



RIVER VALLEY  
ALLIANCE

# STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-2024

*Creating connections to your river valley*



parkland  
county

THE CITY OF  
**Edmonton**

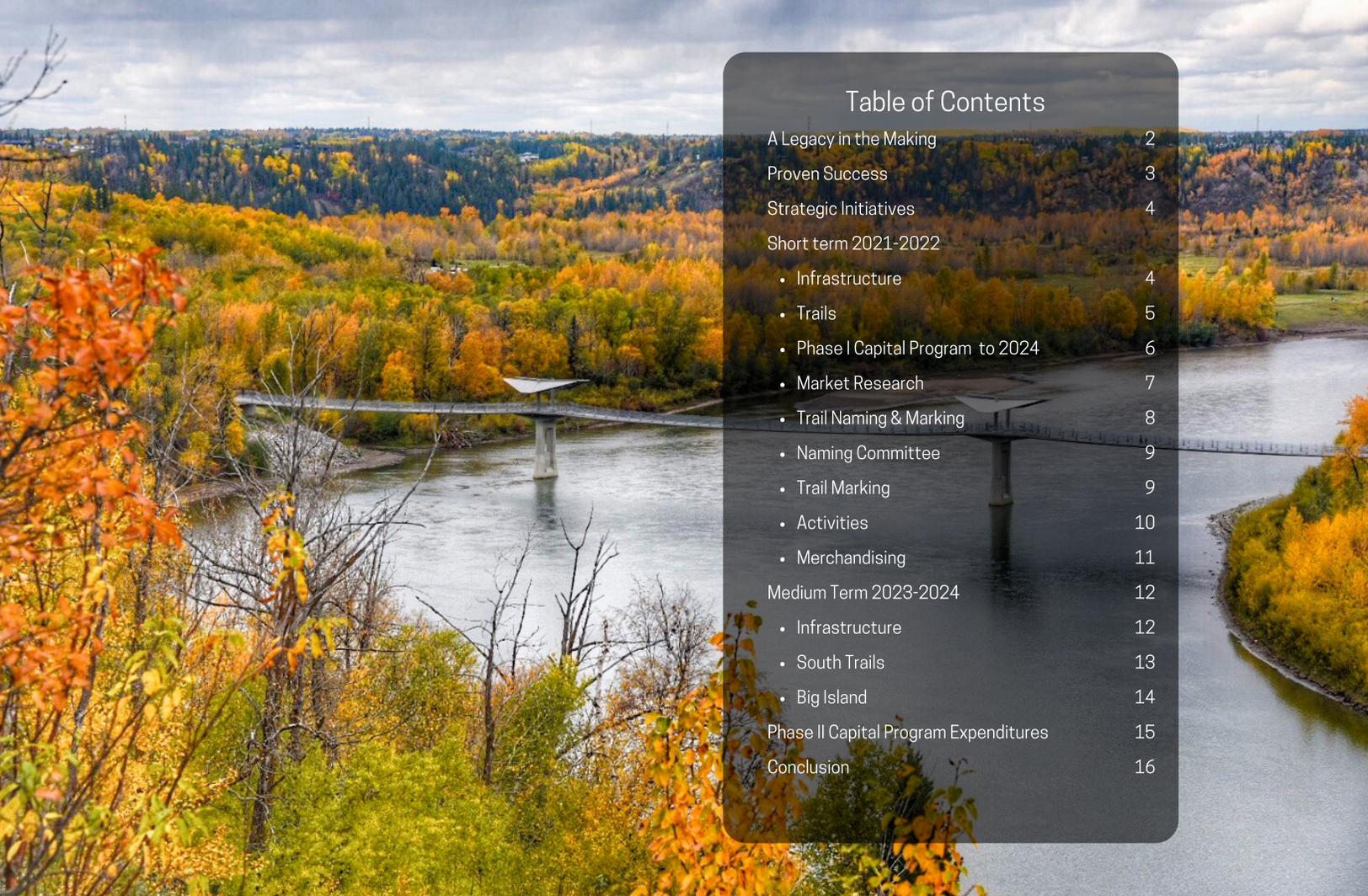


STRATHCONA  
COUNTY



CITY OF  
FORT SASKATCHEWAN

Sturgeon  
County



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# A LEGACY IN THE MAKING

The River Valley Alliance has always been about connecting metro Edmonton's River Valley from end to end with one continuous trail. But we do more than just connect trails.

