

ANNUAL REPORT 2020

Proudly Connecting Your
River Valley



RIVER VALLEY
ALLIANCE



Prepared February 2021 by the River Valley Alliance

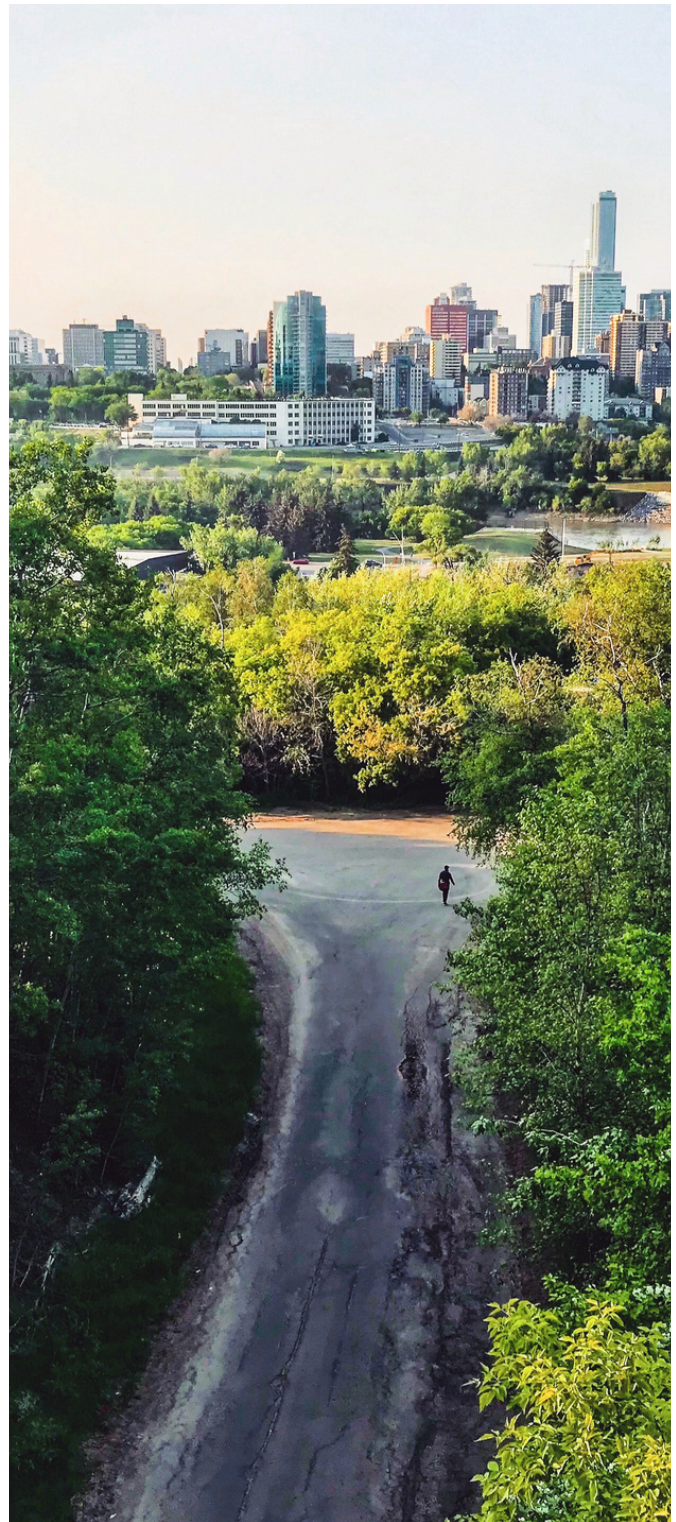
Design and layout by Makennah Walker

Additional photos by Harmony Wolgemuth,
Stephanie Wachnuk, Darby Petersen, Keith Moore
and Shruti Srinivas

At the time of publishing this report, we are one year into the
COVID-19 pandemic.

During this time, perhaps more than ever, the sense of calm
that comes from being out in the natural setting of the river
valley (while practicing appropriate social distancing) brings a
much-needed solace during these stressful days.

This once again reaffirms the value and importance of the work
of the RVA to connect people to this wonderful gem in our own
backyards.



"Trails not only connect us with each other, but they also connect us with ourselves."

MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

GUY BRIDGEMAN, CHAIR



MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As I reflect upon the past year and the unprecedented uncertainty and change that the pandemic brought, there is still an underlying sense of increased community and the incalculable value of connection, to ourselves, to others and to nature. Upon the retirement of Brent Collingwood in December, I was honoured to accept the Executive Director's position and humbled by the challenges that lay ahead with the shuffling of government priorities and the need to pivot to online engagement with partners and the community.

