



TOWN OF FAIRVIEW EVENT DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

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Introduction

Fairview is Alberta. In many ways it defines life in this province with its heavy emphasis on agriculture and farming, and a history connected to the railway and oil and gas. With a population of 3,000, it is also typical of many towns on the prairies. Beyond that exterior, however, is a place that surprises. It is a town of art, ambition, sport, education, activity, and family. It is a town that delivers to its residents a quality of life more common to locations four times its size. And it wants to do more.

As towns on the prairies work to identify their respective futures, Fairview is aiming to jump ahead. It wants not to rest on what currently exists but to further become a town that residents engage in, love calling home, and want to stay in. This has led to a focus on the development of events and activities, and with good success so far it wishes to expand on this progress. The existence of substantive facilities, its tight-knit community, and the experience it possesses in delivering events provides a great foundation but there are crucial considerations to ensure this process moves forward effectively.

Sustaining and growing its population, development of its business community, and great quality of life for its residents are among the objectives Fairview wishes to achieve. While events and visitation will not by themselves deliver these results, they can play a fundamental role in meeting them and making Fairview not only a great home but a great place for people to visit.

This report recommends a path forward for Fairview to build its event culture, direction, and planning. It also considers other factors, such as volunteerism and key relationships, that directly or indirectly relate to event organization and delivery so it has a broader picture on how events can occur and what elements can play a key role in making that happen.

DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this report, there are some clarifying points to be made:

- + When the lowercase 'town' is used, this relates to the broader town as a whole. The use of uppercase 'Town' refers to the administration of Fairview.
- + Over the course of conducting interviews, interviewees often intertwined events and activities. In this report, the use of 'events' speaks to happenings in town that would typically be one off, annual, or irregular. 'Activities' largely refer to occurrences that are more regular in nature, such as participation on a youth volleyball team or music lessons.

Foundation

At the heart of this plan is a strong foundation that has supported Fairview to date and will continue to serve it going forward. Through stakeholder conversations, a visit to Fairview to audit facilities and experiences, as well as discussions with Town staff, this fundamental information was gathered. An understanding of current state, objectives, opportunities, and challenges, as well as how Fairview is positioned, has helped lead to new ideas and potential for future growth and development.

CURRENT STATE

Communities of all scopes and sizes inherently have advantages and areas of challenge, and Fairview, as a community in northwestern Alberta, is no different. As the world continues to emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic, Fairview is assessing how it supports quality of life for its residents while equally developing its economy to be resilient and growing.

Events, or any visitor related activities, must create a net positive for residents. Without local buy in, it can prove difficult to achieve the benefits events can provide. The community is the constant, while elected officials, visitors, or key staff may come and go. So, focusing on what works for residents will often also be what works well for event participants and visitors. Adam Burke, CEO of Los Angeles Tourism and Convention Bureau, once said, "What's good for your residents is good for visitors, the reverse is not always the case". This principle holds true for communities of any size.

In evaluating where Fairview should focus its energy, reviewing its current state is vital to recognize opportunities and challenges. This provides clues as to strengths and gap areas to support future planning. The Research Summary document provides much of this, but key current state elements include the following.

Opportunities

Established Events and Event Experience

Fairview is a community that supports events, and the Town has placed greater emphasis on them in recent years. From major events such as the 2011 Alberta 55+ Games, to the annual Summer's End Festival, or the winter 2023 club volleyball tournament, Fairview has demonstrated both interest and ability in hosting. Events are seen as an important way to engage residents while also highlighting aspects core to Fairview as a community.

Established events such as Summer's End are very well received and appreciated by residents and stakeholders. New ideas, such as dinner theatre events held in the summer of 2022, have provided additional options in which people can take part. Strong event management experience also exists in Fairview as those that bring such events to life often stay with organizations for years or help multiple groups plan events and activities. Building on this level of experience to make events even stronger is an opportunity in Fairview.

Venues

When considering other towns of similar size, very few have a complement of venues to match Fairview's. Three gyms, an aquatics centre, a theatre, a fine-arts centre, an arena, a college campus, a social club, and special interest halls (Friedenstal, Legion, EE Oliver School) are among the key venues. Such an asset base provides an incredible foundation from which Fairview can meet its quality of life objectives by providing interesting entertainment options to residents and to visitors.

Supportive Town Administration

The Town recognizes the value and potential in events. Not only that, but it demonstrates a clear desire to streamline how these come together and to support those that are or wish to organize events. This delicate balance of driving activity from a municipal perspective, but not creating barriers is an important one to find that the Town appears to be striking.

Northwestern Polytechnic

Northwestern Polytechnic, and its previous iterations, have long formed an important part of life and economic viability in Fairview. Its unique buildings, infrastructure, state of the art facilities, greenspaces, and rare campus art make it an important asset for Fairview. Additionally, the dedicated and passionate faculty that support its program offerings uniquely positions NWP Fairview to provide a friendly, undaunting transition to post-secondary education.

