



EDMONTON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
MUNICIPAL ACTION PLAN 2025

Let's Make Edmonton Rich, Together.



Creating Generational Investment

At the Edmonton Chamber of Commerce, we believe this city should be rich — in every sense of the word.

Rich in opportunity.

Rich in vibrancy.

Rich in ideas.

Rich in what it delivers for the people who live here, work here, and do business here.

This action plan outlines what we know the next City Council must prioritize to help make Edmonton rich.

Making this city rich matters because it's about people like Rob, who runs a neighborhood coffee shop and is ready to open a second location. For Sally, leading a small creative agency and chasing her next big client. For Mira, stepping up to grow her family's trucking company. And for David and Jas, whose tech startup just secured its first round of funding and needs Edmonton to be attractive to global investors.

Business owners know when things go right, their potential is exponential: a permit approved on time, a downtown street full of foot traffic, a major project completed ahead of schedule.

But lately, those wins feel fewer and farther between. We're spending more but getting less. Projects like the Valley Line LRT face years of delay. Basic services like snow clearing and waste collection slip. Traffic gridlock worsens. Business costs rise.

This municipal election is about getting back on track. It's about asking our leaders to be bolder, more disciplined, and more accountable. To think more like business owners — the people who put their time, energy, and capital into building this city every day.

WORLD TRADE CENTRE EDMONTON

Our Pillars for a Richer Edmonton

Every recommendation in this plan connects back to our four pillars; the standards that the business community need our future City Council to keep in mind when making decisions.

Fiscal Responsibility
Are we keeping taxes and spending sustainable so businesses can plan with certainty?

Infrastructure Planning
Are we delivering projects that give the best return on investment for businesses and the city?

Boosting Investment
Are we securing the capital and funding Edmonton needs to grow and compete?

Competitive Advantage
Are we building the kind of city that attracts talent, customers, and investors?

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Building a sustainable, predictable tax and spending framework that restores Edmonton’s competitiveness and gives businesses long-term certainty.

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Investing in the foundations of a growing city, renewing what’s aging, building what’s next, and ensuring every project is planned and communicated in a way that ensures faster completion and less disruption.

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Attracting global capital, federal and provincial dollars, and private investment by showing Edmonton can put funding to work — turning bold ideas into jobs, growth, and long-term prosperity.

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Protecting and strengthening what makes Edmonton a city where people want to live, work, and invest in. This means place-making that builds vibrancy, a strong downtown, and a business climate that keeps our competitive edge sharp.

Our Policy Recommendations	Fiscal Responsibility	Infrastructure Planning	Boosting Investment	Competitive Advantage
Establish a Mayor’s Fiscal Roundtable	✓	✓	✓	✓
Implement a Return-to-Office Plan for Civic Staff	✓			✓
Require a “Return on Investment” section	✓	✓	✓	✓
Adopt a Citywide Phasing & Staging Playbook for Corridor Construction	✓	✓		✓
Launch a Core Infrastructure Renewal Plan		✓	✓	
Implement a Financial Loss During Major Construction Policy		✓	✓	
Fund and Implement the Downtown Action Plan			✓	
Set Up a Municipal Development Corporation	✓	✓	✓	✓
Adopt “Development Automatic Yes” Tools			✓	✓
Shift from One-off Grants to Incentives	✓		✓	✓
Convene Partners to Craft a 25-Year Economic Vision	✓		✓	✓
Implement Public Safety Action Plan			✓	✓
Adopt a Non-Residential Property Tax Competitiveness Target	✓		✓	✓
Create a Downtown Office Conversion & Infill Fund		✓		✓

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Our Roadmap

to a
Richer
Edmonton

Fiscal Responsibility

THE PROBLEM

The City of Edmonton doesn't do enough to consult regularly with the business community which creates an information vacuum. Council decisions sometimes move forward without fully understanding their impact on employers and job creators — leading to measures like tax hikes that weaken competitiveness citywide. While City Council has advisory bodies for areas like waste, accessibility, transit, and community services, there is no equivalent focused on economic issues.

For the sake of productivity and better service, more and more civic governments and top corporations in North America are ending the option of remote working for their employees. Edmonton risks falling behind if it doesn't act in the same way.

Council decisions often proceed without consistent economic analysis in public reports. The lack of clear cost-benefit and impact information limits transparency, makes trade-offs harder to evaluate, and weakens accountability in major spending decisions.

OUR RECOMMENDATION

Establish a Mayor's Fiscal Roundtable with leaders from Edmonton's business community to assess finances, programs, and debt, and to produce options to return Edmonton to a sustainable, regionally competitive fiscal trajectory within 24 months.

Implement a Return-to-Office Plan for Civic Staff (office roles) with clear attendance targets, phased milestones, and partnerships with downtown businesses to lift weekday foot traffic and sales.