It has been well documented that access to nature is an important factor in the well being of humans, both physically and mentally. Being in nature reduces anger, fear, and stress, and increases endorphins that generate pleasant feelings. Exposure to nature not only makes us feel better emotionally, but it also contributes to our physical wellbeing by reducing blood pressure, heart rate, muscle tension, and the production of stress hormones. It is for these reasons the RVA continues its quest to complete the Plan of Action that creates access and connectivity to the entire river valley.

Over the past decade, the River Valley Alliance has proven to be responsible stewards of public funds in the coordination of building of trails, boat docks and footbridges, all on time and on budget. But our work is not yet complete.

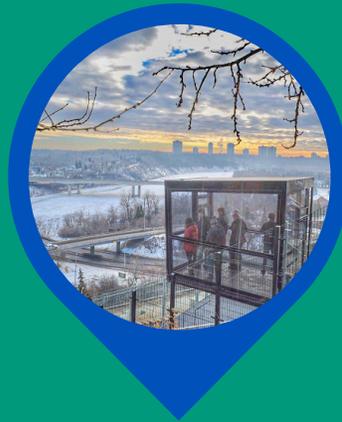
This Strategic Plan outlines the priorities, plans and funding schedule to complete our full end-to-end trail connectivity from Devon to Fort Saskatchewan with short term goals over the next two years plus mid-term goals to 2024. The RVA thanks Leduc County for their support over the last 17 years. With the annexation of land adjacent to the North Saskatchewan River, Leduc County has relinquished its share.

# PROVEN SUCCESS

From 2012 to 2020, the RVA and its shareholders undertook 13 projects in the Phase 1 Capital Plan for a total of \$90 million in capital spend. These projects included:



Terwillegar footbridge  
Edmonton



100 Street Funicular  
Edmonton



West Rivers Edge Pavilion  
Fort Saskatchewan



70 km of new trails  
throughout the region

# STRATEGIC INITIATIVES SHORT-TERM 2021-2022

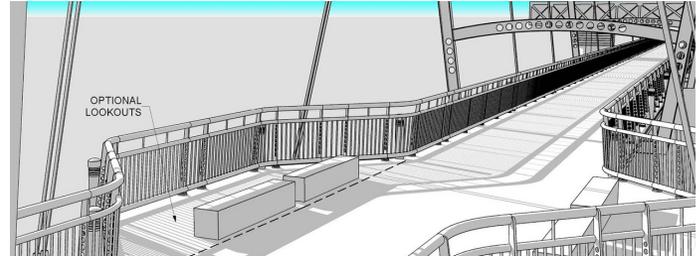
## INFRASTRUCTURE

With its remaining funds from the Phase I Capital program, the RVA has two infrastructure projects underway through 2021-22



Edmonton to Strathcona County Footbridge

Connecting Edmonton to Strathcona County, this important piece of infrastructure will connect over 70 km of trails from east Fort Saskatchewan to west Edmonton. The RVA will be working closely with the City of Edmonton and Strathcona County to complete the conceptual design and public consultation phase in 2021.



Highway 15 Underslung Pedestrian bridge

Scheduled to open in 2022, this bridge will connect Lamoureux in Sturgeon County to Fort Saskatchewan and beyond.