Only communities such as Vermillion, Athabasca, and Lacombe, similar in size to Fairview, can boast having college campuses with substantial program offerings within its town limits. Concerns about the future of the Fairview Campus have previously existed but seem now to be in the rear-view mirror. Though work needs to be done to cement the relationship between the town and NWP and to identify opportunities to partner together, there appears to be a willingness to develop mutually beneficial events and experiences (business, sport, educational, community) that can support growth in Fairview.

Residents / Pride in Place

The definite and clear pride Fairview residents have for the place they call home is valuable. Multi-generational families that have made Fairview home for decades form a strong foundation for this pride, though newer residents also share in it. This feeling creates opportunities for Fairview to consider and deliver different events or activities with greater confidence knowing there will more likely be support from participants, supporters, or sponsors.

Champions

Multiple champions are present in Fairview that can support the development of events and visitation. From Teresa Bell and Tony Shmyruk at NWP to the existence of a strong volleyball community, or Kerry-Ann Schatz at the Fairview Fine Arts Centre, numerous people and organizations bring skills, passion, and a belief in Fairview that can support event development.

Initiative

Through the pride of place that citizens of Fairview have, there is a strong sense of initiative and a 'get up and go' attitude. This means that many events and activities can occur when otherwise they might seem daunting to organize.

Agriculture

There is a uniqueness to the agricultural sector around Fairview. The high quality soil and available summertime light, among other elements, play key roles in what can be produced and how it is grown. This presents a distinct opportunity for Fairview to continue tell its story not only about what is produced but how, as well as the innovation occurring in agriculture specific to this region.

Business Development

With a greater focus placed by Fairview on events, it may help spur the creation of important support service businesses. This could see restaurants consider offering catering or existing businesses in other nearby jurisdictions, such as audiovisual equipment suppliers, consider expanding to Fairview to support the growth in events.



Challenges

Volunteerism

Volunteer burnout and too few people investing time serving organizations and planning events is a challenge, not only for Fairview. Other communities have identified this issue which existed prior to COVID-19 and has only become more acute following the pandemic. Time capacity, perceptions of potential to contribute and be heard, and not seeing the value of contributing time and expertise are all noted reasons that get in the way of people volunteering. Getting people back to contributing their time and increasing the volunteer pool is a major challenge that needs to be addressed.

Organizers

Currently the Town is largely seen as a key 'event manager' in Fairview. While this is an important role it can play, there needs to be a broadening of event delivery capacity. Fairview does have a strong event culture which can be further nurtured to provide the right balance between Town and community as organizers.

Geography

A challenge, but one that cannot be changed, is Fairview's remoteness. It can be difficult to get event participants and visitors to venture north from more populous regions. However, it is important to note that challenges can be turned into strengths and key for Fairview is to identify advantages to being further north – from dark skies in winter to beautiful open spaces and agricultural uniqueness.

Downtown

Downtown Fairview has had positive developments, but there remain issues to this key part of town. Despite the pandemic, there has been a renewal of some business spaces, including the Grand Hotel, but vacancies do remain. Places to gather, sit, or visit are lacking which limits the potential for downtown to be a more frequented space. On the positive side, the recent addition of the archway has provided an indication to residents and visitors alike of the importance Fairview places in its downtown, while also acting as wayfinding for visitors.

Keeping Youth

Age demographic splits are impacted in Fairview by the fact many young people choose to leave town, often after high school. While some return to live, the current state of departures creates a population gap that moves through various aspects of life in Fairview impacting businesses, the employment base, and facility usage.

Idea Traction

The counter to the opportunities presented by the initiative mindset in Fairview is a difficulty in seeing new ideas or directions get traction. At times, it is understood to exist, an attitude of doing things as they have always been done, especially related to events. This can discourage volunteers or younger people from sharing thoughts or initiatives that lead to ingenuity.

Support Services

Currently Fairview lacks sufficient event support services to make hosting more viable. Catering services, audio equipment rentals, transportation, and other equipment needs are limited which negatively suppresses event hosting possibilities in town.

While more than a support service, the availability of accommodations in Fairview is also limited and can make it difficult to host larger events. New hotels do not get built quickly, however a focus on visitation through events and growth at Northwestern Polytechnic are two ways in which new accommodation options become possible.

OBJECTIVES

In further developing events and visitation, there are multiple objectives Fairview is looking to achieve. Some of these may be impacted or met in a shorter time frame, while others may take years to complete, but getting on a path to developing an event culture, engaging volunteers and people in improved ways, and considering how to welcome visitors can all help move these listed objectives forward.

Capacity Identification and Creation

The identification and nurturing of people and organizations within Fairview that can help carry and move this strategy forward are core to growing community events and visitation.

