



SYLVAN LAKE TOURISM FESTIVAL AND EVENT STRATEGY

FINAL - MARCH 29, 2018

expedition
MANAGEMENT CONSULTING

March 29, 2018

Denise Williams
Executive Director
Sylvan Lake Chamber of Commerce
5012 48 Ave.
Sylvan Lake, AB
T4S 1G6

Dear Ms. Williams:

Please find enclosed the Final Sylvan Lake Tourism Festival and Event Strategy. It has been a pleasure working with you and the Committee to develop this important document. We are looking forward to learning about all your achievements over the coming years as you implement the tourism festival and event strategy.

If you have any questions or require clarification on the attached report, please feel free to contact me at 780-266-7888.

Sincerely,



Justin Rousseau, Managing Director
Expedition Management Consulting Ltd.

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Breakfast with Santa - Sylvan Lake

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Project Overview

From June 2017 to February 2018, Expedition Management Consulting Ltd. was commissioned to develop the Sylvan Lake Tourism Festival and Event Strategy. The objective of this project was to develop a tourism festival and event strategy that will position Sylvan Lake as a must-experience event tourism destination.



The project included a variety of qualitative and quantitative research activities including:

- Visitor survey review (N = 953)
- Resident survey (N = 102)
- Business survey (N = 27)
- One-on-one interviews with stakeholders
- Stakeholder Café hosted in Sylvan Lake
- Committee meetings
- Review of internal documents and secondary research

Why Invest?

As a popular resort town, Sylvan Lake already experiences significant benefits from the tourism industry. However, the vast majority of visitation takes place during the summer season, which concentrates these benefits over a short time period. This seasonality poses challenges to businesses, such as reducing their ability to operate year-round. Expanding Sylvan Lake's tourism offering by developing captivating festivals and events in the off-season will increase visitation throughout the rest of the year and allow the community to benefit from tourism all year round.

If the strategy was implemented as described in this report, an additional \$4.4M in direct visitor expenditures could be generated in the off-season over the next 10 years in Sylvan Lake.

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Vision

Sylvan Lake's vision for tourism festival and event development is as follows:

5 Year Vision

- Sylvan Lake has a clear framework, organizational structure and funding model in place to support tourism festival and event development.
- New and innovative tourism event programming is in place in the off-season and is well received from visitors.
- Target markets are aware of an emerging event scene in Sylvan Lake and have become actively engaged in the tourism festival offering.
- Sylvan Lake has attracted new local and regional partners in tourism event development and has highlighted local and regional tourism product.

10 Year Vision

- Sylvan Lake is a destination that is known for delivering outstanding festivals and events year-round. The festival and event scene can be described as emergent, trendy, vibrant and engaging.
- Sylvan Lake's event hosting system is sustainable and poised for future growth.

Strategy

Sylvan Lake will primarily employ a product development strategy moving forward. This means the strategy will focus on developing unique and interesting festival and event product for regional tourism markets. The following points support the product development focus:

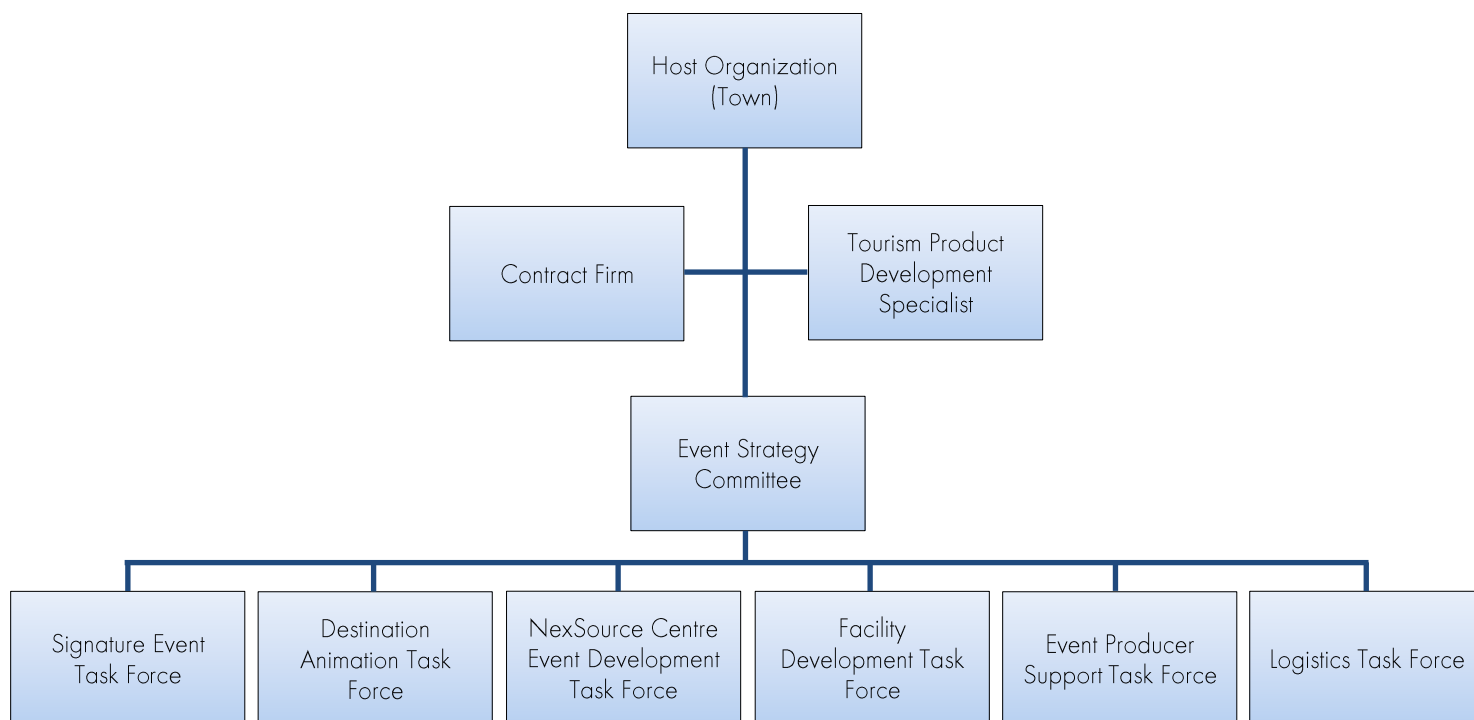
- Need for New Product** – There is a need to further develop the festival and event product offering in Sylvan Lake during the off-season. Few existing events have a tourism-focus, and there is not enough event product to keep visitor markets engaged throughout the year.
- Strong Existing Markets** – Edmonton, Calgary, Red Deer and their surrounding areas represent over half of Alberta's population (nearly 2.5 million people), and they are all within an hour and a half drive to Sylvan Lake.
- Destination Awareness** – Sylvan Lake is recognized as an attractive tourism destination by its target markets and a high percentage of visitors say they will visit Sylvan Lake again (91%). This large, loyal customer base is engaged during the summer, and opportunity exists to attract them during the off-season by offering compelling festival and event tourism product.

Five opportunities for tourism festival and event development in Sylvan Lake have been put forward in this strategy. They include animating the destination, offering seasonal festivals in the Fall, Spring and Winter (e.g. music, culinary, celebrating the holidays), developing "events in a box," leveraging the NexSource Centre for festivals and events, and investing in capital developments to support festivals and events. For an expanded description of these opportunities, see Section 6.

Organizational Structure

Through the process, the Town was identified as the most suitable organization to take on the role of “Host Organization” for the strategy. The role of the Host Organization is that of facilitator, trainer, organization and champion... not producer. The following organizational structure is recommended for the implementation of the strategy.

The role of the Host Organization is that of facilitator, trainer, organizer and champion ... not producer.



Funding the Strategy

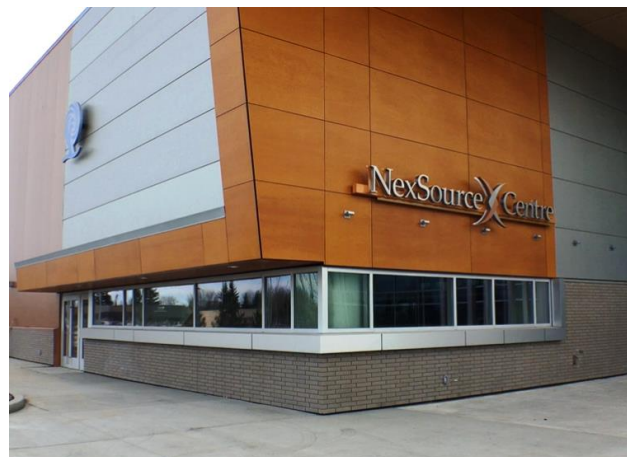
The strategy outlines a list of funding sources that can be used to support implementation of the strategy in the short and long term. The main sources of funding include:

1. Increase in business activity and tax base
2. Project funding and in-kind contributions from government sources
3. Stakeholder contributions
4. Corporate partnerships



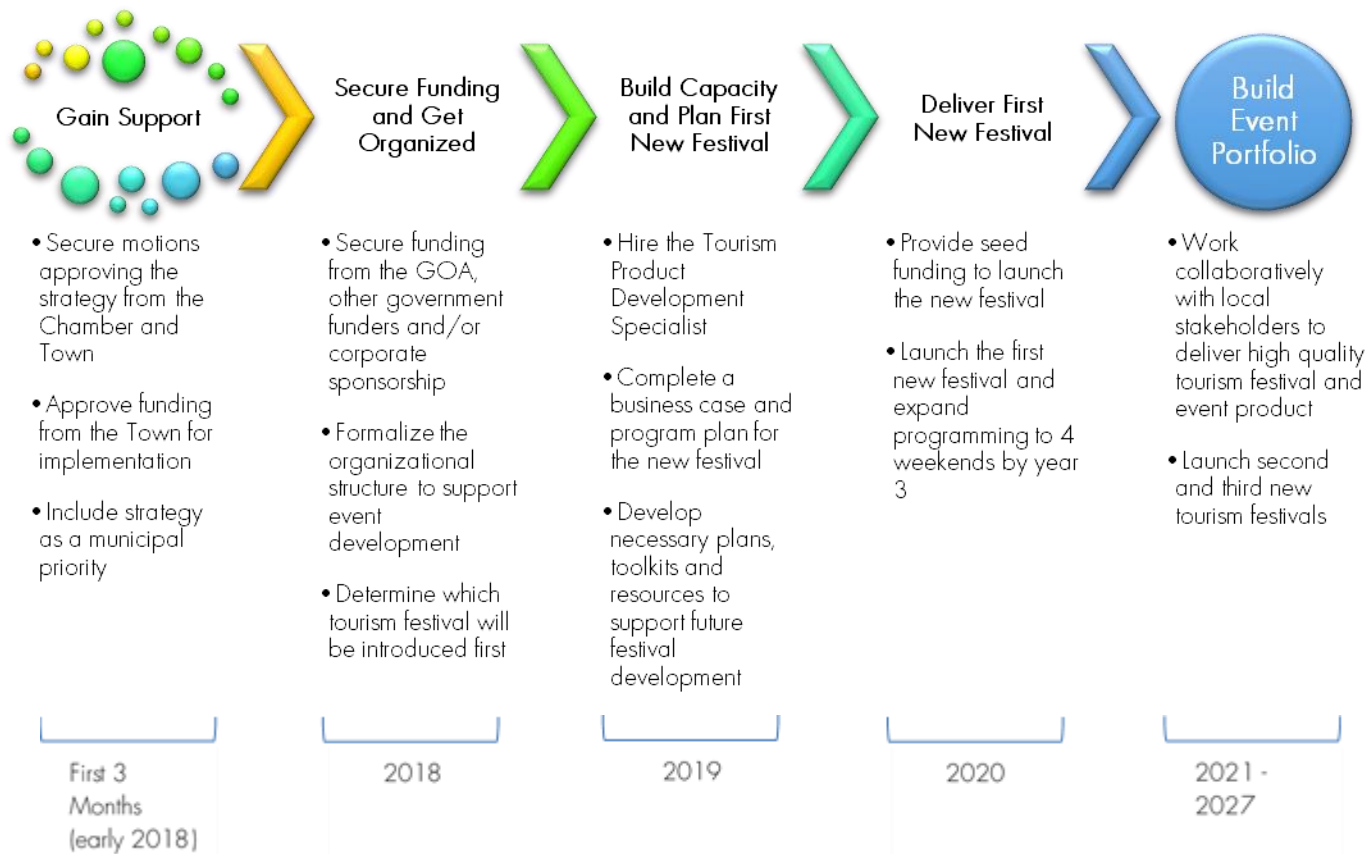
Action Plan

The Action Plan lays out 46 initiatives over the short (1 – 5 years), and long (6 – 10 years) term that will assist the community achieve its vision for tourism festival and event development. In the short term, it will be critical to establish a Host Organization, secure funding for initiatives, and begin building the framework needed for tourism festival and event development. A preliminary budget has been provided that suggests the strategy seeks an operational investment from the Municipality in the amount of \$12.5K for the first year, \$70K/yr for year two to five, and a mix of grants, sponsorships, partner contributions and cooperative marketing dollars in the amount of \$227K for the first five years (total) to address the highest priority items.



Implementation Timeline

The implementation timeline below provides a snapshot of the main activities in the strategy. This timeline describes 10 years of activity, however it will be important to get some initiatives “in the ground” early on in the process.



Measuring Success

As the strategy is implemented it will be important to measure success. By measuring the results of activities, stakeholders will be better able to pinpoint which activities are producing results and which activities need to be focused on more. Having clear and compelling evidence/statistics to point to will also bolster support for the strategy within the community, as well as enhance the attractiveness of Sylvan Lake for festival and event investment.

Key performance indicators (KPI's) have been developed relating to Sylvan Lake's vision for tourism festival and event development (see Figure 11 on page 70). It is suggested that the KPI's are evaluated and amended on an annual basis in order to reflect changing business conditions.

Conclusion

The Sylvan Lake Tourism Festival and Event Strategy offers a strategic direction that will advance Sylvan Lake toward its vision to become a destination that is known for delivering outstanding festivals and events year-round. The community is in the early stages of tourism festival and event development, which means significant time, energy and investment will be required over the short, medium and long term from both the public and private sectors. However, the community is beginning from a position of strength with its existing event offerings, strong existing markets, and strategic location. With some hard work, focused effort and collaboration the community will achieve its vision for tourism festival and event development.



01

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Jazz at the Lake Festival - Sylvan Lake

01 PROJECT OVERVIEW

Sylvan Lake is a popular tourist destination in Alberta that attracts over 1 million visitors annually. However, the bulk of this visitation occurs in the summer season. Because of this acute seasonality, there is a desire to increase visitation to the community during the off-seasons of Fall, Winter and Spring. Tourism festivals and events have been identified as an opportunity to achieve this goal. The Town's large spring-fed lake, superior waterfront developments and strategic location between Alberta's two largest urban centres (Edmonton and Calgary) make it a unique location in which to host a wide variety of festivals and events that can attract tourists.



Project Objective

The objective of this project is to develop a tourism festival and event strategy that will position Sylvan Lake as a must-experience event tourism destination.