# TRAILS

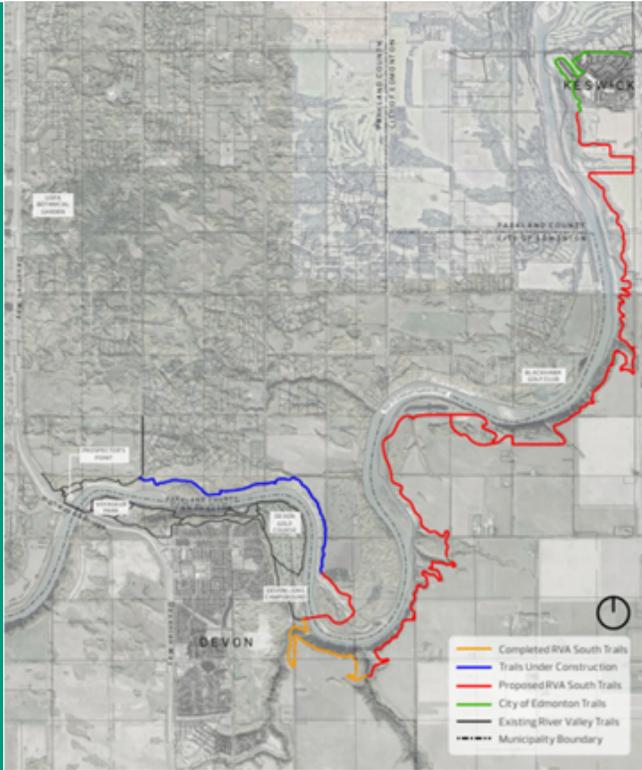


Figure 2 - RVA South Trail Regional Connectivity

The final section of trails to achieve full connectivity is located in the southwest quadrant of Edmonton from Ellerslie Road south to Rabbit Hill creek in Devon.

Access to this land is critical for the RVA to complete its regional connectivity.

Throughout 2021 – 22 the RVA will continue to build meaningful and positive relationships with these landowners through communication and engagement to ensure they remain informed about the RVA work and the opportunity to play a positive role in this big picture legacy-building initiative.

In 2021, the RVA envisions a new section of trail from Rabbit Hill ravine to the termination of Range Road 261.

## Phase I Capital Program Expenditures to 2024 (RVA 2/3 Portion)

<b>Project</b>	<b>Expenditure</b>	<b>Municipality(ies)</b>
*Edmonton to Strathcona County Footbridge – Design & Construction	\$ 16 million	City of Edmonton, Strathcona County
Underslung Footbridge - Highway 15	\$ 4 million	Sturgeon County, City of Fort Saskatchewan
*Trails & other projects TBD	\$ 3 million	City of Edmonton
Project Management & Operational costs	\$ 3 million	
Trail - Prospector's Point Phases I & II	\$ 1 million	Parkland County
<b>Total Capital Expenditures</b>	<b>\$ 27 million</b>	

\*Subject to 1/3 funding approval by municipalities

## MARKET RESEARCH

Over the past five years, we have seen an unprecedented use of our River Valley Trail System and associated amenities. Whether it is walking, running, cycling or on the water activities such as boating, canoeing and kayaking, usage has skyrocketed to the point where all manner of outdoor equipment is in limited supply or sold out.



We know by observation that this usage has increased, yet we have no empirical evidence to support our claim.

Over the next year the RVA will embark on a market research project to get real data, and from that data, create a narrative that access to nature in an urban setting is important, in demand by citizens, and diversifies the economy through eco-tourism. This information will help build our case to the Governments of Alberta and Canada to fund our Phase II Capital Program.

Part of this initiative is expanding our social media presence by sharing content with our shareholder municipalities. It is important to ensure our member municipalities understand the value proposition the RVA brings to their communities.

## TRAIL NAMING AND MARKING

*“To be recognized as a trail, the infrastructure must be named, mapped, and marked with signage”* – Exceptional Trails Guide, Alberta Parks.

The RVA believes that this metro Edmonton trail system can rival the likes of the Bruce Trail (Ontario), the Westcoast Trail (B.C.) and the Cabot Trail (Nova Scotia), and be considered an international destination with many marketing opportunities. But in order to reach that level of exposure and reputation, the trail needs a name. The RVA Board believes now is the right time to launch a naming initiative with 70% of our trail system complete.

The RVA is well aware that we are at a point in time where reconciliation with Indigenous peoples who have inhabited the North Saskatchewan River valley for more than 9,000 years is top of mind. A unifying end-to-end trail name that reflects the historic indigenous usage on the river and in the valley must be seriously considered.

To address this, in 2021 the RVA Board will strike a Naming Committee made up of multiple stakeholders to determine a process of how all voices will be heard in determining a suitable name for this trail.