Revenue Generation

Facilities and the growing equipment asset base (stage, tents, tables, etc.) are leveraged to generate revenue important to support both event operations and to further assist in their development.

Business Spin Off

Events develop to not only drive the growth and sustainability of existing businesses but to spur the creation of new businesses that directly or indirectly support event and visitation servicing.

Resident Satisfaction and Quality of Life

Fairview resident satisfaction in living in the community increases because of the existence of more and increasingly diverse events and activities in which to participate.

Population Maintenance

People choose to remain in Fairview, new people recognize it as a great place to live, and former residents consider returning. This supports population maintenance, at minimum, as core demographics age.

Property Assessment Increases

With more people recognizing Fairview as a great community in which to live thus sustaining population, property value increases occur creating growth in tax revenue for the Town.



DIFFERENTIATION

In visiting Fairview and in conversations with stakeholders, a range of differentiating factors materialized on which the town can further build its position and place, both in northwestern Alberta and the province as a whole.

Generations

The tight-knit and welcoming community that is Fairview is largely a result of the multi-generational families that call it home. This connection to place and belief in what Fairview offers is a unique differentiator as compared to other towns which may have more transient populations.

Agriculture

Farmers and farming make significant contributions to Fairview. This is from both economic and community-minded perspectives. The uniqueness of what is produced, and even how it is grown, enables Fairview and region to stand out.

River and Local Geography

The beauty of the local environment, as well as the recreational opportunities it provides, gives Fairview a very unique place in which to exist, host exceptional events, and welcome visitors. This freedom to easily explore and roam, along with the ability to do this while avoiding the hustle and bustle of bigger centres, is a quality to which Fairview can anchor.

Assets and Community Services Offered

Few towns boast the quality of and access to amenities that Fairview does. This provides residents lots of things to do and with which to get involved. Arts spaces, sports facilities, outdoor recreational opportunities, courses, and programs, among other activities, deliver a quality of life that is rare for a town of Fairview's population.

Academic Institution

In western Canada especially, it is often the bigger centres that have academic institutions with significant depth of programming. Fairview is a lucky jurisdiction to have that as part of the Northwestern Polytechnic network.

Embracing Isolation

While isolation was mentioned by some as a challenge, it was also seen as a differentiating feature. This comes through in the desire and willingness to get things done or brought to life when they do not exist in Fairview. Living further north breeds an attitude of initiative.

Event Host

An aspect of the welcoming nature of Fairview comes through in its interest in gathering. The experience in event hosting that is continuing to grow, provides those opportunities for people to come together.

FAIRVIEW'S POSITION

Positioning, while crucial for business, organizations, and institutions, is often difficult for municipalities because of the range of needs they have to service and the complex nature of operations to support resident life. That said, understanding where a jurisdiction is positioned in relation to other destinations is important in determining how to use strengths. For Fairview this is about leveraging differentiating factors in developing plans to ensure uniqueness is understood, valued, and presents options for those considering engaging (attending an event, living, working, establishing a business, visiting).

Ultimately positioning is about making choices, taking a direction, and clarifying what is important to focus on. Four key components determine a strong position:

Ownable – is it something that can be owned and delivered to key audiences

Believable – will audiences believe the position is valid and supported by underlying elements

Important – does the established position matter to audiences in question

Unique – is it unique as compared to what other jurisdictions can deliver

Fairview's current position in relation to residents and quality of life can be stated as:

Fairview delivers to its northwestern Alberta residents abundant outdoor and indoor recreational and entertainment possibilities accompanied with the freedom and calm of a rural residential experience.

At essence, the aim is not to alter this position, as it remains core and fundamental to what Fairview delivers to its residents, and what is experienced by visitors. The goal is to enhance and build on this strength to further entrench it in the community. This is outlined in the remainder of the report.



Development

Fairview's foundation and position, as summarized, is incredibly valuable and leads well into a further move forward in support of achieving the noted objectives. At the heart of achieving the objectives are four core pillars that combined will deliver the growth in events and visitation Fairview is seeking, as well as the related benefits.

Events – Development of a deeper event hosting culture in Fairview through encouragement of all residents to see themselves as event hosts and ambassadors.

Volunteerism and People – Fairview to become a volunteerism leader in northwestern Alberta by engaging and creating strong connections with people.

Municipal – Areas of growth and need to be developed by the Town of Fairview and other stakeholders that play a vital role in events, activities, and visitation.

Tourism – Events are at the heart of this plan, but Fairview has the potential for tourism development to further support achievement of its objectives.

Additional strategic considerations are also highlighted that can act as guiding principles, constantly available in the background for those in Fairview involved in meeting the outlined objectives.