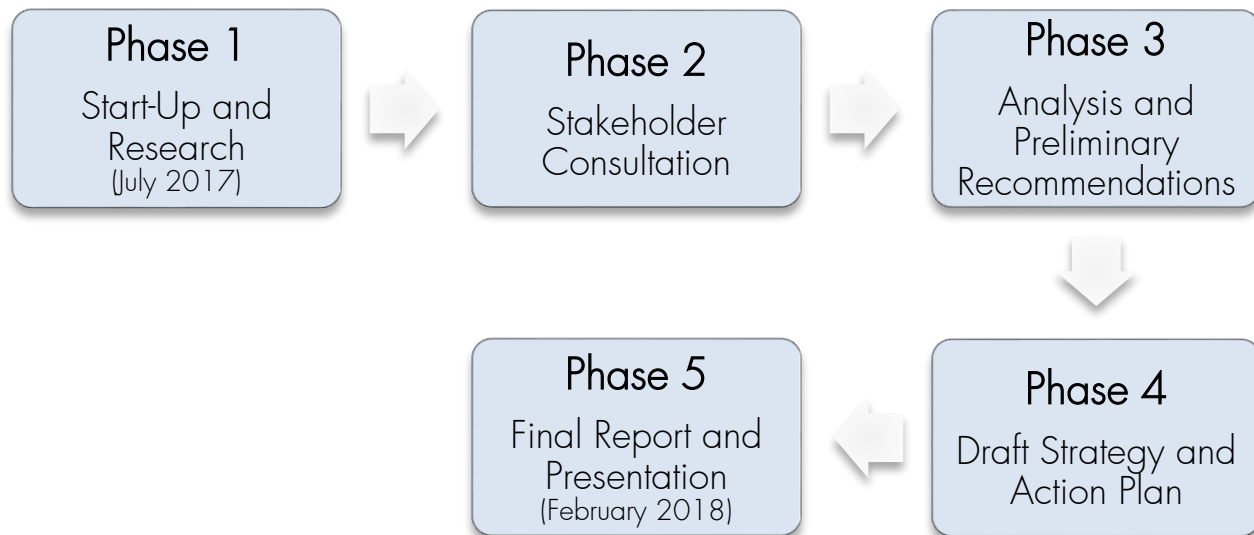
Project Team Members

The Sylvan Lake Festival and Event Strategy Working Group was established to oversee the project and provide inspiration for the development of a destination-wide shared vision for event tourism in Sylvan Lake. Below is a list of working group representatives.

Sylvan Lake Festival and Event Strategy Working Group	
Organization	Representatives
Committee Members	Megan Hanson, Brandon Fancie, Cathy Forner, Cheryl Fisher, Lori Angebrandt, Trevor Pratt
Town of Sylvan Lake (Recreation)	Sean Durkin, Michelle Houle
Town of Sylvan Lake (Parks)	Lee Furlotte
Town of Sylvan Lake (Economic Development)	Vicki Kurz
Sylvan Lake Chamber of Commerce	Denise Williams, Dave Phillips
Consultant Team	
Expedition Management Consulting Ltd.	Justin Rousseau (Project Lead), Maxwell Harrison, Michelle Levasseur, Candice Stasynec

Process

The Sylvan Lake Tourism Festival and Event Strategy project had five, interconnected phases as described below.



Overview of Research

A variety of primary and secondary research activities were conducted to develop this report. Secondary research was gathered from the Town of Sylvan Lake, Government of Alberta departments, event tourism organizations, and an online review. Primary research was completed through an in-person Stakeholder Café, interviews with stakeholders and three separate surveys (visitor, resident, business).

1. Surveys Conducted

- a. Visitor Survey Review (n = 953)
- b. Resident Survey (n = 102)
- c. Business Survey (n = 27)

2. Interviews Conducted

- a. Sylvan Lake Aqua Splash – Charlie Everest
- b. Best Western Plus Hotel – Sue Fisher
- c. Snake Lake Brewing Company – Adam Nachbaur
- d. NexSource Centre – Monique Pummings and Jared Waldo
- e. Royal Canadian Mounted Police – Sergeant Leseck

3. Meetings Conducted

a. Committee Meeting #1

Date: June 22, 2017

Purpose: confirm project objectives and SWOT analysis

b. Stakeholder Café

Date: September 21, 2017

Purpose: gather feedback from stakeholders

c. Committee Meeting #2

Date: November 9, 2017

Purpose: review the Event Opportunity Assessment and set the direction for the Draft Report

d. Committee Meeting #3

Date: December 7, 2017

Purpose: review the Draft Report

e. Final Presentation

Date: February, 2018

Purpose: present the Final Report

4. Documents Reviewed

a. Town of Sylvan Lake Tourism Strategy (2013 – 2018)

b. Town of Sylvan Lake Cultural Master Plan (2017)

c. Town of Sylvan Lake Investment Attraction Strategy & Implementation Plan (2014)

d. Town of Sylvan Lake 10 Year Strategic Plan (2013 – 2018)

e. Town of Sylvan Lake 10 Year Capital Plan (2017)

f. NexSource Centre Business Plan (2017)

g. Special Events Policy R-001-003A

h. Special Event Rules and Regulations

Document Overview

Section 2 provides a case for investment in tourism festivals and events. Sections 3 and 4 offer an analysis of the current internal and external situation in relation to tourism festivals and events in Sylvan Lake. Section 5 outlines a future vision and sets the strategy for tourism festival and event development in Sylvan Lake. Section 6 describes opportunities for tourism festival and event development, while Section 7 lays out the recommended operating structure going forward. Section 8 provides an action plan and steps for implementation, and Section 9 concludes the report.



02

CASE FOR INVESTMENT

Santa Claus Parade Fireworks - Sylvan Lake

02 CASE FOR INVESTMENT

There are many economic and community benefits to be gained by investing in tourism festivals and events. This section provides a brief overview of the various benefits tourism festivals and events can bring to Sylvan Lake.

Economic Benefits

Festivals and events can have a significant economic impact on a host destination when delivered correctly. As suggested by Jago and Dwyer, festivals and events have the potential to attract visitors who otherwise would not visit the area as well as retain local community members who otherwise may travel elsewhere.¹ In addition, it is argued that event tourists have a higher than average daily expenditures.²

Communities across Alberta are embracing tourism events for their positive economic impacts. The City of Leduc, for example, has focused its efforts on sporting events, which have generated significant economic impact. Economic impact analyses have shown that between 2010 and 2015 sport tourism events in Leduc generated the following benefits.³

Case Study: Economic Benefits of Sport Tourism Events in Leduc, Alberta

- \$8.1 million in direct expenditures.
- \$12.9 million increase to local economic activity.
- 88.3 FTE increase in local employment.
- \$5.8 million increase to local incomes.
- \$308,000 increase to local tax revenues.



"In some cases, tourists enjoy their visit so much that they choose to stay."

It is important to note that tourism activity brings visitor dollars into communities. This is "new" money that then circulates throughout the local economy; multiplying its benefit. Additionally, tourism events can encourage increased overnight visitation and expose communities to potential investors and home owners. In some cases, tourists enjoy their visit so much that they choose to stay. Tourism can also positively impact other sectors of local economies and encourage business retention.

Community Benefits

Events also have the ability to bring host communities together. Another positive impact of tourism events is the creation of authentic, community supported events which demonstrate the desired event characteristics. Festivals and events are able to contribute to place making as they provide a space and time away from everyday life in which intense extraordinary experiences can be created and shared.⁴ In addition to creating a space away from everyday life, events also aim to foster the cultural, health and development of a community by enhancing the community spirit.⁵

Festivals and events can also provide the following community benefits:

- *Strengthen community pride* – Celebrating local culture and sharing it with visitors can be a significant source of pride for communities, individuals and cultures.
- *Enhanced community engagement* – Festivals and events provide opportunities for individuals within the community to become engaged through business, volunteerism and event/activity execution.
- *Enhanced quality of life for residents* – Communities that embrace tourism festivals and events can often justify enhancements to infrastructure, events and activities well beyond what could be achieved without a stable source of external revenue flowing into the community. Local community members benefit from enhanced amenities.

More broadly, the tourism industry is also capable of contributing to the preservation and revitalization of built and natural environments. When a destination's unique characteristics (e.g. lakeshore, spring-fed lake, authentic history) are leveraged for tourism events, they acquire an enhanced value that goes beyond just the economic considerations. Travellers experience an emotional connection to the places they visit, while (simultaneously) residents find a new-found significance for things that they may have taken for granted before. The addition of such values provides the impetus to further protect significant community and environmental assets and, in some cases, enhance them.

Good places to visit are also often good places to live. By embracing tourism festivals and events and being inviting to visitors, Sylvan Lake can further enhance the benefits they receive from tourism beyond the economic sphere alone.

Why Invest?

As a popular resort town, Sylvan Lake already experiences significant benefits from the tourism industry. However, the vast majority of visitation takes place during the summer season, which concentrates these benefits over a short time period. This seasonality poses challenges to businesses, such as reducing their ability to operate year-round. Expanding Sylvan Lake's tourism offering by developing captivating festivals and events in the off-season will increase visitation throughout the rest of the year and allow the community to benefit from tourism all year round.

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03

INTERNAL ANALYSIS

1913 Days - Sylvan Lake

03 INTERNAL ANALYSIS

Current State

Sylvan Lake hosts a number of festivals and events throughout the year. Currently, there are three large annual events that draw significant amounts of visitors, including Jazz at the Lake, Shake the Lake and Winterfest. Sylvan Lake also has a number of community events, including 1913 Days, Yuletide Festival, Spooktacular Extravaganza, Santa Claus Parade and others. In addition, sport organizations occasionally approach Sylvan Lake to host their events, such as the 2016 Chinook Triathlon.

Sylvan Lake's tourism festival and event scene is largely driven by the non-profit sector at this time. The Town also delivers events, which are community-focused and usually take place in the off-season. The downturn in the provincial economy has led to a plateau, or even a decline, in event development in Sylvan Lake. However, the destination is well positioned for growth with new facilities coming online and new land along the waterfront being recently acquired by the Town.

Challenges Facing Tourism Festival and Event Development

Challenges facing tourism festival and event development in Sylvan Lake are centred around three main themes including product development, market awareness and organizational structure.

Product Development

At the present time, there are no formal mechanisms in place to develop new tourism events. In the off-season there are limited tourism events and activities available. In addition, services and business hours are reduced in the off-season posing a challenge for new tourism event development. In general, businesses are not fully engaged in developing complementary programming to support tourism events. This is a significant gap and a focus of action items in subsequent sections of this document.

Businesses are not fully engaged in developing complementary programming to support tourism events.

Market Awareness

Sylvan Lake is a well-known summer destination, but is not as well known for attracting visitors in the off-season. Creating market awareness of Sylvan Lake as a year-round destination will be achieved through the implementation of the tourism festival and event strategy.

Organizational Structure

At the present time there is no one organization responsible for tourism event development and there are no dedicated resources applied to event attraction and execution.

The Town's recreation department is currently allocating significant staff resources to the implementation of community events. These events serve an important social function, but do little to further the tourism goals of the community. Tourism development falls under the responsibility of the Town's Economic Development Department, which has a staff compliment of 1 FTE. Consequently, tourism event development (and tourism in general) has been resourced as an "off the side of the desk" function. If the Town truly wants to further tourism development in Sylvan Lake, there will need to be a significant shift in approach.

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Opportunities for Tourism Festival and Event Development

There are many opportunities for tourism event development in Sylvan Lake. Below we have identified the main strengths the community can leverage in order to get the most out of the strategy.

The Lake

The lake is the "star of the show" when it comes to tourism development in the community. There are endless opportunities to further leverage this natural asset and engage visitors in sharing in its beauty. Creating linkages between tourism event development and the future development of the recently acquired waterfront site will be extremely important.



Location

Sylvan Lake is strategically located with excellent access to important urban markets of Red Deer, Edmonton and Calgary. Day trips or quick over-night visits to attend planned events in Sylvan Lake are realistic for over 2 million regional visitors.

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Off-Season Programming

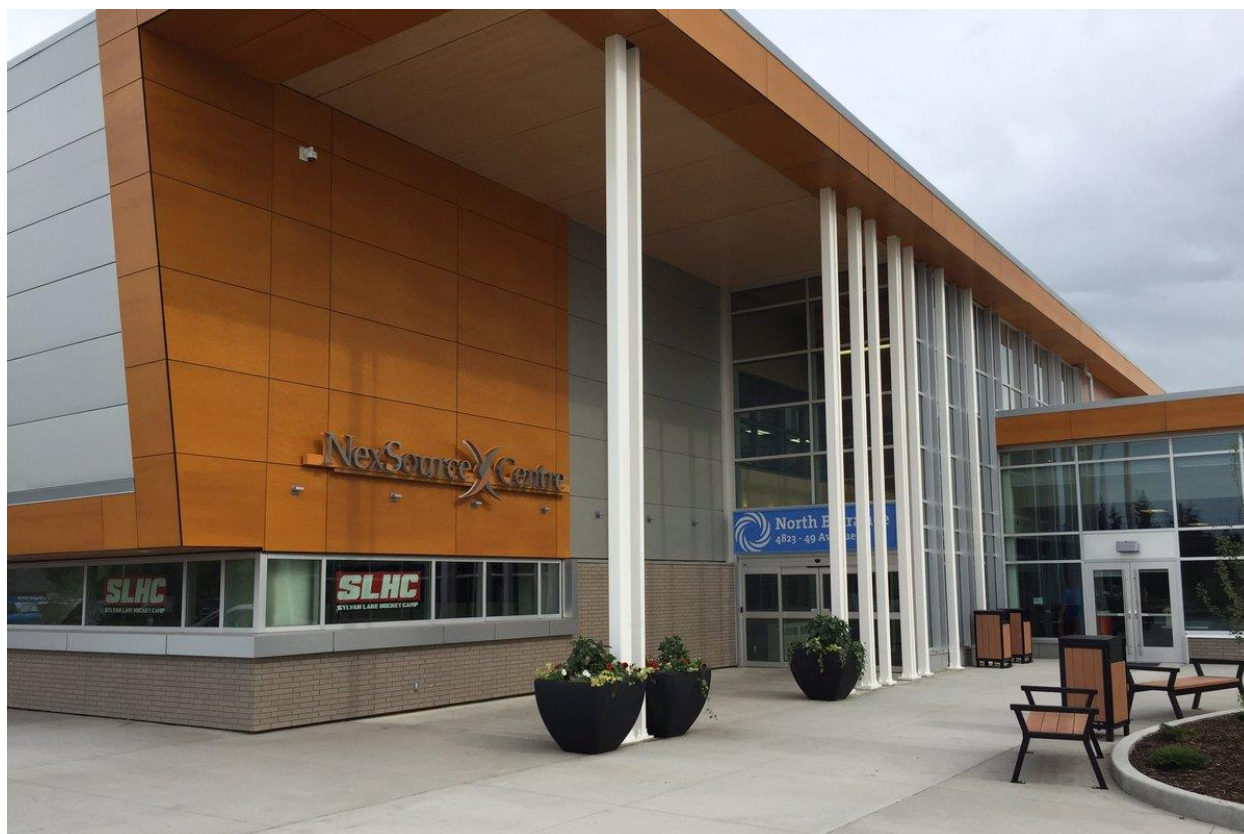
Spring and fall are beautiful in Sylvan Lake and the weather isn't too cold, therefore there is opportunity for new events during these periods. In addition, the Town already offers a significant amount of programming around the Christmas season and has invested in creating a Water Front Winter Village atmosphere. Building upon this existing winter programming is a key opportunity.

Market Awareness

Although market awareness is identified as a challenge it can also be viewed as an opportunity. That is, Sylvan Lake is not starting from scratch. One million people are already visiting the community each year and this puts Sylvan Lake in a position of strength to engage these visitors year-round.