## NAMING COMMITTEE

In order to build consensus among our six municipal shareholders, the RVA will strike a Naming Sub-Committee whose mandate will be to design a process and execute on that process, to determine a final and appropriate name for the trail system from end to end. The Committee will consist of representatives appointed by each municipal shareholder as well external citizens who bring knowledge, context and skill sets in maneuvering this delicate undertaking.

As a way to ensure success in this endeavor, the RVA will be requesting a commitment from each shareholder to support the end result as determined by the Naming Sub-Committee and the Board before work begins.

## TRAIL MARKING

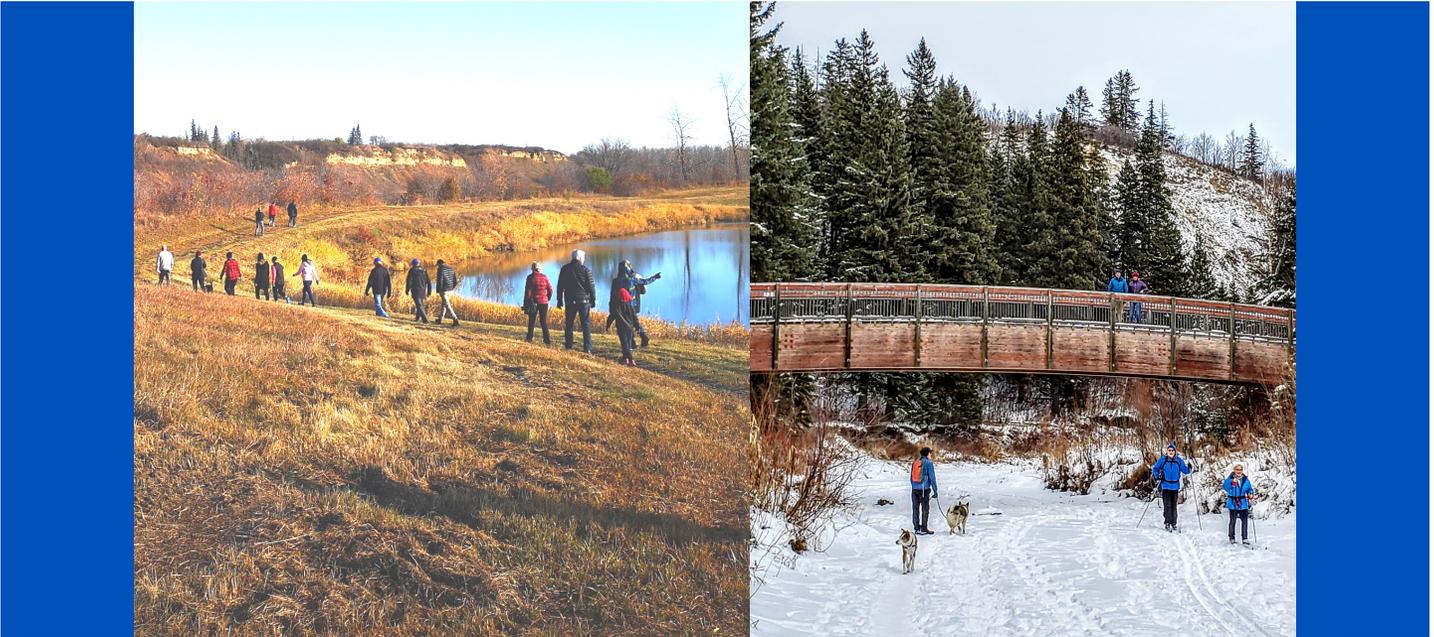


A regional marking system is proposed that links the trail system together and creates an overall visual identity and orientation by trail users. These markers will provide the trail name, information via QR code and a commemorative plaque for sponsorship opportunities that will subsidize the cost of placing the markers along the trail. It is planned for markers to be installed in 2022.

Prototypes are currently being designed to incorporate logo, trail name, QR code, and memorial plaque.

# ACTIVITIES

People want to be in our beautiful river valley. Through our #trekthetrails video blog posts featuring 20 different walks in the river valley, to our monthly scheduled walks, to our e-newsletter, active social media platforms and podcasts, the RVA is the “go-to” organization to source activity in the river valley.



# MERCHANDISING

In 2021-22, the RVA will be adding to its brand awareness by selling merchandise such as active wear, interactive calendars and souvenirs once the trail naming is complete.