In light of those challenges, the RVA reviewed its Strategic Plan and re-focused our efforts and resources to continue work to connect the 100 kms of the regional trail from Sturgeon County to the Town of Devon. We advanced important pieces of infrastructure such as the Hwy 15 Underslung Pedestrian Bridge and the Edmonton to Strathcona County Pedestrian Bridge, currently in preliminary design and consultation. Also completed were the new Battery Creek Trail in Devon and the Parkland Nature Trail in Parkland County. By 2024, with these key pieces of infrastructure in place, there will be more than 75 kms of fully connected trail.

With this 75 percent connectivity in view, the Trail Naming Initiative was resurrected, focusing on an effective process for garnering a marketable end-to-end trail name that respects and highlights the history and geography of the region. We also engaged the community with an interactive calendar, online scavenger hunts, and educational blogs related to river valley trail etiquette and usage and all it has to offer.

I remain incredibly impressed by the work of our team and the never-wavering vision of connecting the North Saskatchewan river valley trail system while at the same time respecting and appreciating its natural beauty. This truly is a passion project for all involved.

KRISTINE ARCHIBALD, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



PROJECTS SUMMARY

Even with the shutdown of many things in 2020 due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, it was a busy year of behind-the-scenes planning for new connections in the river valley, along with great progress for ongoing projects—and recipient of an additional award.



Battery Creek Trail, Devon

Construction begins on Highway 15 pedestrian bridge

Construction on the new “underslung” pedestrian bridge continued to be built in conjunction with the twinning of Highway 15, connecting Sturgeon County to the City of Fort Saskatchewan. This will be a critical piece of infrastructure in achieving our regional connectivity goal from Devon to Sturgeon County.

New trail at Battery Creek

A new addition to the Devon river valley park system has added 3 km of trail along Battery Creek ravine and the top of the riverbank. Many thanks to the local landowner for his cooperation and participation in the RVA's Vision.

New trail in Parkland County

The Parkland Nature Trail has been completed, with the official opening in the spring of 2021. This new trail adds 3 km of trail east along the river. It includes over 700 stairs up and down the bank and affords breathtaking vistas of the river.

Additional Accolades for the Edmonton funicular

The 100 St Funicular (which includes the Frederick G. Todd Lookout) was awarded its fourth accolade, the National Urban Design Award. This is in addition to the International Architecture Award the Canadian Institute of Steel Construction - Alberta Steel Design Award of Excellence and the Edmonton Urban Design Award of Excellence.

WHAT'S AHEAD

The RVA's three priority areas are completion of connectivity through trails and bridges, trail naming and marking, along with public engagement through social media and our website. We also continue work on our Advocacy Plan as we strategize funding for the Phase II Initiatives.



Strategic plan

From the Strategic Planning process of 2020, the RVA's priority areas are completion of connectivity through trails and bridges, naming and marking, public engagement, and government advocacy for phase II funding. Our updated **Strategic Plan** sharpens the focus on what we need to accomplish in order to achieve our vision. In addition to identifying strategic priorities for advancing our work (funding, land access, infrastructure), the review re-affirmed the importance of connecting people to the river valley through infrastructure, activities, and awareness that make it easier to access and enjoy.

Planning and construction

The RVA, in concert with the City of Edmonton and Strathcona County, will also continue work to advance the Edmonton to Strathcona County Footbridge in Edmonton's northeast. This project is in the preliminary design and construction phase, with final approval for the construction being considered in the Fall of 2021.

Land acquisition

The RVA will continue to pursue land access in the southwest quadrant (Rabbit Hill ravine to west Anthony Henday bridge) in order to fulfill the organization's vision of a fully connected river valley trail system. The organization will work closely with landowners along top of bank to secure access through means that include rights-of-way and easements.

Naming and Marking

The RVA will continue to advance the End-to-End Trail Naming Initiative.

Government grants

The RVA will continue to work on our advocacy plan as we engage with the provincial government to encourage approval of the organization's funding application for its second phase of projects that will create a fully connected river valley trail system.

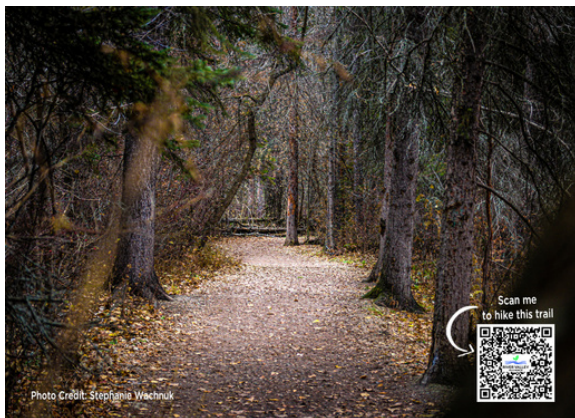
CONNECTING WITH COMMUNITY

Covid-19 and the Pivot to Connecting With Community Online

2020 was a year that none of us could have predicted. While we acknowledge that it has been a hard year for many, it's also been a year that so many people have found reprieve and joy in the river valley. While we all adapted to a different daily life, the behind-the-scenes planning for new ways to connect as a community continued. While large gatherings could not continue the RVA created new ways to engage with the community until our regular in-person activities could continue.