NexSource Centre

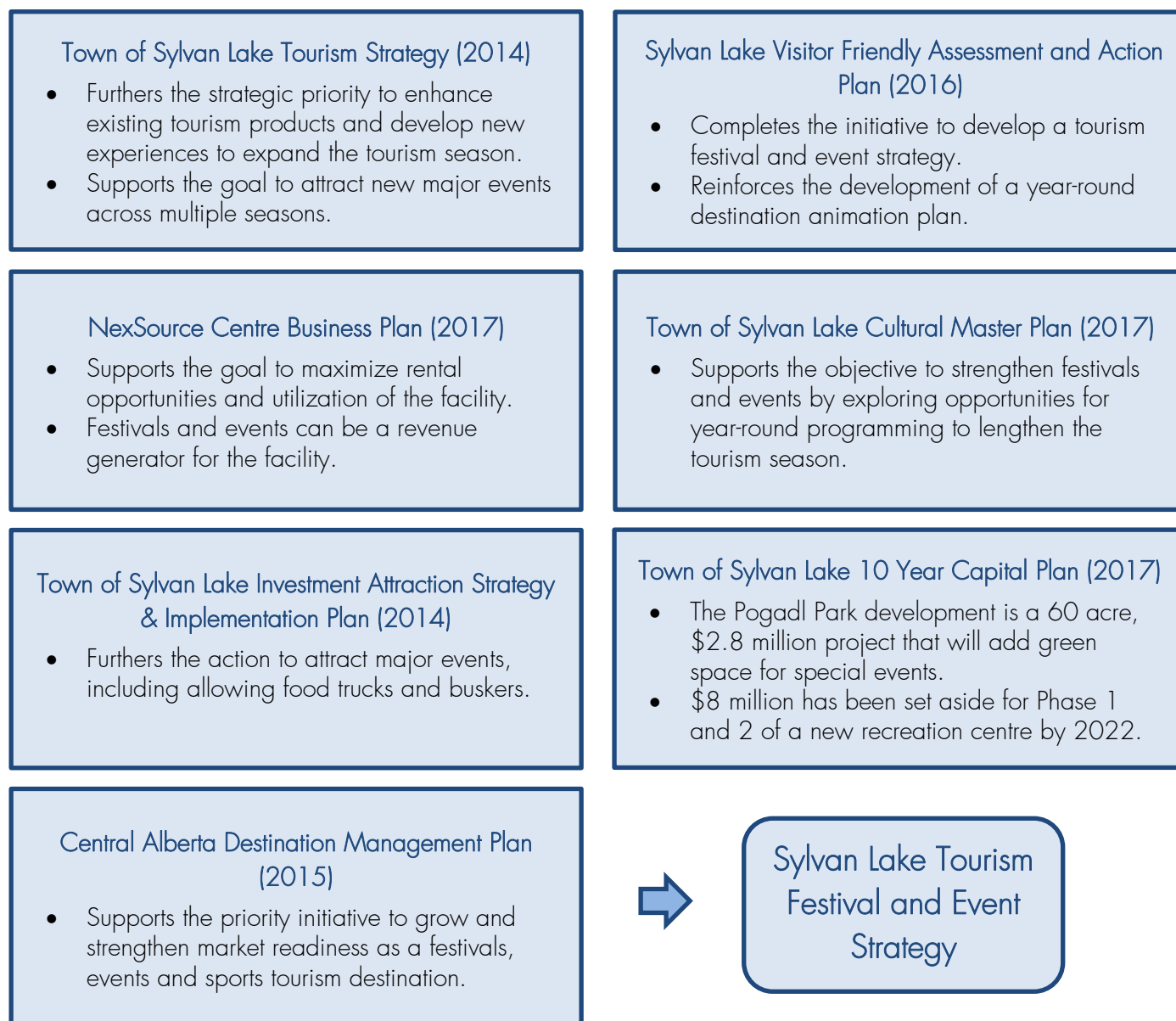
The Town has invested heavily in the newly developed NexSource Centre. This high quality facility offers amenities that position the community to attract both sport tourism events and non-sporting events during the off-season. The Town has identified that during the winter season the arenas and pool are at (or near capacity) with community use. Although this poses a challenge for major sport events during this period, it does not limit the ability of the facility to support tourism events through complementary programming. The Town has a prime opportunity to increase facility utilization at the NexSource Centre through tourism event development.



Strategic Alignment Analysis

Tourism is recognized as a key industry in Sylvan Lake, and significant investment has been made by tourism stakeholders in plans and policies that impact tourism development. The development of a tourism festival and event strategy for Sylvan Lake was found to be in alignment with six existing strategies and plans in the community. Figure 1 provides a summary of key linkages related to the project.

Figure 1. Strategic Alignment of Tourism Festival and Event Development



Policy Analysis

The Town of Sylvan Lake currently has a special events policy and application process in place that promotes a consistent approach to approving special events in the community.⁶ This policy only applies to special events that take place on publicly owned land or in publicly owned facilities within the Town of Sylvan Lake. Event producers must follow the application process and submit a Special Event Permit Application with all supporting documentation to the Recreation and Culture Department. As stated in the policy, applicants are responsible for all costs associated with the special event they want to host. These costs include, but are not limited to, equipment, supplies, parks staff, public works assistance, bylaw enforcement, fire services, policing or any additional services required to host the event or restore Town facilities and lands after the event. Events are categorized in the policy as shown in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2. Special Event Categories

Event Category	Description	Minimum Application Approval Time
A	Events that require a road closure on an arterial roadway and events including special circumstances or approvals.	3 months
B	Events that require a road closure, events that expect more than 500 attendees and/or events that include alcohol.	2 months
C	Events held on all other Town property including parking lots, trails and parks.	1 month

There are no linkages within this policy to an overarching strategy of festival and event development. Special event permits are granted on a first-come, first-served basis, and there are no guidelines relating to preferred events that match the community's brand and target markets. There are also limited supports for festivals and events identified in the policy and application process.

Recreation, Arts and Culture Grants

The Town of Sylvan Lake provides grant funding to organizations providing programs, services, or events that address a community need, contribute to the positive image of Sylvan Lake, and/or enhance the quality of life for residents. This grant program is targeted towards community events, but could be expanded to tourism events since they also have the potential to satisfy the application criteria.

Event Venue Inventory

A strong understanding of a community's event-related infrastructure is needed to develop a sound festival and event strategy. To achieve this, festival and event venues in Sylvan Lake were inventoried and analyzed using a customized inventory tool. This tool was developed based on the unique needs of this study and collected important information, such as the number of venues available, their characteristics/amenities, location, and their associated costs. Research included inputs from stakeholder interviews, existing tourism asset inventories, community websites, an online search, and Sub-Committee input. See Appendix B for a full list of inventoried venues.

Both indoor and outdoor venues were inventoried to identify event hosting capacities and gaps within the community. The key findings from the inventories are described below:

Indoor Venues

There are 30 indoor public and privately operated venues available in the community. These spaces can be categorized as Small Venues (up to 1,200 sq.ft, 200 person capacity), Medium Venues (up to 10,000 sq.ft, 500 person capacity), and Large Venues (up to 20,000 sq.ft, 2,000 person capacity). The majority of indoor venue spaces were Small or Medium Venues. These venues are well-suited to hosting small stage events, celebrations, and other meetings, incentives, conventions and events (MICE) product. Challenges associated with these spaces include:

- Limited access to WiFi and audio-visual equipment (e.g. projector, screen sound systems),
- Mandatory in-house food service or limited food preparation areas and equipment,
- Limited access to a stage,
- Unknown capacity for load in/out amenities, power and drapery.

The NexSource Centre is a large, full service community facility and the only indoor facility that meets the Large Venue classification. This facility is equipped with hosting amenities such as WiFi, audio-visual equipment, chairs, tables and small food prep areas. The challenges with this amenity include:

- No access to a full service, certified food preparation area,
- No drapery and linens,
- The facility is at capacity with regularly scheduled community programming throughout the fall and winter seasons.

Outdoor Venues

There are 15 outdoor venues in the community that are well-suited for events and festivals, including sport fields, parks and green space. However, there are several limitations and unknown factors that cause challenges when using these venues, such as:

- Basic site amenities are limited (e.g. chairs, tables, drapery, access to food preparation areas),
- Unknown technical amenities such as lighting for safety and ambience, power capacity and audio-visual equipment,
- Site logistics are limited or unknown (e.g. washrooms, stage area, parking, fencing/barricades, accessibility and security).

It is also important to note that the community currently does not have a dedicated performing arts venue.

CHINOOK TRIATHLON FE



Chinook Triathlon - Sylvan Lake

04 EXTERNAL ANALYSIS

Best Practices in Event Destinations

A review of best practices in event destinations across Canada was conducted to understand trends in festival and event management. Common best practices included the following:

- Clear roles and accountability for stakeholders.
- Dedicated human resources and funding for festival and event product development and promotion.
- Detailed event hosting guidelines and processes were accessible to prospective event organizers.
- A website portal dedicated to event hosting.
- Contact information for event coordinators was found on the website and in the guidelines.
- Formalized destination animation programs.
- Information regarding costs of hosting an event (e.g. facility rates, civic services charges, etc.).
- Information regarding grant opportunities, sponsorship and other event supports.
- Connections to a local Destination Marketing Organization (DMO).
- Regular communication between stakeholders.

Target Market Analysis

Sylvan Lake welcomes hundreds of thousands of visitors each year, with over 761,000 arriving in the summer months alone.⁷ Nine in ten visitors to Sylvan Lake are Albertans (92.8%).⁸ Of Alberta residents traveling to Sylvan Lake, 87% are within a 90 minute drive from the community (32% from Calgary and Area, 31% from Edmonton and Area, 24% from Central Alberta).⁹ Albertans visiting Sylvan Lake tend to travel in groups of about four (4.3 average party size)¹⁰ and often as a family.¹¹ Albertan visitors tend to be younger (60% under 44 years old), more educated (66% have post-secondary), and with disposable income to spend on leisure activities.¹² The average Albertan visitor to Sylvan Lake spends about \$35 per day, or just over \$150 for the average Alberta visitor party of 4.3 people. Most of the spending is on food and accommodation, followed by transportation, recreation and then shopping.¹³ Albertan visitors stay an average of 1.3 nights on a trip to Sylvan Lake,¹⁴ choosing primarily to camp (62%), followed by staying in a hotel (14%) or a rented cabin, cottage or seasonal home (8%)¹⁵. With an average of only 1.3 nights per trip, this indicates significant day trips to Sylvan Lake.

Canadians from outside Alberta and international travelers also visit Sylvan Lake. Canadians from other provinces make up 4% of visitors, travel in an average party size of 3.7, and stay an average of 4.8 nights. International travelers constitute 3.2% of all visitors to Sylvan Lake, travel in parties averaging 4.3 people, and stay an average of 3.7 nights. Typically, Canadian and international visitors to Alberta have higher daily trip spending than Albertans; however, in Sylvan Lake, this is not the case. Canadian and international travelers were found to spend slightly less per day than Albertans (\$32.93 and \$30.32 respectively), indicating that these visitors are likely visiting and overnighting with friends and family.¹⁶

Research on the visiting friends and relatives (VFR) market in Alberta indicates that residents use their personal experience to determine what to do when friends and family visit from out of town. Planning is typically a joint effort between the hosting resident and their guests. While most hosts are involved in trip planning (80%), very few hosts plan activities in advance of their guests' arrival (15%). More often plans are made once guests arrive (23%) or both before and after guests arrive (41%).¹⁷ Given that planning happens in the destination and is relatively spontaneous, *resident hosts rely on personal experience* to inform decisions on where to go and what to do with guests.

Target Markets

Travel Alberta has identified Free Spirits as the Explorer Quotient (EQ) Traveller Type that is the primary target market for Alberta, and the analysis above suggests this is also the case for Sylvan Lake. Free Spirits are highly social and open-minded travellers. Their enthusiasm for life extends to their outlook on travel. Experimental and adventurous, they indulge in high-end experiences that are shared with others.¹⁸ Important characteristics of the Free Spirit EQ that are most applicable to Sylvan Lake are provided in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3. Free Spirit EQ Profile

Experience and Product Appeal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Festivals, events & spectator sports – Entertainment, performing arts and amusement parks – Shopping, dining and other food-related activities
Travel Values	<p><i>Shared Experiences:</i> Attracted to groups where they can socialize and share the experience with others.</p> <p><i>Luxury:</i> They want to get the best there is to offer when it comes to hotels, restaurants and shopping.</p>
Social Values	<p><i>Attraction for Crowds:</i> They enjoy large group atmospheres – interacting with others gives them a chance to learn about themselves.</p> <p><i>Joy of Consumption:</i> Love to shop – find shopping highly gratifying.</p>
Demographics	<p>Gender: male = 46% female = 54%</p> <p>Education: average</p> <p>Income: higher than average</p> <p>Age:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 18 - 34 = 40% – 35 - 54 = 40% – 55+ = 20%

The following target market is proposed for the Sylvan Lake Tourism Festival and Event Strategy:

Free Spirits – Youthfully-spirited Alberta families drawn to festival and event experiences in an animated waterfront commercial district who are within a 90 minute drive from Sylvan Lake.

Competitor Analysis

As identified in the Sylvan Lake Visitor Friendly Assessment and Action Plan, Sylvan Lake's main competitors are the Village of Wabamun, Gull Lake and Pigeon Lake.¹⁹ These destinations currently offer very little off-season festival and event tourism product for visitors, which indicates a potential market gap.

Edmonton, Calgary, and Red Deer must also be considered as part of the competitor analysis because these destinations host many events in the off-season that typically draw visitors similar to Sylvan Lake's target market. Currently, there is a large amount of festival and event product offered in Edmonton, Calgary and Red Deer (see Figure 4 for examples of tourism festivals and events in the off-season). As Sylvan Lake develops and attracts new tourism festivals and events, consideration should be put towards what festivals/events are available in these destinations at targeted times. This will reduce the negative impacts of competition and help Sylvan Lake find its niche in Alberta's tourism festival and event landscape. Sylvan Lake must also clearly identify its competitive advantage in order to gain market share (see below).

Figure 4. Competitive Tourism Festival and Event Destinations

Competitor	Example Off-Season Tourism Festivals and Events
Edmonton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Edmonton International Film Festival (Fall) – Ice on Whyte (Winter) – Edmonton Beerfest (Spring)
Calgary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Calgary International Film Festival (Fall) – Block Heater (Winter) – Calgary International Children's Festival (Spring)
Red Deer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Canadian Finals Rodeo (Fall) – 2019 Canada Winter Games (Winter) – Annual Vintage Auto Swap Meet (Spring)
Pigeon Lake	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Christmas at the Village (Fall) – Chef N' Pigeon Lake New Years Red Carpet Gala (Winter) – Village Spring Fling (Spring)
Wabamun Lake	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Wabamun Culture Days (Fall) – Christmas Social (Winter)
Gull Lake	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Light It Up Contest (Winter)

Competitive Advantage

Sylvan Lake's competitive advantage is a combination of its **central location**, easily accessed from Edmonton and Calgary, and its **unique local characteristics**, such as the spring-fed lake, Waterfront Commercial District, and culture. This combination sets the Town of Sylvan Lake apart from other festival and event destinations that draw from the same Edmonton, Calgary and Central Alberta markets. The

Other communities may offer a culinary festival, but they do not offer it with Sylvan Lake as a backdrop and therein lies the competitive advantage of the destination.

development of high quality, niche festival and event tourism product will further distinguish Sylvan Lake from its competition. For example, other communities may offer a culinary festival, but they do not offer it with Sylvan Lake as a backdrop and therein lies the competitive advantage of the destination.

Stakeholder Consultation

Visitors, residents, business owners and key stakeholders were consulted as part of this project. Visitors were accessed through Beach Ambassador intercept surveys, residents and business owners were accessed through online surveys, and key stakeholders were accessed through a facilitated Stakeholder Café.

Visitor Survey Results (N=953)

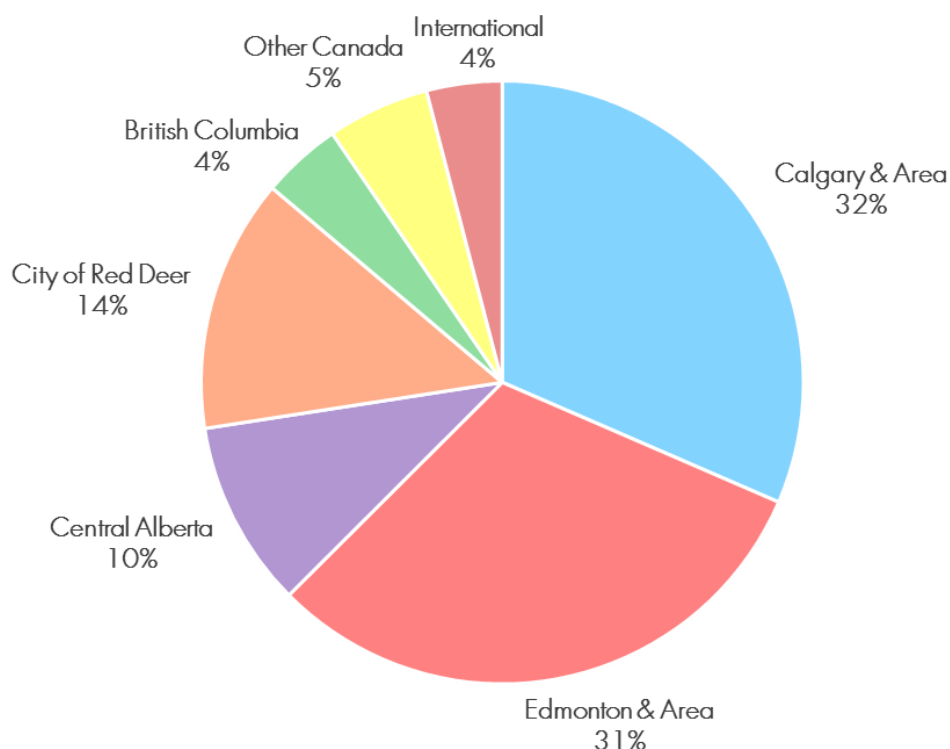
An important input into Sylvan Lake's tourism festival and event strategy is the visitor survey. This annual survey collects valuable information on visitors' origin, motivations, and expectations. To support the tourism festival and event strategy, an extra question was added. This extra question asked, "What types of festivals and events would you like to see offered in Sylvan Lake during the spring, fall and winter? Select all that apply."