The RVA is looking to partner with activewear companies to create custom RVA prints to raise public awareness and increase brand identification. With these partnerships the RVA would carry no stock, as orders would be printed on demand.



Photo Credit: Shruti Srinivas

# STRATEGIC INITIATIVES MID-TERM 2023-2024

## INFRASTRUCTURE AND TRAILS

In the years 2023-24 the RVA will embark on completing the Edmonton to Strathcona County Footbridge and its final 30 km of trails in Edmonton's southwest quadrant.



### Edmonton to Strathcona County Footbridge

Connecting Edmonton to Strathcona County, this important piece of infrastructure will connect over 70 km of trails from east Fort Saskatchewan to west Edmonton. In 2023-24 the RVA will work with City of Edmonton and Strathcona County to complete the construction of this footbridge.

# SOUTH TRAILS



Phase I – Rabbit Hill Ravine Creek to Shalom Park

This phase, comprising of 6 km, will follow top-of-bank on the south side of the river to Shalom Park, to provide users beautiful vistas overlooking the meanderings of the North Saskatchewan River. A trailhead is intended at the northernmost point of this section to allow users different access points with parking and trailheads.



Phase II –Shalom Park to west Anthony Henday Bridge

This section of trail will continue north along top-of-bank into the Keswick neighbourhood, along Windermere and finally connecting to the west Anthony Henday bridge beside River Ridge golf course. The RVA will continue working with these landowners to secure access that provides safety and enjoyment for all parties.

## BIG ISLAND

In its 2019 Business Plan, the Government of Alberta's Ministry of Environment & Parks states in its Outcome 3 key objectives, "*Local and issues-based land use planning ensures all Albertans can enjoy and appreciate parks and public lands, including through creation of the capital region Big Island Provincial Park...*"

The RVA remains supportive of trail development in and around Big Island and south to the Woodbend area, which is presently owned by Kanata Metis Cultural Enterprises Ltd., a subsidiary of the Elizabeth Metis Settlement. The RVA submitted a trail development proposal for Big Island to the Government of Alberta Ministry of Environment & Parks (AEP) in April of 2020 based on our Plan of Action and stands ready to assist where appropriate in selective programming of this environmentally sensitive and important area of the river valley.



## PHASE II CAPITAL PROGRAM EXPENDITURES (TOTAL COST)

Working with our municipal shareholders, the RVA has established a list of future projects to be undertaken once additional grant dollars have been received. All these projects are part of the RVAs Plan of Action, and will improve and enhance the user's experience of the river valley. These costs are estimates based on past and current projects.

Project	Expenditure	Municipality(ies)
South Trails (Devon to Anthony Henday Drive) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Land Acquisition</li> <li>• 23 km of Trail</li> </ul>	\$ 20 million	City of Edmonton
Amenities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trail Heads / Parking Lots / Washrooms</li> <li>• Boat Docks / Launches</li> </ul>	\$ 10 million	Devon, Edmonton, Strathcona County, Sturgeon County
Big Island / Woodbend <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Land Acquisition &amp; Trails</li> <li>• Woodbend Amenities</li> </ul>	\$ 25 million	City of Edmonton
Devon - Parkland Footbridge + Trail	\$ 18 million	Devon, Parkland County
Terwillegar Park to EL Smith Footbridge + Trail	\$ 27 million	Edmonton
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 100 million</b>	

## CONCLUSION

The work of the RVA has been ongoing for almost 20 years. Incorporated in 2003, the RVA has been working tirelessly with its shareholders, government partners, stakeholders and many enthusiastic volunteers to bring the vision of one continuous trail in the river valley to life.

With this Strategic Plan in place, infrastructure remains its top priority with new initiatives to engage and inform a desirous public and encourage river valley usage.

We are so close to fulfilling our mission – building a world-class, one-of-a-kind outdoor destination for generations to come that is unique in all of North America. Imagine one trail, one name, 100 km in length. With your help, we can get this done.

Both residents and tourists alike love our river valley. Through the RVA's work of making the river valley more accessible and more connected, we can all take advantage of this natural gem so important to our physical, mental and spiritual health.





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