While Council benefits from strong governance and public transparency, decision-making is limited by inconsistent economic analysis in public reporting. The City should maintain the 10-day public release rule for Council reports and update templates to **require a "Return on Investment" section** in each report outlining costs, benefits, disadvantages, and broader economic impacts for all items requiring Council approval.

Infrastructure Planning

THE PROBLEM

Edmonton’s population is on track to almost double to 2 million by 2040. And then increase to 2.6 million by 2050. That means we will see immense pressure to respond as more than 50,000 people on average move here every year for 25 years.

OUR RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a Citywide Phasing & Staging Playbook for Corridor Construction that mandates “open-once” utility coordination, realistic milestone schedules, maintained business access (at least one sidewalk and one lane open where feasible), early-completion incentives and liquidated damages for delays, mandatory business-impact assessments with mitigation, and a real-time public delivery dashboard—targeting a 20-point increase in on-time delivery and a 30% reduction in full-closure days within two construction seasons.

Edmonton’s infrastructure, from roads to buildings to bridges, is getting old. The city needs to make expensive repairs and upgrades to the aging infrastructure by 2030 while also constructing new infrastructure to support a booming population and growing business. The price tag: \$4.4 billion. But we only have \$2.6 billion. **We are \$1.8 billion short.**

Launch a Core Infrastructure Renewal Plan that right-sizes capital scope, prioritizes high-return renewal, and introduces a dedicated renewal levy with strict reporting to close the maintenance backlog while minimizing long-term operations and maintenance costs.

Major city-led construction projects along commercial corridors often block customer access for over a year, causing steep revenue losses for local businesses. Without a policy for financial relief, viable businesses risk closing permanently, weakening employment, tax revenues, and district vitality.

Extended city-led infrastructure projects along commercial corridors can severely restrict customer access, causing prolonged revenue declines for local businesses - often with no recourse or compensation for work initiated beyond their control. The City should revisit and approve a **Financial Loss During Major Construction Policy** providing targeted tax relief, direct grants, or temporary relocation assistance for businesses impacted by projects exceeding 12 months, with transparent eligibility criteria and timelines to ensure timely, equitable, and predictable support.

Boosting Investment

THE PROBLEM

Downtown Edmonton’s contribution to the municipal tax base has dropped significantly due to a decline in property values post-pandemic. Meanwhile, Calgary’s Greater Downtown Plan has sparked a \$1.8-billion increase in assessed downtown property since 2022. The consequences of Edmonton’s sluggish response are being felt by businesses and residents across the city and region.

OUR RECOMMENDATION

Since 2021, Edmonton has experienced numerous business closures with net business growth of less than 1%. Downtown Edmonton has been particularly impacted due to persistent safety concerns, declining foot traffic, and eroding investor confidence. Council should fully fund and implement the **Downtown Action Plan**, leveraging provincial and federal dollars to attract private investment, increase commercial activity, and re-establish downtown as a safe, vibrant, and competitive hub for business.

The City of Edmonton is driving up the cost and slowing down the pace of development with its site preparation as it builds roads and installs utility lines before selling parcels of land to developers. This also places the City in direct competition with private industry.

In 2022, Edmonton held 6,715 hectares of vacant industrial land, plus 75 hectares in central, mature, and established neighbourhoods - representing one example of untapped opportunities for economic activity and transformative investment. The City should create an independent **Municipal Development Corporation** to assemble strategic land, deliver catalytic projects, and co-invest with private and Indigenous partners, leveraging City assets to attract investment, accelerate redevelopment, and drive citywide revitalization.

Although Edmonton has taken great strides to increase housing construction, we must do more to streamline the process to more efficiently move projects through zoning, planning and permitting as our city’s population continues to increase dramatically.

Lengthy permitting timelines and inconsistent approvals create uncertainty, delay projects, and drive up costs, with new commercial, mixed-use, and industrial permits targeted for 75 days but averaging 110. The City should adopt an **Automatic Yes Policy** with pre-approved pattern books, elimination of most “discretionary use” approvals, expedited inspections for code-compliant infill and conversions, and a default approval process granting applications unless denied within a set timeframe - reserving Council involvement for exceptional cases only.

Edmonton is in a competition with other major cities across Canada and the United States to attract business and boost economic development and revitalization. We cannot afford to fall behind. We need to be more strategic by providing tax incentives that will ease the financial strain on businesses.

Shift from **One-off Grants to Incentives** with targeted, time-limited property tax abatements, levy offsets, and TIF-style tools in priority districts (downtown, station areas, industrial nodes) with strict ROI tests. Not always relying on grants, using broader incentives. Thinking about the broader economic impact.