The survey was implemented by Beach Ambassadors using a visitor-intercept methodology during the summer of 2017. In total, 953 responses were collected. Below is an analysis of the visitor survey results.

Survey Analysis

The majority of respondents travel to Sylvan Lake from Calgary and Area (32%) and Edmonton and Area (31%), followed by the City of Red Deer (14%) and the rest of Central Alberta (10%). All of these visitor markets are within a 90-minute drive of the destination. The greatest contributing factor for respondents deciding to travel to Sylvan Lake was proximity (47%). Attending an event/festival (3%) was not a significant driver of visitation during the summer season.

Question 1: Where are you visiting from?*

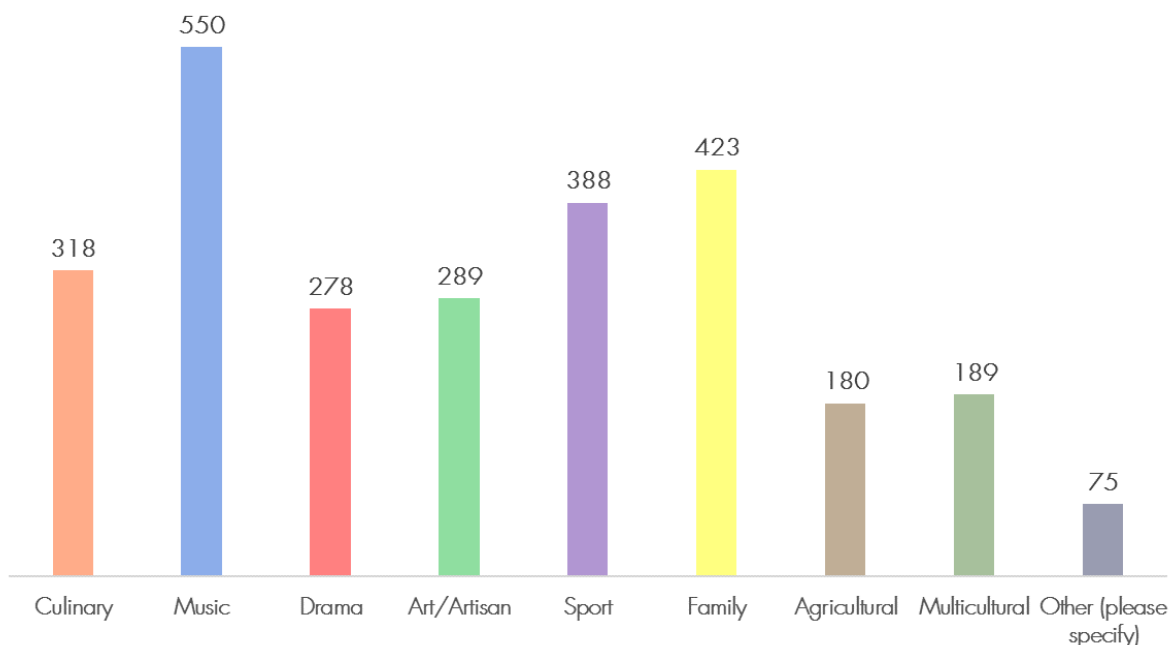


*Coded responses were unavailable for the 2017 and 2016 visitor surveys. Therefore, data from the 2015 visitor survey is used.

A large majority of respondents had previously been to Sylvan Lake (86%), while only 14% had never previously visited. Additionally, an impressive 91% of respondents said they will visit Sylvan Lake again. This indicates a high degree of awareness of and familiarity with the destination among visitors. It also demonstrates that Sylvan Lake has a large, loyal customer base that continues to return year-after-year. However, only a small number of respondents indicated that they will be visiting again at different times of the year (6%). This presents an opportunity to grow repeat visitation in the off-season by offering compelling festival and event tourism products that resonate with these loyal customers.

Respondents replied enthusiastically to the question asking them what types of festivals and events they would like to see offered in Sylvan Lake. Music was the most popular festival/event type with 550 selections, followed by Family (423), Sport (388), Culinary (318), Art/Artisan (289) and Drama (278). Notably, “all” types of festivals/events was given as a response in the “Other” category 45 times; further indicating demand for festivals and events Sylvan Lake.

Question 4: What types of festivals and events would you like to see offered in Sylvan Lake during the spring, winter and fall? (select all that apply)



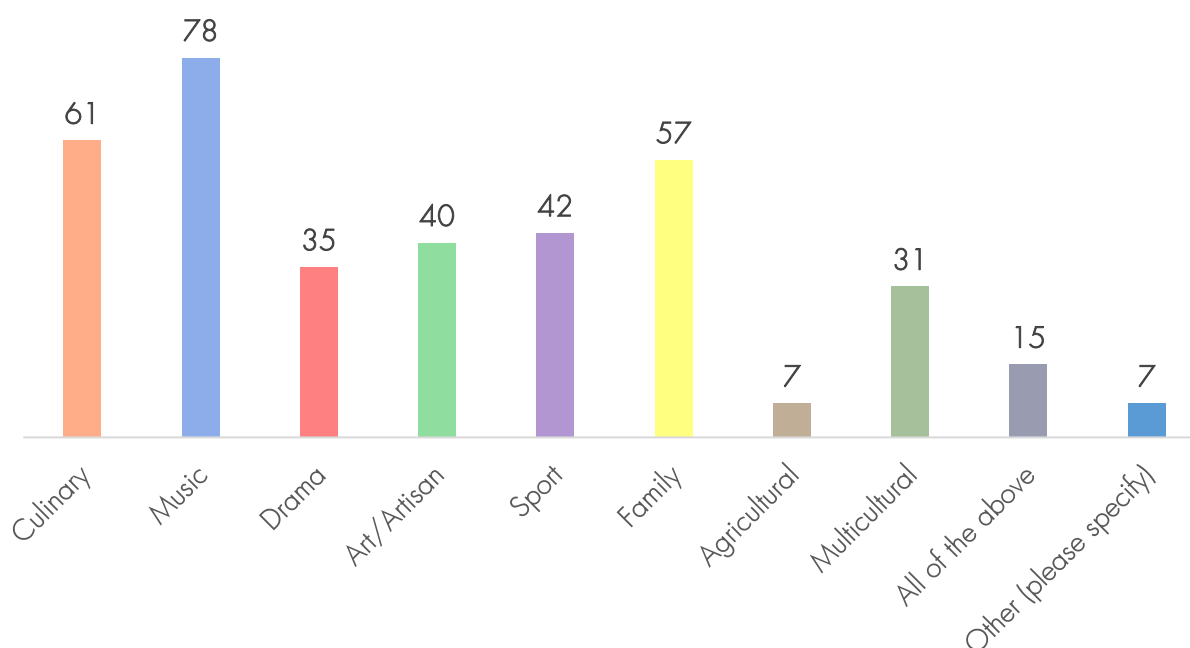
Resident Survey Results (N=102)

The resident survey ran from October 24 to November 10 in 2017. Links to access the survey were posted online on the Sylvan Lake municipal website. In total, 102 responses were collected. The main findings from the resident survey are provided below.

Survey Analysis

The top three types of festivals/events that respondents wanted to see offered in Sylvan Lake were Music (78), Culinary (61) and Family (57). Fall was the most preferred season for events with 74 selections, however Spring (72) and Winter (71) were also frequently preferred. The similarly high selection count for each season indicated that respondents are supportive of Sylvan Lake becoming a year-round destination. Regarding the size of events, 92% of respondents would prefer medium sized events (i.e. hundreds of visitors) over small events (dozens of visitors) and large events (thousands of visitors). When asked why they would prefer medium sized events, respondents often cited the economic benefits of bringing more visitors in, but tempered this with concerns about crowding and the capacity of services and infrastructure.

Question 1: What types of festivals and events would you like to see offered in Sylvan Lake during the spring, winter and fall? (select all that apply)



The main barriers respondents identified to developing and delivering tourism festivals and events were “unpredictable weather” (53%), “lack of market awareness of Sylvan Lake as an off-season event destination” (52%), “lack of existing tourism festivals and events” (43%), and “lack of facilities” (38%).* When asked what community members can do to support tourism festival and event development, respondents primarily chose attending tourism festivals and events (82%), volunteering their time (75%), inviting family and friends from outside the community to participate (73%), and taking an active role in planning festivals/events (64%).* In general, the responses indicated support for tourism festivals and events in Sylvan Lake.

*Respondents were asked to select all that apply, leading to percentage totals above 100%.

Business Survey Results (N=27)

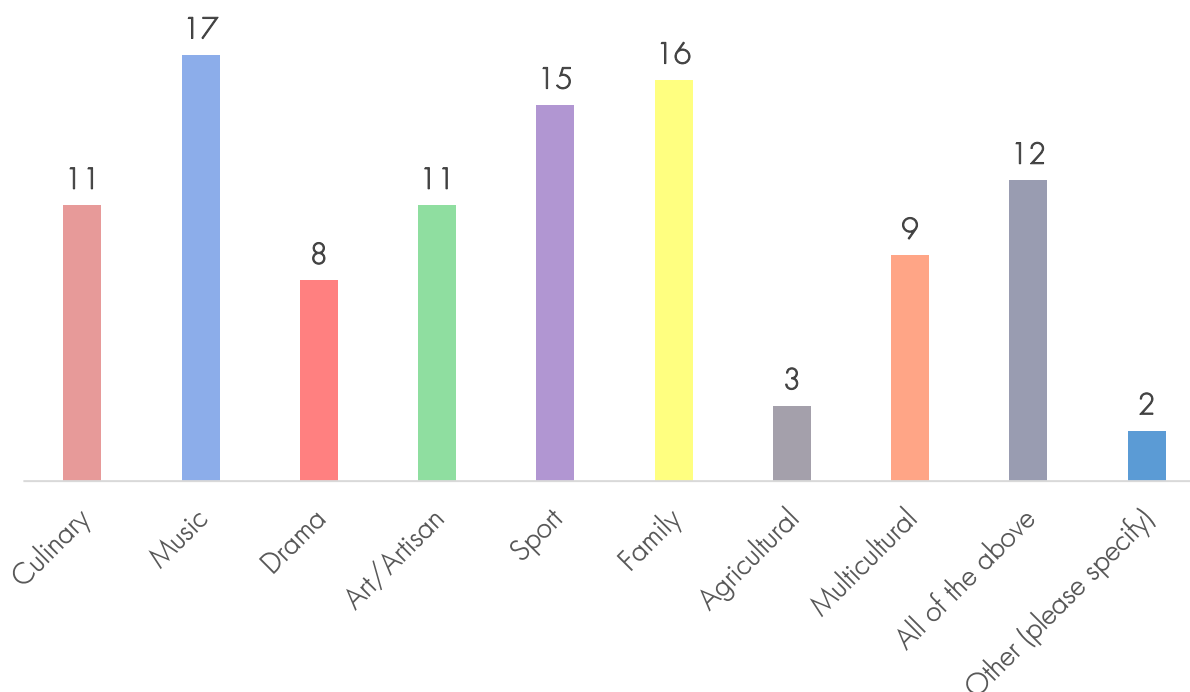
The business survey ran from October 24 to November 10 in 2017. Links to access the survey were posted online on the Sylvan Lake municipal website. In total, 27 responses were collected. The main findings from the business survey are provided below.

Survey Analysis

Respondents to the business survey chose Music (17), Family (16) and Sport (15) as their top three choices for events they would like to see offered in Sylvan Lake. “All events” was selected 12 times, strengthening the top three choices and indicating broad support for tourism festival and event development. Fall was the most preferred season for events to occur with 24 selections. Spring (20) and Winter (18) were also selected frequently, which demonstrates support for Sylvan Lake becoming a year-round destination. Similar to the resident survey, the majority of businesses would prefer medium sized

events (81%). The potential to bring in more visitor dollars, while also managing capacity and sustaining community were often cited as reasons why.

Question 4: What types of festivals and events would you like to see offered in Sylvan Lake during the spring, winter and fall? (select all that apply)



The main barrier respondents identified to developing and delivering tourism festivals and events was “lack of market awareness of Sylvan Lake as an off-season event destination” (57%). Other barriers identified were “unpredictable weather” (48%), “lack of facilities” (43%) and “lack of financial support” (43%).* When asked what the businesses community can do to support tourism festival and event development, respondents primarily chose extending businesses hours during events (73%), providing venue space for festival/event activities (73%), helping promote festivals/events (68%), taking an active role in developing and planning festivals/events (68%) and providing visitor experiences, products and services that support event themes (64%).* In general, the responses indicated support for tourism festivals and events in Sylvan Lake.

*Respondents were asked to select all that apply, leading to percentage totals above 100%.

Stakeholder Café

On September 21, 2017 a Stakeholder Café was held in Sylvan Lake at the NexSource Centre. 20 local stakeholders were in attendance and input was gathered from them through table discussions that were facilitated by the consultant team. The findings from the Situational Analysis were shared with participants, who were then asked to identify additional opportunities and challenges related to developing tourism festivals and events in Sylvan Lake. Figure 5 below lists the opportunities and challenges that were most important to participants. The full list of stakeholder feedback can be found in Appendix C.

Figure 5. Participant Feedback from the Stakeholder Café

Opportunities	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Leveraging existing venues – Niche events (e.g. water skiing, fat biking, wind surfing, ski doo, scuba diving, trail skating, ice golf, dark sky) – Developing the old waterslide site (e.g. band shell) – Hosting more sporting events (e.g. curling, hockey) – Implementing the Cultural Master Plan – Targeting students/youth for volunteering – Rentals (snow machine, snowshoes, skates) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Lack of a performing arts venue – Need a venue with a commercial kitchen – Outdoor maintenance costs for the Town



05

VISION AND STRATEGY

Winterfest Polar Bear Dip - Sylvan Lake

05 VISION AND STRATEGY

Vision for Tourism Festival and Event Development

Through consultation with the Committee and stakeholders, a vision for tourism festival and event development in Sylvan Lake has been created. The vision is as follows:

5 Year Vision

- Sylvan Lake has a clear framework, organizational structure and funding model in place to support tourism festival and event development.
- New and innovative tourism event programming is in place in the off-season and is well received from visitors.
- Target markets are aware of an emerging event scene in Sylvan Lake and have become actively engaged in the tourism festival offering.
- Sylvan Lake has attracted new local and regional partners in tourism event development and has highlighted local and regional tourism product.

10 Year Vision

- Sylvan Lake is a destination that is known for delivering outstanding festivals and events year-round. The festival and event scene can be described as emergent, trendy, vibrant and engaging.
- Sylvan Lake's event hosting system is sustainable and poised for future growth.



Strategy for Tourism Festival and Event Development

When developing Sylvan Lake's event tourism strategy, we utilized Ansoff's Product/Mission Mix (see Figure 6). This model frames what direction festival and event tourism development should take. Ansoff's Matrix identifies four different strategies, which can be described as follows:

Market Penetration (existing products in existing markets)

- Expanded provision of existing festivals and events for existing markets.

Market Development (existing products in new markets)

- Focus on existing festivals and events promoted to market segments currently not highly engaged.

Product Development (developing new products for existing markets)

- Expansion of current events or addition of new events (or program stream) for existing markets.

Diversification (developing new products for new markets)

- Develop new events (or program stream) specifically designed to attract and engage new markets (i.e. national and international travellers).