Interactive Calendars

For the 2021 calendar, we added the interactive element of a QR code to each month. Each month's QR code links to a trek the trail blog that highlights the trail where the photograph of the month was taken. Using the calendar we have created monthly interactive scavenger hunts to encourage more people to go out and trek the trails. For monthly scavenger hunts, we have been giving away RVA trek the trail hoodies as prizes.



RVA Ambassador Program

Over 110 people have signed up to be RVA Ambassadors since this program was piloted in March 2019. Ambassadors share their love of the river valley with others by promoting and raising awareness of the trails, pedestrian bridges, and other RVA projects that make it easier for everyone to connect with the river valley. They do this through social media, by leading or supporting activities on the trails, and by volunteering at river valley events. Thank you to all of the Ambassadors who lent a hand (or a voice) to help celebrate the river valley and the work of the RVA. The RVA looks forward to continuing to grow and enhance this program in 2021.

100%

more followers on Instagram since 2019, doubling our following.

5100+

uses of the hashtag "#trekthetrails" since its launch in 2018



Hosted trail walks

RVA staff hosted Board and committee members, RVA Ambassadors, and partners by organizing two trail walks in 2020 to draw attention to RVA projects. Trail walks were organized on the new Battery Creek Trail in Devon and Gold Bar and Rundle Parks along the river to the Strathcona Science Park Footbridge. As the restrictions due to Covid-19 increased, the RVA was no longer able to hold in-person trail walks. To stay engaged with the community, monthly trail walks shifted to a virtual platform; using the interactive calendar to link to a featured trail of the month; individuals could then use a trail trek blog for a self-directed adventure.

Over the Christmas Holidays, the RVA held a 14-day virtual scavenger hunt that featured 14 unique locations throughout the river valley, encouraging people to get out to explore trails unfamiliar to them. Thanks to our Christmas scavenger hunt prize sponsors Track N Trail, The Fort Detailers, River Valley Adventure Company, United Sport & Cycle, Revolution Cycle, The Grindstone Theatre, Florida Pizza & Steakhouse Devon and MKP IT Management Consulting LTD.



Trail Trek How-To blogs

An important component of the RVA's strategic plan is to support use of the trail system by providing tools and resources to make it easy to get out there and enjoy it. In that spirit, last year the RVA launched a series of Trail Trek How-To Blogs. The blogs are hosted on the organization's website (rivervalley.ab.ca/trekthetrails) and feature how-to routes of short and medium trail distances all set in these magical, natural surroundings - many of which highlight RVA projects and other interesting geographical landmarks with the six RVA shareholder municipalities. This continues to be the most popular of the online content produced and distributed by the RVA.