Competitive Advantage

THE PROBLEM

Having a 10-year economic plan is no longer ambitious enough, especially given how fast Edmonton is growing. We need to look much further into the future and set a higher standard. Toronto’s mayor has introduced a 25-year plan, *Sidewalks to Skylines: An Action Plan for Toronto’s Economy*, to double the city’s GDP by 2050 and create the most competitive business environment in North America. Edmonton can be just as forceful and ambitious as Canada’s largest city.

Edmonton’s Crime Severity Index has risen to 101.1—second highest among Canada’s largest cities—fueling visible disorder that deters investment, reduces business confidence, and undermines downtown vitality. Current efforts remain fragmented across agencies, limiting their impact.

OUR RECOMMENDATION

Convene Partners to Craft a 25-Year Economic Vision that defines 3–5 signature clusters (e.g., advanced manufacturing, clean energy, health innovation), aligning land-use, incentives, marketing, and workforce pipeline.

Edmonton’s Crime Severity Index is up 4% since 2021 and the second highest among Canada’s eight largest cities - damaging business attractiveness and deterring investment. Building on the Community Safety and Well-Being Strategy, and possibly by reigniting the Edmonton Public Safety and Community Response Task Force, the City should urgently work with all orders of government to implement a coordinated **Public Safety Action Plan** that unites police, social services, housing, health care, and justice partners to address social disorder, reduce public drug consumption, improve visible safety, support vulnerable populations, and restore confidence in key business districts.

THE PROBLEM

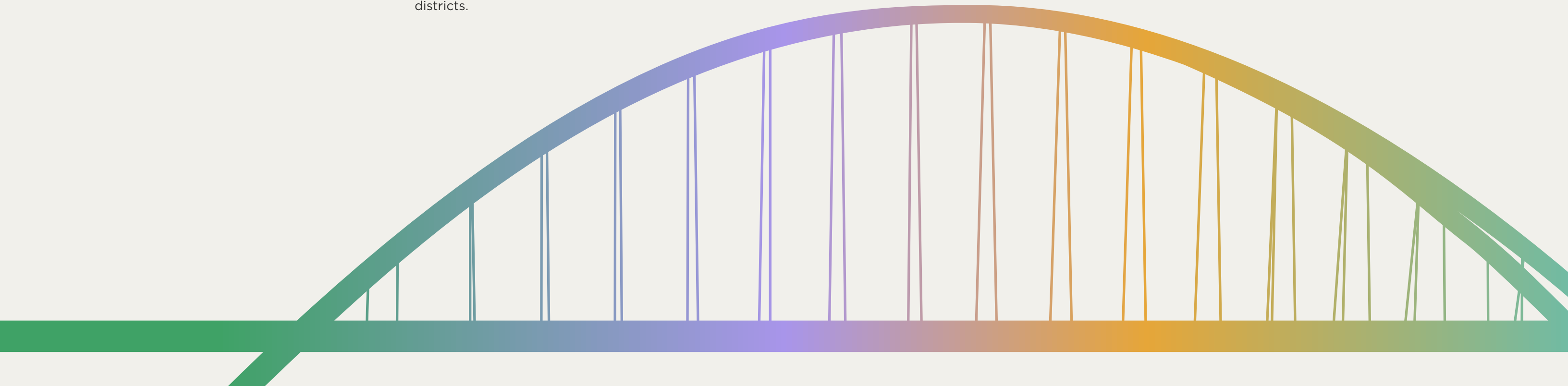
Edmonton has the least competitive commercial tax rates in the province, making it harder to attract and retain businesses compared to neighbouring municipalities.

Edmonton is struggling to deal with a housing crisis while its downtown core is deteriorating. Our downtown office vacancy rate is almost 25 percent, the second highest of any major city in Canada after Calgary. But Calgary is acting by reviving its office conversion program with a \$52.5 million investment to transform unneeded office buildings into homes for Calgarians, post-secondary academic spaces, hotels, and other uses.

OUR RECOMMENDATION

Council should adopt a **Non-Residential Property Tax Competitiveness Target** to bring Edmonton’s commercial mill rate closer to the regional average over the next budget cycle, supported by annual progress reports and offsets through service efficiencies. To ensure long-term stability, this must be paired with a competitive, predictable Tax Framework that sets multi-year tax guidelines, protects stabilization reserves, and limits in-year supplemental spending to true emergencies or externally funded priorities—requiring a comprehensive overhaul of the existing taxation system.

Create a **Downtown Office Conversion & Infill Fund** of \$100 million over three years to catalyze new builds and office-to-residential conversions, targeting 1,000+ new homes and up to a 5% reduction in office vacancy downtown.





Rich in Potential.

We have the talent, the space, the energy, and the opportunity.
What we need now is leadership that matches our potential.

Together, we're investing in Edmonton's future.

STAY CONNECTED

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