Figure 6. Ansoff's Product/Mission Mix



Product Development Focus

Sylvan Lake will primarily employ a product development strategy moving forward. This means the strategy will focus on developing unique and interesting festival and event product for existing tourism markets. The following points support the product development focus:

- A. **Need for New Product** – There is a need to further develop the festival and event product offering in Sylvan Lake during the off-season. Few existing events have a tourism-focus, and there is not enough event product to keep visitor markets engaged throughout the year.
- B. **Strong Existing Markets** – Edmonton, Calgary, Red Deer and their surrounding areas represent over half of Alberta’s population (nearly 2.5 million people), and they are all within an hour and a half drive to Sylvan Lake.
- C. **Destination Awareness** – Sylvan Lake is recognized as an attractive tourism destination by its target markets and a high percentage of visitors say they will visit Sylvan Lake again (91%). This large, loyal customer base is engaged during the summer, and opportunity exists to attract them during the off-season by offering compelling festival and event tourism product.

Important Note

Product Development is the strategic focus and the majority of implementation activities should (in general) fall within this focus. However, it is important to note that Sylvan Lake should not limit itself exclusively to this approach. If attractive opportunities arise that fall within the focus areas of market penetration, market development or diversification they should be considered on a case by case basis.





Jaws at the Lake - Sylvan Lake

06 TOURISM FESTIVAL AND EVENT DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Based on research and analysis, five opportunities for future tourism festival and event development in Sylvan Lake have been identified. In addition, we have developed a Tourism Festival and Event Assessment Criteria tool that will assist the community in determining which opportunities are the best fit for Sylvan Lake (see Appendix A). An overview of the opportunities is provided below.

1. Destination Animation – Bringing Sylvan Lake to Life in the Off-Season

Involving business owners and other organizations in providing new tourism product during planned events will be crucial to the success of Sylvan Lake's tourism offering in the future. Formalizing a destination animation program is a way to achieve this. Destination animation can be defined as:

*"Smaller performances, interactive displays or experiences that take place repeatedly, mostly in the heart of a town, and help enliven the visitor's or local's experience."*²⁰

Destination animation can be a powerful attractor; surprising and delighting visitors to keep them coming back again and again. Supplying regular, on-brand entertainment for visitors to enjoy is an important component of all of the event opportunities described in this report. It fits particularly well because our recommendation is to create prolonged event programming (over multiple weekends) to attract a steady stream of visitors throughout the off-season (vs big 1 or 2-day events). This will in turn encourage visitor spending.

Sylvan Lake can accomplish this by developing a destination animation partnership program. This program will engage the business community by providing matching funding to help them bring their animation ideas to life. A program like this would allow Sylvan Lake to tap into the creative genius of



Destination Animation in Stratford - Hidden quotes from Shakespeare magically appear on sidewalks and walls when it rains.



Symphony Under the Sky produced by the Fairmont Jasper Park Lodge to support the Jasper Dark Sky Festival.

its entrepreneurs for the benefit of the entire community. The program would fund new experiences and would also provide support to develop those experiences into ongoing tourism product. The program can be implemented in Sylvan Lake by establishing a shared vision with business owners, communicating the positive increase to return on investment (ROI), and providing ongoing support in developing event tourism product. Once businesses see success and an increase to their bottom line, they will be energized to become even more involved.

Stratford, Ontario has successfully implemented a destination animation partnership program, and is well known for its ongoing animation. Jasper, Alberta is another good example of a community that has engaged local business owners in developing unique and interesting experiences that help bring the destination to life during planned events.

Examples of Destination Animation:

1. Local eateries, tour operators or other businesses provide unique experiences that link to the event theme;
2. A camp fire in a central area with smores, local stories and hot chocolate;
3. Unique and interesting art installations and experiences in public spaces (e.g. light installations);
4. Participatory activities and experiences (e.g. see “event in a box” idea later in this report);
5. Performances;
6. All other unique and interesting experiences that Sylvan Lake wants to share with visitors.

Action Items

1. Host a one-day idea generation workshop to brainstorm destination animation ideas.
2. Develop a destination animation partnership program that would encourage the development of new experiences during planned events including:
 - A clear application and selection process;
 - Development of an adjudication committee and criteria for idea selection;
 - Provision of matching funds to businesses, non-profit organizations and individuals to implement new destination animation initiatives;
 - Provide support to organizations to help them build ongoing tourism product that can add to the event tourism offering;
 - Develop clear evaluation and performance measures and monitor success.

2. Celebrate the Season in Sylvan

Sylvan Lake has an opportunity to build its off-season event offering with the goal of becoming “the place” to go to and celebrate each season. This approach is on brand and furthers the off-season event development objective. The community should begin by expanding programming in one season, and then moving on to others.

This idea would include a combination of ongoing, themed animation with specific tourism events to draw people into the community. Festival programming will need to be supported with shopping opportunities and/or weekend markets to both enhance the draw and increase the economic impacts. An event idea for each season (spring, fall and winter) is further described below. It is envisioned that each festival would be one month in duration with feature programming on four weekends. This approach maximizes programming opportunities and visitor spending, while at the same time meets the objectives of keeping events at a manageable size.

Spring Music Festival (June)

A music festival was the top choice of visitors, businesses and residents when asked what new tourism events they would like to see in Sylvan Lake. The community can capitalize on this enthusiasm and enhance its seasonal event offering by developing a spring music festival. We suggest hosting the festival in June because the weather is normally very nice, and it will provide the business community an opportunity to extend their summer operating season by a month.



There are many examples of communities that have found their niche and offer high quality musical festivals that attract visitors (e.g. Beaumont's Blues and Roots Festival, Hinton's Wild Mountain Music Festival, Canmore's Folk Music Festival).

Sylvan Lake will need to differentiate itself from the competition and find its own niche. This could be done by offering a new style of music festival with a uniquely Sylvan Lake twist. One option to consider is a multi-genre festival that would offer performance micro-venues throughout the WCD (think Fringe Festival). There would also be a feature stage at the event epicentre that would highlight a different genre each weekend. It should be noted that the Beaumont's Blues and Roots Festival occurs in June therefore there are high quality acts in Alberta that could potentially be accessed by Sylvan Lake at a lower cost. Regardless of the direction chosen to differentiate the offering, it will be important that the festival aligns with the community's fun, family-friendly brand.

Action Items

1. Offer a spring music festival that would differentiate Sylvan Lake from other offerings across the province.
2. Host a one-day idea generation workshop to brainstorm music festival ideas.
3. Assess music festival ideas using the Tourism Festival and Event Assessment Criteria to determine the most suitable one.
4. Develop the chosen idea into a multi-weekend program offering with animation and product contributions from the business community and non-profit sector.

Fall Culinary Festival (Late September/Early October)

The visitor and resident surveys identified medium - high interest in culinary event development in Sylvan Lake (culinary was voted #2 by residents and #4 among visitors).

Culinary tourism is big business in Alberta, and Sylvan Lake is in a strong position to capitalize on this current tourism trend. While the opportunities for culinary events are endless, one idea stands out from the rest – craft beer! Currently, there are more than 65 craft breweries throughout the province, including many in central Alberta.²¹ Since July 2016, 24 new craft breweries have opened up shop and more are expected to follow, including two in Sylvan Lake (Snake Lake Brewing Company and Undercurrent Brewing). This trend is gaining steam and festivals present an additional opportunity to further leverage the economic growth generated through craft brewing activities.



Many successful craft beer festivals and events already take place throughout the province, and there is currently a whole week in October dedicated to celebrating Alberta's craft breweries (Alberta Beer Week). Alberta Beer Week is a week-long celebration of barley, hops and entrepreneurship running from October 20 – 28, presented by the Alberta Small Brewers Association. Sylvan Lake could develop its own unique events in collaboration with nearby craft breweries to draw visitors during the off-season.

The culinary festival does not end with craft beer. It should include programming built around other local food producers (e.g. Sylvan Star Cheese) and restaurants. For example, Prince Edward Island has been hosting a successful burger making competition since 2011 (PEI Burger Love™). This unique event draws visitors to the Island, is enjoyed by residents, and has resulted in \$8.7 million in burger sales alone over the past seven years.²² In addition, the Town of Beaumont hosts a "Taste of Beaumont" event that is extremely successful. With a little creativity, Sylvan Lake can produce similar results.

Action Items

1. Collaborate with craft breweries, restaurants and producers from Sylvan Lake and Central Alberta to develop a culinary festival. Part of the festival will include a celebration of Alberta Beer Week.
2. Host a one-day idea generation workshop to brainstorm culinary event ideas and assess them utilizing the Tourism Festival and Event Assessment Criteria.
3. Connect with the Alberta Small Brewers Association and get involved in their tourism initiatives (e.g. Alberta Beer branding initiative, digital platform, events calendar).
4. Connect with the Alberta Culinary Tourism Alliance and get involved in their tourism initiatives (e.g. Cook It Raw Alberta, Culinary Adventure Trip Planner, events calendar).
5. Develop a list of food and beverage producers in Central Alberta, and then approach them to become involved in a culinary festival in Sylvan Lake.
6. Review Alberta Culture and Tourism's *Culinary Tourism Event Handbook* and share this with culinary event producers. The handbook has helpful advice, event check-lists and resources.

Water Front Winter Village (Nov/Dec.) or New Winter Event (Jan/Feb.)

Sylvan Lake already offers community events celebrating the winter season (Spirit of Sylvan Yuletide Festival and Market, Winterfest), and there are plans in place to animate the downtown and waterfront to become a “Water Front Winter Village.” These factors put the community in a good position to attract more visitors who want to celebrate the winter season.

Sylvan Lake can increase visitation in the winter season by expanding existing community events or developing a new winter festival. Expanding existing community events can be advantageous, because most of the event framework is already in place. However, organizers should be mindful that more visitor-focused product will need to be developed. In the case of the Spirit of Sylvan Yuletide Festival, this could be achieved by expanding programming over multiple weekends and by adding feature activities on each weekend to drive visitation. Conceivably, the Spirit of Sylvan Yuletide Festival could be one of several feature weekends of programming and could operate much like it does now. The suitability of existing events to be expanded for tourism purposes should be evaluated using the assessment criteria (see Appendix A).



The other option is to develop a new festival to celebrate the winter season. This new festival should be a unique winter celebration experience that can attract visitors and set Sylvan Lake apart from existing events across the province. Many destinations across Alberta have found their niche and are attracting tourists to their communities with unique winter festivals (e.g. Jasper in January, Ice on Whyte in Edmonton, Winter Festival of Speed in Lac La Biche).

Action Items

1. Host a one-day idea generation workshop to brainstorm winter event ideas.
2. Utilize the Tourism Festival and Event Assessment Criteria to evaluate ideas and determine whether to expand existing community events or develop a new festival.
3. Expand winter season programming each year with a goal to have every weekend in December with a full slate of programming and site animation.

3. Event in a Box

Sylvan Lake will succeed as a festival and event destination when it is able to continually surprise and engage with visitors. One way to achieve this would be to develop “events in a box.” These events would be easy to put on with short notice, have all of the preplanning in place, and offer a unique experience that would attract visitors. For example, skating on a crystal-clear lake as far as the eye can see and being able to look down and see



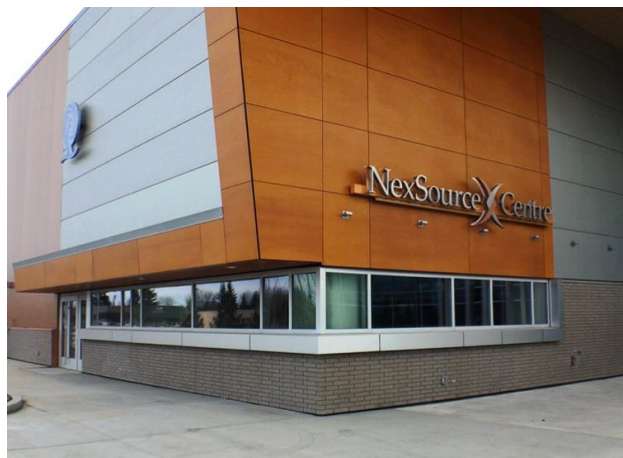
through the ice is a very unique experience (a bucket list item for many). Sylvan Lake experiences this phenomenon periodically, however, the weather conditions must be perfect, are difficult to predict and tend not to last long. These challenges can be overcome by preparing an “event in a box” for this experience with promotional packages, media releases and program elements that are all planned in advance. Once the conditions are right, the event can be sprung into action with short notice via a social media blast and triggering the “event in a box;” surprising visitors and creating a sense of urgency. By developing events in a box like this, Sylvan Lake will be able to keep the attention of visitors and attract valuable earned media as people wonder what the destination will do next.

Action Items

1. Host a one-day idea generation workshop to identify unique experiences that could have an “event in a box” built for them (e.g. skating party on Sylvan Lake when it freezes crystal clear).
2. Assess event ideas using the Tourism Festival and Event Assessment Criteria to determine the most suitable ones.
3. Develop an “event in a box” program plan for each experience. The plan should identify activities, processes, task list, roles, etc. that could be activated at a moment’s notice (similar to an emergency response plan). There should also be a physical kit that includes materials needed.
4. Assist businesses and other organizations in creating product that can contribute to the “Event in a Box.”
5. Build in a mechanism to alert businesses so they can capitalize on the event and contribute to its success.
6. Build in a mechanism to alert visitors and media outlets.

4. Festivals and Events at the NexSource Centre

The NexSource Centre is a sport, recreation, arts and culture facility that has significant potential to be leveraged for tourism event development. The facility has many amenities that can be utilized, including multi-use rooms, senior centre space, a curling rink and twin ice arenas with seating for thousands. These high quality amenities position the facility to attract both sport tourism events (e.g. tournaments, competitions) and non-sporting events (e.g. concerts, tradeshow) during the off-season. Sport tourism events should be a particular focus for the NexSource Centre.



According to the Canadian Sport Tourism Alliance, sport tourism is the fastest growing segment within the tourism industry, and has many far-reaching benefits such as:²³

- Stimulates economic, cultural, and social prosperity
- Adds to the quality of life of community members
- Showcases a positive community brand and image
- Provides enhanced exposure opportunities for the community
- Builds civic pride, an event hosting resume and lasting legacies for the future

The majority of the facility's community programming occurs in the fall and winter seasons, and facility staff have indicated that there is limited space to host events during this time.²⁴ The right balance between community programming and tourism festivals/events during these seasons needs to be investigated further.

As stated in the NexSource Centre Business Plan, the facility is primarily applying a business approach, or "enterprise model," towards operating the facility.²⁵ This approach includes the utilization of business metrics and cost-benefit analyses as key decision-making tools. Hosting tourism events at the NexSource Centre has the potential to positively impact revenue generation and cost recovery for the facility, in addition to increasing the overall economic activity in the Town by attracting visitors. Therefore, we see tourism festivals and events at the NexSource Centre as in alignment with the current operating direction.

Action Items

1. Ensure the NexSource Centre is made available during signature tourism events and that the NexSource Centre provides complimentary programming during these events.
2. Develop an event development plan specific to the NexSource Centre that would increase visitation during identified need periods.
3. Meet with provincial sport organizations to discover what competitions could be hosted at the NexSource Centre (i.e. technical compliance of the facility to host competitions, community asset requirements, etc.).
4. Develop an event bid package that could be used to compete for future events.
5. Develop an event hosting package that can be used to communicate the unique attributes and services provided in the facility (e.g. wedding package).
6. Create a unique website portal that can help sell event rentals.
7. Create a comprehensive digital asset library that can help sell existing space.
8. Acquire equipment that will expand the facility's hosting capacity (e.g. ice surface covers, draping, audio/visual equipment, seating, etc.).
9. Develop event hosting guidelines and resources to support event producers (e.g. facility amenity inventory, event policies, booking process, fees, event supplies available, etc.).
10. Ensure high quality food and beverage services are made available to customers.
11. Develop a marketing plan to promote event development and rentals.

5. Capital Development for Festivals and Events

Festival and Event Epicentre

It will be important to identify a location that will serve as the epicenter for seasonal festivals and events. The new waterfront site, pier area, waterfront walkway or downtown would all be options to consider. This area should be highly animated during scheduled events. On this site, consideration should be given to the development of a multi-purpose building and amphitheatre that can be used as a home base for event activities. The site should be highly attractive, have performance space, be useable in all seasons, be well lit and have adequate utilities to support events.

