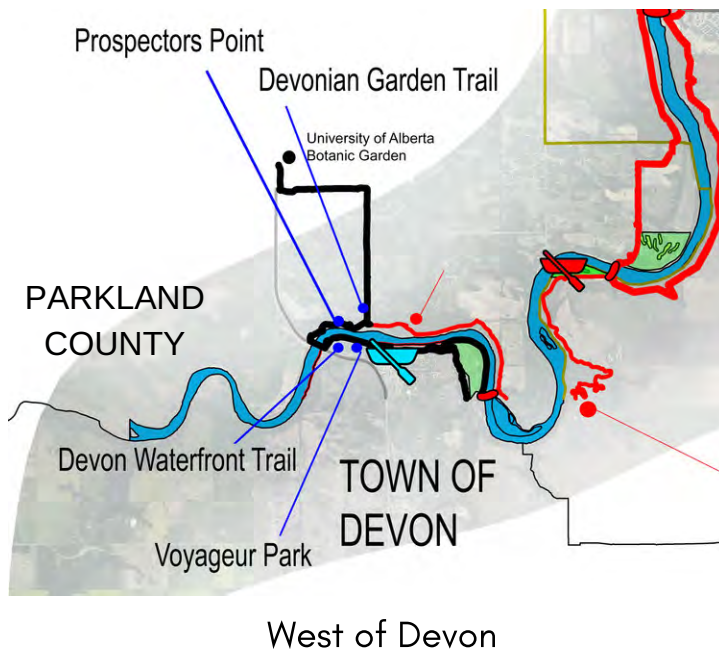
In 2018 the City of Edmonton annexed land in Leduc County that borders the North Saskatchewan River. This presents an opportunity to consider expansion of the RVA's boundary beyond Devon and Parkland County.

TRIBUTARIES

There are many tributaries and creeks that feed into the North Saskatchewan River that may have merit as adventure trails incorporated into the RVA trail system. Examples include: Blackmud Creek, Whitemud Creek, and Mill Creek.

Additionally, the eastern boundary of the RVA trail system is the mouth of the Sturgeon River. Consideration could be made for continuing the trail north along the Sturgeon River.

POSSIBLE EXPANSIONS





CONCLUSION

While continuing its priority to coordinate the funding, design and construction of infrastructure to achieve regional connectivity, the RVA will also be focusing on new initiatives that support and enhance the user experience in the river valley. These include trail heads, parking, comfort stations, trail marking and naming, and building a mobile site for a more interactive digital experience when exploring the trails.

Working with a multitude of stakeholders and a clear direction going forward, the RVA will achieve our overarching goals of connectivity, access and an enhanced user experience.



APPENDIX



CAPITAL PROGRAMS

PHASE II CAPITAL PROGRAM

These are projects that were identified as priorities by the municipalities. Costs are identified but funding is not confirmed.

West Metro Edmonton Region

Municipality

Parkland & Devon
Parkland County
Devon to Ellerslie Road
Leduc County
Edmonton
Edmonton
Edmonton

Project

Pedestrian Bridge
Secondary Trail
Secondary Trail
Boat Access
Primary Trail
Primary Trail
Pedestrian Bridge

Central and East Metro Edmonton Region

Municipality

Edmonton
Edmonton & Strathcona County
Edmonton & Strathcona County
Sturgeon County & Fort Saskatchewan
Edmonton & Strathcona County
Fort Saskatchewan & Sturgeon County

Project

Touch the Water Promenade
Secondary Trail
Pedestrian Bridge
Pedestrian Bridge
Boat Access
Boat Access

13 Total Projects**Combined Project Totals****\$101,912,000**



Compiled & written by RVA
Layout & design by Arielle Demchuk

Other photos by Chad Griffiths, Burton Xu,
Keith Moore, Jeff Szcusik,
Harmony Wolgemuth, Monique Langevin,
Tariq Bacchus & Nancy Critchley

River Valley Alliance, 9825 103 St
Edmonton, AB T5K 2M3 ♦ Phone: 587-401-3355
Email: contact@rivervalley.ab.ca ♦ Web: rivervalley.ab.ca