GOVERNANCE AND STAFF

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Chair

Guy Bridgeman

Municipal Directors

Councillor Wayne Bokenfohr, Sturgeon County

Councillor Sarah Hamilton, City of Edmonton

Councillor Gordon Harris, City of Fort Saskatchewan

Councillor AnnLisa Jensen, Parkland County

Councillor Sandy Koroll, Town of Devon

Councillor Robert Parks, Strathcona County

Councillor Kelly Vandenberghe, Leduc County / left December

Councillor Michael Walters, City of Edmonton / left April

Councillor Aaron Paquette, City of Edmonton / joined April

Directors at Large

Wendy Boje, Parkland County / left April

Marcel Chichak, City of Edmonton

Michael Gardiner, City of Edmonton

Bob Horton, Strathcona County

Andrew Leach, City of Edmonton / left April

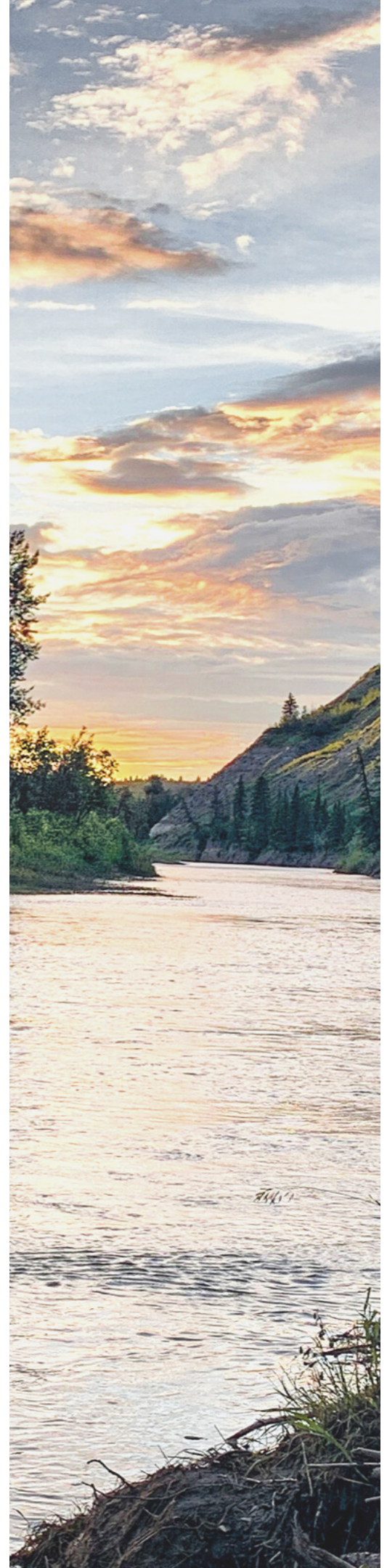
John McGladdery, Strathcona County

Carol Moreno, City of Edmonton (CEC Chair Interim) / left June

Wendy Boje, Parkland County (CEC Chair Interim) / returned July

Cathy Kiss, Strathcona County / joined April

Katherine O'Neill, City of Edmonton / joined April



COMMITTEES

GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

Wendy Boje, Committee Chair / left April
Katherine O'Neill, Committee Chair / joined April
Peter Faid / left April
Andrew Leach / left April
John McGladdery / joined April
Guy Bridgeman, RVA Board Chair
Brent Collingwood, RVA Executive Director (ex-officio)
Kristine Archibald, RVA Finance Manager (ex-officio)

IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE

Bob Horton, Committee Chair
Brad Armstrong / joined June
Pat Butler
Marcel Chichak
Guy Bridgeman, RVA Board Chair
Brent Collingwood, RVA Executive Director (ex-officio)
Kristine Archibald, RVA Finance Manager (ex-officio)

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Michael Gardiner, Committee Chair
Mark McRae
Neil Cockburn / joined June
Guy Bridgeman, RVA Board Chair
Brent Collingwood, RVA Executive Director (ex-officio)
Kristine Archibald, RVA Finance Manager (ex-officio)

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Carol Moreno, Interim Committee Chair, City of Edmonton / left July
Grant Geldart, Town of Devon
Evelyn Mark, Town of Devon / left May
Mike Evans, Parkland County / left April
Valerie Turner, Parkland County / left April
Jason Jama, City of Edmonton / left May
Wendy Lickacz, City of Edmonton / left May





COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT COMMITTEE CONTINUED

Suzanne McAfee, City of Edmonton

Maelle Piquee, City of Edmonton / left May

Stephanie Borgs, Strathcona County

Dennis Lukawesky, Strathcona County / left November

Jeff Adema, City of Fort Saskatchewan / left December

Jim Cockburn, City of Fort Saskatchewan / left April

Wendy Boje, Parkland County / joined July, Interim Committee Chair

Avelyn Nicol, Parkland County / joined July

Mike Pye, City of Edmonton / joined November

Graham Taylor, City of Edmonton / joined April

Kendell Slusarchuk, City of Fort Saskatchewan / joined April

VOLUNTEERS



RVA AMBASSADORS

Thank you to the over 100 plus ambassadors that have signed up since the ambassador program's launch. We look forward to meeting in person again; until then, we are grateful for all of the social media shares. Keep up the great work!

STAFF

Kristine Archibald, Executive Director

Brent Collingwood, Executive Director/ Retired Dec 2020

Makennah Walker, Marketing and Communications Manager

Sydney Brown, Administrative Coordinator



SPECIAL THANKS

Phil Krysa, Principal, Architectural Works Inc

Ruth Stiksma, Corporate Support Group

Kyle Matheson, NetSmart

Trevor Tessier, Strong Coffee Marketing

Shannon Troke, King and Company Chartered Accountants

Chris Schulte, King and Company Chartered Accountants

SUMMARY OF FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

SUMMARY OF FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

SUMMARY OF FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

SUMMARY OF FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

SUMMARY OF FINANCIAL STATEMENTS



RIVER VALLEY ALLIANCE

4638 - 90A Avenue

Edmonton, AB T6B 2P9

587-401-3355

contact@rivervalley.ab.ca

rivervalley.ab.ca



[/rivervalleyalliance](https://www.facebook.com/rivervalleyalliance)



[@RiverValleyPark](https://twitter.com/RiverValleyPark)



[@rivervalleyalliance](https://www.instagram.com/rivervalleyalliance)

Trek the Trails