Waterfront Design Charrette

Sylvan Lake can grow as a tourism event destination by developing key infrastructure that will support festivals and events. The timing is excellent for the Festival and Event Strategy to feed into the Waterfront Design Charrette process scheduled for early in 2018. Creating linkages between tourism event development and the future development of the recently acquired waterfront site will be advantageous.



Cedar Creek Park Bandshell Concept Design
 – Groth Design Group

Seasonal Installations

Another opportunity for the waterfront would be to develop rotating animation installations that would add to event programming and create an incentive for visitors to come to Sylvan Lake. For example, in the winter season, the site could include an artificial ice (chilled slab) surface with ongoing programming. Rather than a simple boarded rink, the ice surface could be a winter wonderland with skating paths along the waterfront, islands for fire pits, and lights for evening skates. A chilled slab surface would dramatically extend the skating season. For the fall and spring seasons, the site could transition to become a unique art installation with contributions from local artists. Given the size of the site, artists would have ample room to explore their creativity and amaze visitors. As identified above, it will be important for the Town to develop the core facilities needed to make these feature attractions a success (e.g. the multi-use building could be used as a skate shack in the winter, a performance venue in the spring/summer and a picnic shelter in the summer).

Performing Arts Centre

It was identified in the Cultural Master Plan (2017) that Sylvan Lake is missing a dedicated performance space²⁶ and we did hear this during our community consultation process. Such a facility could add value to tourism event development as well as support local cultural programming. However, the cost for developing a performing arts centre will be significant, therefore it is recommended that a business case is developed that identifies the capital costs, operational costs and if adequate demand exists to support the facility.

Action Items

1. Identify a location that will serve as the epicenter for seasonal festivals and events. The new waterfront site, pier area, waterfront walkway or downtown would all be options to consider. This area should be highly animated during scheduled events.
2. Consider the development of a multi-purpose building/amphitheatre that can be used as a home base for event activities.
3. Ensure the needs identified in the Tourism Festival and Event Strategy are brought to the forefront during the Waterfront Design Charrette process scheduled for early in 2018.
4. Consider the development of rotating animation installations that would add to event programming and create an incentive for visitors to come to Sylvan Lake.
5. Develop a business case that identifies the capital costs, operational costs and if adequate demand exists to support a new performing arts facility.



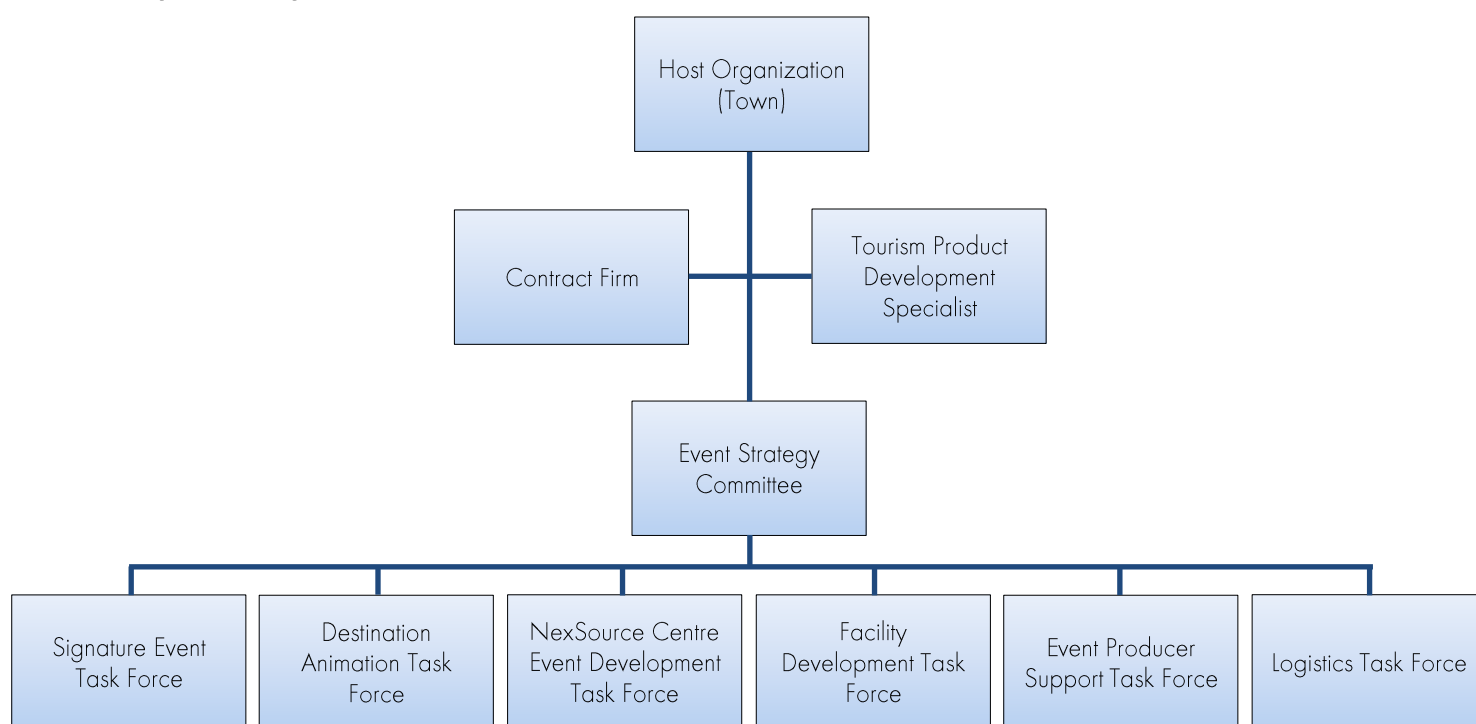
Shake the Lake - Sylvan Lake

07 OPERATING STRUCTURE

Organizational Structure

Identifying an appropriate organizational structure is critical to the success of the strategy. This section describes a proposed organizational structure and outlines the roles each organization will play (see Figure 7. Organizational Chart and the subsequent descriptions). The operating structure is supported by Section 8, which outlines in greater detail the steps required to launch the new structure. It is important to utilize both of these sections as they complement each other and provide a comprehensive view of the path forward.

Figure 7. Organizational Chart



Host Organization

Through the process, the Town was identified as the most suitable organization to take on the role of “Host Organization” for the strategy. The functions of Host Organization should be housed in the economic development department (reporting to the Economic Development Officer) as tourism is primarily an economic development function. In the future, it may be appropriate for the Chamber to take over the role as Host Organization. Figure 8 below describes a set of criteria that can be used to assist in selecting future host organizations.

The role of the Host Organization is that of facilitator, trainer, organizer and champion ... not producer.

Figure 8. Criteria for Selecting a Host Organization

Criteria	Description
Goal Alignment	The extent to which the goals of the organization align with those of the strategy.
Organizational Capacity	The extent to which the organization has the capacity to add value. Do they have the business infrastructure, experience, management capacity and financial resources to be an active leader in the strategy?
Knowledge	The extent to which the organization understands festival and event management.
Entrepreneurial Mindset	The extent to which the organization has the ability to be innovative and entrepreneurial in order to generate revenue to be reinvested in the strategy.
Complementary Skills	The extent to which the organization will bring to the arrangement a complementary skill set and/or other resources that will add value to the strategy.
Past Success	The extent to which the organization has been successful elsewhere in similar projects.

Event Delivery Approach in the Future

In order to grow event tourism product in Sylvan Lake it will be very important to diversify the workload to those that have the most to gain by building tourism product. New tourism events need to be supported by experiences developed by business owners, non-profit organizations and third-party producers. This will not occur without adequate support and development by the Host Organization. The role of the Host Organization is that of facilitator, funder, trainer, organizer and champion ... not producer. This may be difficult to achieve in the short term, but it is the most sustainable approach in the medium to long term.

The role of the Host Organization is as follows:

Role:

- Facilitator, funder, trainer, organizer and champion.
- Oversees the “big picture” to ensure the strategy’s action items are moving forward in the most effective and cohesive manner in the next 3-5 year period.
- Supervise Tourism Product Development Specialist and/or Contract Firm.
- Apply for project grants to support activities.

Event Strategy Committee

The role of the Event Strategy Committee is as follows:

Role:

- The main forum for Task Forces to report on progress.
- A forum for collaboration on the promotion and development of tourism event development initiatives.

Composition:

- Representatives from the business community, key stakeholder groups, the Chamber, and Municipality.

Task Forces

Task Forces implement key action items in each of the 6 areas of focus. Ideally, at least one member of the Event Strategy Committee will sit on each of the Task Forces. Task Force representatives will report on their initiatives at identified Event Strategy Committee meetings.

Role:

- Implement key projects in each of the 6 areas of focus.

Composition:

- 1 representative from the Event Strategy Committee, and representatives from organizations affected by the area of focus.

Contract Firm

It is recommended that in the first two years of implementation that a contract firm is hired to set the Host Organization up for success. This is most important early in the implementation phase when the majority of the organizational development work will be completed. A firm with experience in tourism product development, strategic planning and organizational development can provide the expertise required to build the foundation that will ensure success. This will also make the job of recruiting staff in the future easier as the infrastructure will be in place for their commencement. In addition, it may also be easier to receive grant funding for a firm to complete specific deliverables identified in the strategy.

Role:

- To build organizational capacity, execute key development initiatives and ensure the plan is implemented in a timely manner.

Tourism Product Development Specialist

The Tourism Product Development Specialist is an employee of the Host Organization and has the role of facilitating high quality experiences during events. Activities will include attracting new events to the community, liaising with event producers, assisting businesses in setting up activities that would complement signature events, driving product development initiatives, training organizations to provide high quality product, recruiting organizations to provide product, managing the annual event planning process, measuring ROI and managing the sponsorship program. The position is about “expanding the service delivery web” and enabling more businesses and organizations to produce more products and higher service levels for visitors. This should in turn make each business more profitable as they are driving business to their establishment.

Role:

- To facilitate the attraction and development of high quality experiences during events.

Partner Roles and Responsibilities

The implementation of this strategy will require the cultivation of partnerships to collaboratively accomplish initiatives. The following identifies key partners for the strategy and describes their role.

Organization	Role
The Town of Sylvan Lake	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Town has an important leadership role in the strategy including acting as the Host Organization, providing funding for implementation, letters of support for grant applications, and collaboration with other municipal initiatives. Recreation staff at the NexSource Centre have a key role in providing complementary programming in the facility to support tourism events.
Chamber of Commerce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Chamber is a critical link to businesses in Sylvan Lake and will play a key leadership role in implementation. The Chamber could act as the Host Organization in the future. The Chamber should encourage members to supply unique experiences that align with the strategy and support experience development by building capacity in businesses.
Businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The businesses will be relied upon to deliver new experiences during planned events. They are the front line of the strategy and need to be encouraged and supported in delivering high quality and engaging tourism product.
Residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The residents of Sylvan Lake will play a crucial role in bringing this strategy to life in the community. Passionate and dedicated individuals will need to be inspired to help implement the plan. Making the opportunity to participate in Task Forces available to them will be important.
Third Party Event Producers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Event producers from throughout Alberta should be targeted and encouraged to support event development in Sylvan Lake (e.g. the Running Room is well known for producing outstanding running events. They have a motivation to do this to support their brand and they bring a high level of expertise to the table).
RCMP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The RCMP should be brought on as an active partner. There should be support from the RCMP for the strategy as the direction is to bring in medium-sized events that will have lower enforcement requirements and be less risky than large events.
Alberta Culture and Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alberta Culture and Tourism funded the development of the strategy. The department has clearly indicated that Sylvan Lake tourism is worth investing in. As the project moves into the implementation stage it will be critical to further engage the department to move initiatives forward.
Travel Alberta	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide matching funding for promotion of tourism initiatives through its cooperative marketing fund. Provide training and mentorship.

Funding the Strategy

This section provides an overview of potential revenue streams that are available to help implement the strategy.

Increase in Business Activity and Tax Base

The overall purpose of the strategy is to develop tourism initiatives that will (in the medium to long term) result in increased economic activity that will result from spending by tourists who come from outside the community. If businesses and governments see a return on investment over the next 5-10 years, it is expected that further investment will be warranted from a range of stakeholders.

Municipal Funding

The Town is at a turning point in its evolution as a tourism destination. If the Town recognizes the positive economic and social benefits of tourism, it should commit to funding implementation for the first 3-5 years (at minimum). The Town should work hard to match its core funding during this time period with grants from other orders of government and contributions from the private sector.

Provincial Funding

The Alberta government and Travel Alberta invest funds in provincial, regional and local tourism initiatives through programs such as Travel Alberta's Cooperative Marketing Investment Program and provincial services in product and destination development, investment, research and visitor services.

Funding support is also available from the province through other programs. The Community Initiatives Program funds initiatives (up to \$75,000) that enhance and enrich communities across Alberta. This program empowers local citizens and community organizations to work together towards the betterment of their communities. A brief overview of available provincial funding programs is provided next in Figure 9.

Figure 9. Provincial Funding Programs

Organization	Program	Available funding
Alberta Culture and Tourism	Community Initiatives Program	\$75,000 (project-based) \$75,000 (operational)
Alberta Culture and Tourism	Major Cultural and Sport Events	\$250,000 maximum
Alberta Culture and Tourism	Visitor Friendly Alberta	Approximately \$20,000 (depending on project)
Alberta Culture and Tourism	Product Development	No set amount
Alberta Culture and Tourism	Community Facility Enhancement Program	\$125,000/year (small) \$1,000,000/year (large)
Alberta Culture and Tourism	Heritage Awareness Grants	\$15,000

Alberta Culture and Tourism	Historic Resource Conservation Grants	Grants range from \$5,000 - \$100,000
Alberta Culture and Tourism	Other Initiatives Program	No set amount
Travel Alberta	Cooperative Marketing Program	Under and over \$100,000 categories
Travel Alberta	Tourism Training Programs	100% of approved training costs
Alberta Labour	Summer Temporary Employment Program *	\$10,000,000 annually (province-wide)

Stakeholder Contributions

This document identifies several stakeholder groups that will be drivers of the strategy as it moves forward into the implementation stage. These organizations may choose to fund various initiatives based on the mandate of their organization. It is expected that some organizations will participate to a greater degree (financially) than others. It should be noted however, that gifts in kind and other forms collaborative support are also valuable contributions during implementation. It will be critical to have all stakeholders participate in the development of key initiatives in the plan regardless of their financial contribution.

Corporate Partnerships

International research indicates that tourism organizations look to sponsorships and partnerships as key to building revenue. Building new partnerships is about creating value by connecting destination and partner brands, customers and networks. Once the strategy begins to take shape it will be important to identify companies and organizations that identify with, or have branded themselves along similar lines to, Sylvan Lake's tourism event offering.

Business Revitalization Zone

Business revitalization zones (BRZ) are defined areas within which businesses opt to pay an additional tax in order to fund projects within the district's boundaries. The main purpose of a BRZ is to revitalize and maintain a dynamic commercial area and promote the area as a business or retail destination.²⁷ Funds collected as part of the BRZ are spent on economic and physical improvements such as beautification, maintenance of streetscapes, transportation upgrades, and festivals and events. BRZ's can be established by municipalities, and are often led by a non-profit entity managed by a Board of Directors. There are currently hundreds of BRZ's in existence across Canada.²⁸

Community Revitalization Levy

A community revitalization levy (CRL) is a funding initiative that allows a municipality to redirect a portion of provincial tax revenues from a designated revitalization area and direct the revenues towards approved municipal expenditures in the specified area. The revenue that is redirected is a portion of the provincial (education) share of the property tax revenue. The approved expenditures must have a direct role in fostering redevelopment of the area and tend to be capital improvements and one-time investments. These municipal improvements encourage property owners to invest in their properties resulting in a renewal and revitalization of an existing area.

Long Term Funding Solutions

Looking further into the future, it is possible that the Host Organization for the strategy evolves into a fully functioning Destination Management Organization (DMO). If this occurs, it will be important to establish at the outset that tourism product development and destination management are core functions of the organization (in addition to promoting the destination). This section provides an overview of three additional revenue streams important to many DMO's. It should be noted that all of the above funding streams are also available to DMO's.

Membership Fees

Membership fees are a traditional revenue stream, providing revenue on an annual basis. These fees can be structured as a flat rate for all members, or in a scaled fashion whereby smaller organizations pay less. In return, members receive a package of services. Many tourism organizations in Alberta and across the globe utilize membership fees for a portion of their budgets.

Fee for Service

Fee for service is a "pay to play" option for tourism organizations to meet specific industry needs and generate revenue. Charging a fee for a website listing or for trade show representation are both examples of fee-for-service offerings. Providing a-la-carte products and services (vs. an all-inclusive membership fee) provides more choice for potential members and allows them to invest in customized services. Conversely, this approach has the potential to significantly increase the number of sales transactions per year, therefore this risk must be managed through the development of efficient administrative processes.

Fee for service has emerged in recent years as an alternative to the membership-based model. Chinook Country Tourism Association (CCTA), Edmonton Tourism and Boomtown Trail each dissolved membership dues in favour of a non-membership model. In the case of the Boomtown Trail, the human resources required to solicit and retain members over a large geographic area outweighed the revenue. Edmonton Tourism executives felt their membership program was out of date and provided little support to industry. In its place, Edmonton Tourism is building relationships and partnerships that do not focus on a yearly membership fee – essentially, working with any business that relies on tourism-based revenues for its success (Edmonton Tourism Business Plan 2014). CCTA found that when it moved from a membership fee model to a fee-for-service with operators, attitudes shifted from “what did I get out of my membership fee” to “how can I partner again to the benefit of my business and all.”

Destination Marketing Funds

Destination Marketing Funds (DMFs) involve voluntary participation by operators who agree to charge an extra 2-3% on their services. This extra charge is then contributed to the DMF for collective marketing purposes. In order for a DMF to achieve a sustainable scale it must reach a critical mass of participants. DMF's can be challenging to develop and maintain, but there are many examples of successful organizations that utilize DMFs in Alberta, including Edmonton Tourism, Tourism Calgary and Tourism Jasper.



08

ACTION PLAN

New Years Fireworks - Sylvan Lake

08 ACTION PLAN

An action plan has been developed to assist in the implementation of the Sylvan Lake Tourism Festival and Event Strategy. Specific initiatives have been developed relating to tourism festival and event product development opportunities, organizational development, market development, and event producer supports. The initiatives in the action plan will also assist the community in evaluating the success of the strategy moving forward.

Priority

The action items are listed in order of priority.

Costs

Costs are provided for each action item.

Organizational Lead

The action plan identifies individuals and organizations responsible for leading initiatives. Please see below for a list of abbreviations used in the action plan.

Abbreviation	Organization
ESC	Event Strategy Committee
PDS	Tourism Product Development Specialist
CF	Contract Firm
TOSL	Town of Sylvan Lake
COC	Sylvan Lake Chamber of Commerce

Implementation Timeline

Short Term In the next 5 years

Long Term 6 – 10 years from now

Future Planning, Evaluation, and Reporting

A key component of the success of the strategy will be the evaluation of its initiatives. The plan should be reviewed quarterly, at which time priorities should be re-evaluated and a discussion of any variances should occur. If new projects are added (or old projects removed) as the strategy progresses, this should be done by weighing the relative priority of all projects in the strategy. The festival and event strategy should be updated on a yearly basis; therefore, the third quarter evaluation period will set the stage for the updated version of the plan. In the fourth quarter, the updated strategy should be formalized and a draft approved by the end of the year. See page 70 for a Festival and Event Development Scorecard that can be used to help evaluate the progress of the strategy.

Short Term Initiatives (2018 - 2022)

5 Year Vision

- Sylvan Lake has a clear framework, organizational structure and funding model in place to support tourism festival and event development.
- New and innovative tourism event programming is in place in the off-season and is well received from visitors.
- Target markets are aware of an emerging event scene in Sylvan Lake and have become actively engaged in the tourism festival offering.
- Sylvan Lake has attracted new local and regional partners in tourism event development and has highlighted local and regional tourism product.

Initiative	Lead	Year	Cost
1.1) Obtain motions from the Chamber and Town approving the strategy (within 3 months).	TOSL	2018	
1.2) Approve funding from the Town to be used for implementation (within 3 months).	TOSL	2018	
1.3) Ensure strategy implementation is included as a priority in the Council approved strategic plan. Issue an administrative directive from the CAO of the Town to all departments indicating that tourism event development is a priority. Within the Town administration, evaluate and implement event support tasks (e.g. Communications, Marketing, Planning, Recreation and Culture, Parks, etc.).	TOSL	2018	Staff resources only
1.4) Secure funding from the GOA, other government funders and/or corporate sponsorship to support implementation.	TOSL	2018	
1.5) Engage a Third-Party Contract Firm (CF) to assist with implementation for years 1 and 2.	TOSL	2018	\$25K/yr x 2 yrs
1.6) Appoint the initial members of the Event Strategy Committee.	TOSL	2018	
1.7) Begin to implement action items specific to the NexSource Centre (see page 46).	TOSL	2018	As per NexSource event/program plan

1.8) Formalize the structure of the strategy administration including the general intent and philosophy in managing the function, further development of the organizational structure, establishment of sub-committees, reporting mechanisms, job descriptions, terms of reference document for each committee, policies/procedures, annual budget, annual business plan, service level expectations, revenue expectations, decision making mechanisms, performance measures, management control mechanisms and annual reporting structures.	CF	2018	
1.9) Develop an event hosting policy for the Town that provides a foundation for the effective development, management and resource allocation of services.	CF	2018 /19	
1.10) Begin working with businesses to provide training and mentorship in order to get their experiences market ready. This includes the development of specific program plans that outline the creation, promotion and sale of high quality tourism experiences executed by individual businesses (e.g. Travel Alberta's Partnership and Packaging Workshop and Experience Development Workshop, and Gold Star Customer Service Training).	COC	2018	The Town is participating in the Visitor Friendly Business Pilot Program. These can all support this initiative.
1.11) Host an annual festival and event summit. Engage all partners, businesses and event organizers. Collaborative planning, education, and reporting should occur at these events.	CF	2018	Included in Town/Chamber hosting budgets
1.12) Utilizing the Tourism Festival and Event Assessment Criteria (see Appendix A), determine which tourism festival and event development opportunity will be introduced first.	CF	2018	It will be important to generate buy-in from stakeholders
1.13) Complete a business case for the new event that identifies target markets, market demand, required resources, human resource requirements, community impact, partnerships, program, infrastructure requirements and broadly outlines logistics.	CF	2019	
1.14) Complete a partnership development plan and seek out new partners to assist in event development. Partnerships may include sponsors, third party producers, tourism operators in Sylvan Lake and the surrounding region, other municipal governments in the region, etc.	CF	2019	

1.15) Provide tourism marketing training for tourism stakeholders. Travel Alberta offers a suite of workshops that include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SHiFT: Transforming Products to Experiences - Say Hello to your Best Customer - Building Experiences for Your Best Customer - Marketing Experiences for Your Best Customer - Building a Basic Marketing Plan - Building Your Business Through the Travel Trade 	TOSL / COC	2019	Assume sponsored by Travel Alberta
1.16) Develop a comprehensive communication plan for the strategy that will assist in communicating to potential partners, businesses, organizations and the public.	CF	2019	TOSL Communications Officer
1.17) Recruit community members to participate in Task Forces.	ESC	2019	
1.18) Introduce a destination animation program that would assist businesses in developing compelling experiences during planned events. Consider amending the guidelines of the existing RAC grant program to include elements of the destination animation program described in Section 6.	CF	2019	Included within existing RAC grant program budget
1.19) Develop an event toolkit to communicate with and support event producers. The event toolkit should provide information on how to host an event, destination protocols, marketing recommendations, event production tools, safety, applications, event contacts, templates, etc. See http://events.whistler.com for an example.	CF	2019	
1.20) Using this action plan as the starting point, complete an annual review of the action plan that evaluates past performance, identifies key priorities, assigns responsibilities and sets targets. Evaluate and update the plan each year.	CF	2019 + On-going	
1.21) Gather baseline data from organizations and businesses that will help measure ROI in future years (e.g. # visitors during event weekends, products/services sold, etc.). Agree upon key indicators that will be used to measure ROI.	PDS	On-going	
1.22) Hire the Tourism Product Development Specialist (PDS)	TOSL	2020	\$70K/yr.
1.23) Complete action items specific to the event chosen (see Section 6).	PDS	2020	

1.24) Begin detailed event planning for the chosen event development opportunity (with a goal to launch in year 3).	PDS	2020	Detailed planning to be underway in Q1 of 2020.
1.25) Implement initial marketing initiatives beginning in year 3.	PDS	2020	\$10K/yr. (assume this is matched by Travel Alberta)
1.26) Implement a process and fee schedule that will recover direct costs for event support services incurred by the Town. Create efficiencies and review alternate service delivery models in order to maximize benefits to the community, municipality and to event organizers.	PDS	2020	Staff resources only – PDS to work with municipal departments
1.27) Provide seed funding to launch the new event development opportunity.	TOSL	2020	\$40K yr 1, \$30K yr 2, \$20K yr 3
1.28) In 2020, launch the new event with at least two weeks of programming to start, with a goal to have month-long programming after 3 years of operating.	PDS	2020	Included above
1.29) Complete a comprehensive annual evaluation of the event in each of its first three years. Include an economic impact analysis.	PDS	On-going	
1.30) Create a sustainability plan that would ensure the new event works towards cost recovery after its third year of operation.	PDS	2020	
1.31) In year 5 (2022), complete an update of the Tourism Festival and Event Strategy. Complete a comprehensive formal review of the existing strategy to determine what is working and not working. Make adjustments to activities as required and chart a course for the next five years.	TOSL	2022	\$30K
1.32) Utilizing the Tourism Festival and Event Assessment Criteria (see Appendix A), determine which event will be introduced second.	PDS	2022	
1.33) Complete a business case for the second new event that identifies target markets, market demand, required resources, human resource requirements, community impact, partnerships, program, infrastructure requirements and broadly outlines logistics.	PDS	2022	
1.34) Begin detailed event planning for the second chosen signature event.	PDS	2022	

Long Term Initiatives (2023 - 2027)

10 Year Vision

- Sylvan Lake is a destination that is known for delivering outstanding festivals and events year-round. The festival and event scene can be described as emergent, trendy, vibrant and engaging.
- Sylvan Lake's event hosting system is sustainable and poised for future growth.

Initiative	Lead	Year	Cost
2.1) Determine the need for the development of a Destination Management Organization to act as the Host Organization moving forward.	TOSL	2023	Cost is outside the scope of the F/E Strategy. Has broader implications.
2.2) Provide seed funding to launch the second new event.	TOSL	2023	\$40K yr 1, \$30K yr 2, \$20K yr 3
2.3) Create a sustainability plan that would ensure the second new event works towards cost recovery after its third year of operation.	PDS	2023	
2.4) In 2023, launch the second new event with at least two weeks of programming to start, with a goal to have month-long programming by after 3 years of operating.	PDS	2023	Included above
2.5) Complete a comprehensive annual evaluation of the second new event in each of its first three years.	PDS	2023 - 26	
2.6) Utilizing the Tourism Festival and Event Assessment Criteria (see Appendix A), determine which event will be introduced third.	PDS	2025	
2.7) Complete a business case for the third new event that identifies target markets, market demand, required resources, human resource requirements, community impact, partnerships, program, infrastructure requirements and broadly outlines logistics.	PDS	2025	
2.8) Begin detailed event planning for the third chosen signature event.	PDS	2025	
2.9) Provide seed funding to launch the third new event.	TOSL	2026	\$40K yr 1, \$30K yr 2, \$20K yr 3

2.10) Create a sustainability plan that would ensure the third new event works towards cost recovery after its third year of operation.	PDS	2026	
2.11) In 2026, launch the third new event with at least two weeks of programming to start, with a goal to have month-long programming by after 3 years of operating.	PDS	2026	Included above
2.12) Complete a comprehensive annual evaluation of the third new event in each of its first three years.	PDS	2026 - 29	

Implementation Budget (2018 - 2022)

Estimated Annual Operating Budget of Strategy Implementation (Years 1-5)					
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Revenue					
Town Contribution	12,500	12,500	70,000	72,100	74,263
Grants and Sponsorship (e.g. TGIF)	37,500	37,500	50,000	30,000	50,000
Partner buy-in (coop. marketing)			10,000	10,000	10,000
Travel AB (coop. marketing)			10,000	10,000	10,000
Total Revenue	50,000	50,000	140,000	122,100	144,263
Expense					
Wages and Benefits			70,000	72,100	74,263
Professional Fees	50,000	50,000	10,000		
Cooperative Marketing Campaign			20,000	20,000	20,000
New Event Production Grant			40,000	30,000	20,000
Event Strategy Update					30,000
Total Expense	50,000	50,000	140,000	122,100	144,263

Revenue Notes

1. Town Contribution

The Town's contribution to the Product Development Specialist position should be used as the Town's in-kind contribution to product development when applying for grants.

2. Grants and Sponsorship

The Host Organization will need to seek grant funding and sponsorships. It is assumed that the Town will work closely with Alberta Culture and Tourism in providing seed funding for product development in the early years of strategy implementation.

3. Partner Buy-In (Cooperative Marketing)

As enthusiasm for the event builds, it is assumed that the Host Organization will be successful in attracting new partners in event development, execution and promotion. This amount reflects their contribution to event promotion.

4. Travel Alberta (Cooperative Marketing)

Travel Alberta provides matching funds for cooperative marketing (for qualifying campaigns).

Expense Notes

1. Wages and Benefits

Product Development Specialist position (\$60K/yr. plus benefits). The role of this position is described in previous sections.

2. Professional Fees

This line item is for the Host Organization to engage a contract firm. The role of the contract firm is described in previous sections. It is assumed that by year 3 the organization will build enough capacity to not require the contract firm.

3. Cooperative Marketing Campaign

Funds required to implement a marketing campaign.

4. New Event Production Grant

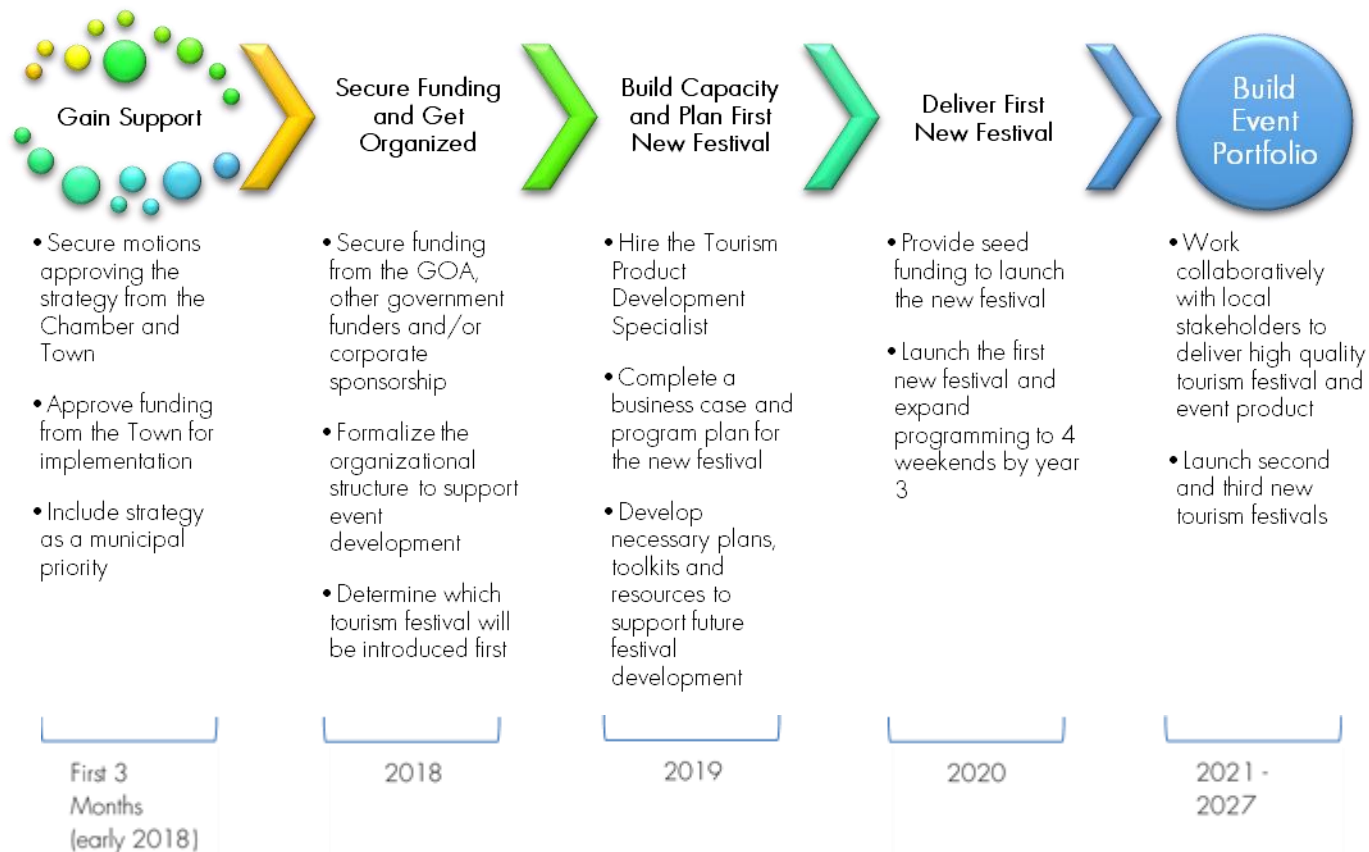
Funds required for production of the new event. The grant reduces each year for three years as the event becomes more sustainable and additional partners contribute.

5. Event Strategy Update

Funds required to complete a comprehensive review of the success of the strategy in its first 5 years and to chart a course for the next 5 years.

Implementation Timeline

The implementation timeline below provides a snapshot of the main activities in the strategy. This timeline describes 10 years of activity, however it will be important to get some initiatives “in the ground” early on in the process.



Measuring Success

Direct Visitor Spending Analysis

An analysis of direct visitor spending as a result of implementing the strategy has been developed (see Figure 10). This analysis projects direct visitor spending of over \$4.4M during the course of the 10-year strategy. It is important to note that the analysis only considers the “direct” effects from visitor spending and does not consider “indirect” or “induced” effects as described below.

Direct, Indirect and Induced Effects

Every dollar spent on attending a festival circulates and re-circulates through the economy, which multiplies the effects of the original expenditure on overall economic activity. This process is known as the economic multiplier effect, and it operates on three levels.

Direct Effects: the initial expenditures of tourists (e.g. a visitor rents a hotel room).

Indirect Effects: subsequent purchases by suppliers of services (e.g. a hotel buys goods and services in the community and hires staff).

Induced Effects: emerge when workers in the sectors stimulated by direct and indirect expenditures spend (the hotel’s workers purchase groceries, clothing and other goods/services in the community).

Figure 10. Direct Visitor Spending Analysis – Sylvan Lake Tourism Festival and Event Strategy (2018 – 2027)

Direct Visitor Spending (Festival 1)

Year of Event ¹	Year in Strategy	# Program Days ²	# Visitors Per Day ³	Daily Direct Visitor Spend (day trip) ⁴	Daily Direct Visitor Spend (overnight) ⁵	Total Direct Visitor Spend ⁶
2020	3	6	500	35.17	49.00	\$ 108,276
2021	4	9	700	35.17	49.00	\$ 230,284
2022	5	12	900	35.17	49.00	\$ 399,751
2023	6	12	900	35.17	49.00	\$ 399,751
2024	7	12	900	35.17	49.00	\$ 399,751
2025	8	12	900	35.17	49.00	\$ 399,751
2026	9	12	900	35.17	49.00	\$ 399,751
2027	10	12	900	35.17	49.00	\$ 399,751
Total Direct Spending (Festival 1)						\$ 2,628,791

Direct Visitor Spending (Festival 2)

Year of Event ¹	Year in Strategy	# Program Days ²	# Visitors Per Day ³	Daily Direct Visitor Spend ⁴	Daily Direct Visitor Spend (overnight) ⁵	Total Direct Visitor Spend ⁶
2023	6	6	500	35.17	49.00	\$ 108,276
2024	7	9	700	35.17	49.00	\$ 230,284
2025	8	12	900	35.17	49.00	\$ 399,751
2026	9	12	900	35.17	49.00	\$ 399,751
2027	10	12	900	35.17	49.00	\$ 399,751
Total Direct Spending (Festival 2)						\$ 1,429,538

Direct Visitor Spending (Festival 3)

Year of Event ¹	Year in Strategy	# Program Days ²	# Visitors Per Day ³	Daily Direct Visitor Spend ⁴	Daily Direct Visitor Spend (overnight) ⁵	Total Direct Visitor Spend ⁶
2026	9	6	500	35.17	49.00	\$ 108,276
2027	10	9	700	35.17	49.00	\$ 230,284
Total Direct Spending (Festival 3)						\$ 338,560

TOTAL DIRECT VISITOR SPEND 2018-2027	\$	4,396,889
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¹ Refers to years the new event(s) will be launched and programmed.

² Assumes Friday – Sunday programming for 2 weeks in year 1, 3 weeks in year 2, and 4 weeks in year 3.

³ Assumes programming is kept focussed to maintain medium-sized event status (maximum 900 visitors/day). Also assumes 10% of visitors will be overnight visitors in year 1, 15% in year 2, and 20% in year 3. Overnight stays only occur on Friday and Saturdays.

⁴ Daily spend per day trip visitor.²⁹

⁵ Daily spend per overnight visitor.³⁰

⁶ In 2018 dollars, including day trip and overnight spending.

Festival and Event Development Scorecard

As the strategy is implemented it will be important to measure success. By measuring the results of activities, stakeholders will be better able to pinpoint which activities are producing results and which activities need to be focused on more. Having clear and compelling evidence/statistics to point to will also bolster support for the strategy within the community, as well as enhance the attractiveness of Sylvan Lake for festival and event investment.

Key performance indicators (KPI's) have been developed relating to Sylvan Lake's vision for tourism festival and event development (see Figure 11 next). It is suggested that the KPI's are evaluated and amended on an annual basis in order to reflect changing business conditions.

Figure 11. Key Performance Indicators for Implementing the Strategy

Vision	KPI	Measurement Tool
5 Year Vision (2023)	1. Organizational structure established and functioning well. 2. At least 10 businesses have participated in the destination animation program. 3. The Host Organization has partnered with at least three other organizations in tourism event development. 4. New signature event launched. 5. Second new signature event launched. 6. 15% of summer visitors indicate they will return in the off-season to attend a festival or event. 7. At least 25% of signature event participants are tourists. 8. From 2020 - 2027, direct visitor expenditure targets are achieved for Festival 1 (see Figure 10). 10. At least 80% visitor satisfaction with new events.	Action Plan Destination Animation Program Review Partnership Plan Action Plan Action Plan Beach Ambassador Survey Event Surveys Economic Impact Analysis Event Surveys
10 Year Vision (2027)	1. Third new signature event launched. 2. Sylvan Lake offers highly engaging tourism festivals and events throughout the year, especially during the Fall, Winter and Spring seasons. 3. 30% of summer visitors indicate they will return in the off-season to attend a festival or event. 4. At least 50% of signature event participants are tourists. 5. From 2023 - 2027, direct visitor expenditure targets are achieved for Festival 2 (see Figure 10). 6. From 2026 - 2027, direct visitor expenditure targets are achieved for Festival 3 (see Figure 10). 7. Minimum 90% visitor satisfaction with new events.	Action Plan Calendar of Events, Post Event Evaluations Beach Ambassador Survey Event Surveys Economic Impact Analysis Economic Impact Analysis Event Surveys



09

CONCLUSION

Summer Sensation Music Festival - Sylvan Lake

09 CONCLUSION

The Sylvan Lake Tourism Festival and Event Strategy offers a strategic direction that will advance Sylvan Lake toward its vision to become a destination that is known for delivering outstanding festivals and events year-round. The community is in the early stages of tourism festival and event development, which means significant time, energy and investment will be required over the short, medium and long term from both the public and private sectors. However, the community is beginning from a position of strength with its existing event offerings, strong existing markets, and strategic location. With some hard work, focused effort and collaboration the community will achieve its vision for tourism festival and event development.



Halloween Spooktacular - Sylvan Lake

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Tourism Festival and Event Assessment Criteria

Sylvan Lake may utilize the following criteria as a tool to assist in determining which festivals and events have the highest potential for tourism. The criteria is not listed in a suggested order of priority as it is expected that the community will prioritize and weight each criterion in order to reflect its priorities.

Scoring Chart

0 = clearly does not meet the description

1 = somewhat meets the description

2 = clearly meets the description

3 = exceeds the description (new and innovative thinking is demonstrated)

Criteria	Description
1. Attracts Day-Trippers	- The festival/event idea will attract tourists in the non-peak seasons who visit during the day. These visitors will spend money in local businesses.
2. Attracts Overnights	- The festival/event idea will attract tourists in the non-peak seasons who stay overnight. These visitors will spend money in local businesses.
3. Revenue Potential	- The festival/event idea has high revenue potential (including revenue from own sources and sponsorship).
4. Financial Return on Investment	- The festival/event idea has reasonable potential to produce a high financial return on investment (public and private).
5. Strategic Alignment	- Development of the festival/event idea aligns with the strategic intent and organizational strategy of stakeholders.
6. Human Resource Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development of the festival/event idea will not put un-due stress on existing human resources. - The producer of the festival/event has a strong organizational structure that can support growth (e.g. leadership, business infrastructure, experience, management capacity). - The festival/event idea will attract and retain new human resources to support growth. - The festival/event idea has the potential to “repackage” some of what is currently being done, thereby reducing stress on existing human resources.
7. Community Buy-In	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The community is open to hosting the festival/event idea. - The community is willing to promote the festival/event idea as a tourism product.
8. Community Impact	- The festival/event idea fosters the culture, health and development of the community by enhancing community spirit.

9. Partners	- The festival/event idea provides strong opportunities for partnerships (public and/or private).
10. Ability to Generate New Product	- The festival/event idea has clear product development opportunities that will lead to increases in new and complementary product on an annual basis.
11. Growth Potential	- The festival/event idea has a reasonable expectation to achieve year over year growth in revenue, product and visitation.
12. Market Demand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The festival/event idea reaches identified target markets. - The festival/event idea demonstrates market demand through relevant indicators (e.g. visitation statistics, gap analysis, expressed demand, survey data, population projections, trends, etc.). - Limited competition exists relative to market demand (by geography, season, product offering, etc.).
13. Market Reach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The festival/event idea should have the potential to be promoted year-round to leverage the brand of Sylvan Lake. - The festival/event idea should have the potential to attract the attention of the media.
14. Authenticity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provides an authentic, experience-based product that highlights what is unique and valuable about Sylvan Lake. - Product differentiates itself from the competition.
15. Environmental Impacts	- The festival/event idea has minimal environmental impacts (risks are mitigated).
16. Physical Infrastructure Requirements	- The community has the physical infrastructure in place to support development of the festival/event idea (e.g. roads, public facilities, parking, accommodations, etc.).
17. Logistics and Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The festival/event idea is logistically sound and will not require a large amount of addition resources or planning in the execution of high quality experiences for visitors. - The festival/event idea can be executed safely with minimal risk to visitors, staff and residents.

APPENDIX B: Event Venue Inventory (full results)

Legend:	BWP: Best Western Plus	Event Classification:	STG: Stage Events
	CIS: Comfort Inn & Suites		TS: Tradeshow and Markets
	FCC: Family and Community Centre		MICE: Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions
	GCC: Golf and Country Club		SR : Sport & Recreation
	MC: Multicampus Facility		FF: Festivals and Fairs
	MGC:Meadowlands Golf Club		C: Celebrations
	NC: NexSource Centre		

Indoor Venues	Size (sq. ft)	Capacity (# of people)	Event Classification
Arrow and Oar Venue		150	C, MICE,
BWP-Board Room	240	10	MICE
BWP-Sunset Room	1271	120	C,MICE
CIS - Breakfast Room			C,MICE
CIS -Meeting Room			C,MICE
FCC Kitchen	n/a	n/a	All
FCC-Main Hall/Gym	6392	500	All
GCC-Duffers Den		125	C,MICE
GCC-Eagles Nest		100	C,MICE
GCC-Tournament House		250	C,MICE
Incline Industries Skate & BMX Park			SR
Library Program Room		35	MICE
Lions Club Hall - Basement	3500	80	C,MICE
Lions Club Hall - Main Hall	4000	80	C,MICE,SR
MC - Full Gym			STG,SR
MC-Fine Arts Centre		200	STG
MC-Mother Theresa Gym		694	STG,SR,TS
MC-Fox Run		750	SR
MC - Shared Gym		623	SR
MGC-Clubhouse			C,MICE
MGC-Event Room			C,MICE
NC - Arena 1	17,000	1209	All
NC - Arena 2	17,425	2066	All
NC - Curling Rink	20365	1757	All
NC - Multi-Purpose Rm 1	1064	114	TS,MICE,C
NC - Multi-Purpose Rm 2	1148	119	TS,MICE,C
NC - Multi-Purpose Rm 3	1940	193	TS,MICE,C
NC - Seniors Activity 1	1625	201	TS,MICE,C
NC - Seniors Activity 2	1270	158	TS,MICE,C
NC - Seniors Activity Centre	2895	360	TS,MICE,C
Stevenson Performing Arts Centre			STG
Stevenson Tournament House			SR,C

Legend:	FCC - Family Community Centre	Event Classification:	STG: Stage Events
	MC: Multicampus Facility		TS: Tradeshow and Markets
			MICE: Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions
			SR : Sport & Recreation
			FF: Festivals and Fairs
			C: Celebrations

Outdoor Venues	Size	Capacity (# of people)	Event Classification
Arrow and Oar Venue		150	C,MICE
Centennial Park	5 acres		All
FCC - Outdoor Rink			SR,C
Four Seasons Park			STG,SR,FF,C
Leader Field			STG,SR,FF,C
Lighthouse Park			All
Lion's Legacy Park			C,FF
MC - Field A			SR,C
MC - Field B			SR,C
MC - Mini field			SR,C
Meadowview Ball Diamond			SR
Palo Park Ball Diamond			SR
Provincial Park			All
Railway Promenade Parking Lot			STG,TS,FF
Ryders Ridge Soccer Pitch			SR
Steffie Woima Ball Diamond			SR

APPENDIX C: Stakeholder Café (full results)

The most important opportunities and challenges to participants are identified by a dot “●” in the chart.

Opportunities	Challenges
Providing more event supports (logistics)	Volunteer burnout and aging
Targeting students/youth for volunteering ●	Parking (especially downtown and along the waterfront)
Utilizing volunteer centre services	Temporary signage laws too restrictive
Leveraging existing venues ●●	Lack of a performing arts venue ●●●
Offering training for events	Online presence and social media
Hosting more sporting events (e.g. curling, hockey) ●	Municipal expenses and processes (e.g. renting, bylaws, signs, etc.)
Implement the Cultural Master Plan ●	Lack of B&B type accommodations
Hosting art/music events (Sylvan Lake Idol, Symphony on the Lake)	Noise levels
Children’s festival	Venue with a commercial kitchen ●
Culinary events (craft beer, wine, partner with Red Deer College, dinner theatre)	Outdoor maintenance costs for the Town ●
Community history and culture	Lack of cleanliness along the waterfront
Developing the old waterslide site (e.g. band shell) ●●	Ice conditions on the lake fluctuate year to year
Niche events (e.g. water skiing, fat biking, wind surfing, ski doo, scuba diving, trail skating, ice golf, dark sky) ●●	There is currently no position solely dedicated to tourism, visitor services or tourism marketing in Sylvan Lake
Rentals (snow machine, snowshoes, skates) ●	Potential for increased RCMP costs
Pet focused event	Brand confusion
Holiday events	
Enhancing existing events (e.g. Jaws on the Lake)	
Partnering with other communities in Central Alberta	
Clearly defining target market(s)	
The work plan should be focused on short, medium and long term goals	
Making continual progress and tracking successes	

APPENDIX D: References

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