FUTURE STATE

In furthering Fairview's focus on quality of life and how that supports the noted objectives, a page is taken from Simon Sinek and his book, "Start With Why". In the book, Sinek argues that people and organizations achieve great things when a clear 'why' or purpose is defined. This innate 'why' guides leaders and engages others to not only follow but contribute to its attainment. He then considers 'how' that is achieved, essentially what vehicles are used to bring the 'why' to life, and also 'what', meaning the tactics or actions done to deliver the 'why'.

To build on Fairview's existing quality of life position, as noted earlier, the following is the recommended future state direction to be taken.

Why – residents are welcomed and welcome others through unique and enduring events and experiences

How – the simultaneous development of both a volunteer and event host culture

What – engaging people and organizations to see themselves as key contributors, hosts, and ambassadors for events in Fairview (as outlined through multiple actions and tactics).

STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS

To bring this purpose and approach to life, the following strategic considerations are woven through as footings in the recommendations in this report. These can be leveraged by Fairview as it continues along the path to developing events, an event culture, and a deeper spirit of volunteerism.

Legacy

Legacy for destinations is the process of understanding how events become more than just the consumption of services (venues, accommodation, hospitality, activities, etc.). It means working in collaboration to develop a project or program that considers the purpose of the lead group (association, corporation, or sports organization), and how the destination can align and contribute to this mission to create something more meaningful for the community and for broader socio-economic gain.

Following VisitBritain's open-source Legacy and Impact Toolkit, created in partnership with Event Legacy experts Meet4Impact, here is a brief overview of the current opportunity that Fairview has as it sets an events strategy in motion:

From the Legacy and Impact Toolkit: "The events industry is a hugely important vehicle to influence positive impact and education. Deeper collaboration of knowledge, stronger engagement with local communities and businesses, inserting sustainability into all key decision-making, and establishing positive legacy will all be at the heart of events looking forward."

Event legacy can be defined and executed in various forms but must be articulated, aligned, and planned early in organizing an event. If done correctly, the outcome generated from hosting events will more clearly demonstrate the value of events to residents, stakeholders, and prospective participants.

Four main steps exist to engage a community around legacy projects that aim to generate impact through event activities.

Define

Consider how an event could fill a gap or need in the community. This needs to be done collaboratively with the community by identifying the intentions and objectives to create the changes sought through the event.

Manage

This is the development of a legacy strategy. Mapping and engaging stakeholders, reviewing existing events to determine additional opportunities, developing of project timelines, allocating responsibilities to stakeholders, risk management, and an event legacy communications plan all make up this step.

Measure

Groundwork completed in the Define and Manage steps is utilized here. At this step it is determined what impact measurement is, measurement indicators, the scope of data to be collected, and a process for analyzing that info.

Maximize

This considers how to report on the impact created through the three previous steps and how to communicate the story for future event strategy development.



Rule of 11%

In developing events or programming, it is natural to think about new ideas and how to introduce completely different concepts. However, at times taking what exists and elevating it can be the right direction. Fairview is encouraged to think about how to take existing events and elevate them 11%. This leverages the current foundation and avoids reinventing the wheel or taxing teams and volunteers in creating new concepts. It also enables a reinvigoration to take place so, as an interviewee said, there is a consistency but not redundancy to what events or activities Fairview produces.

Examples of the 11% concept could be to add a Friday night kickoff event to Summer's End or to include a coaching clinic as part of a basketball tournament. These do not fundamentally alter the existing event, but instead elevate it to allow current equity (brand, assets, planning) to be used while improving the experience and potentially attracting new people.

This concept can apply to anything Fairview is doing, and not just events. Things like service delivery at the recreation centre, volunteer management, or even stakeholder engagement can be looked at with this 11% lens. In some cases, the 11% could feel or seem big or in others a small change or adjustment to an activity could produce significant impact.

It is also worth noting that this suggestion is not meant to preclude new ideas, concepts, or events from coming to the fore. As a destination or community builds out plans, it is meant as a reminder that current assets may have legs or potential beyond what is already seen.

Lean In

Fairview possesses many unique attributes that it can lean into as it builds its events plans. Four stood during conversations with stakeholders:

- + Strong arts culture
- + Court sports (especially volleyball)
- + Unique agricultural environment
- + Outdoor lifestyle

Though not everything Fairview does has to focus around these key areas, leaning into areas of strength and building on them is a way to leverage interest and expertise that already exists. Using these as anchors to further develop an event and volunteer culture can better use resources, not stretch Town staff thin, and build on areas of prevailing interest.



Events

As one of the four core pillars, events are at the heart of meeting Fairview's stated objectives. The town already comes from a place of reasonable strength with existing, well organized, and successful events appreciated by residents and visitors alike. Past events, such as the 55+ Games did test the limits of what Fairview could do but, in the end, demonstrated a strong will and sense of initiative to bring them to life and further entrench an event hosting mindset. The following outlines how Fairview can continue to evolve its position as an event host and entrench a hosting mindset within the community.

EVENT CULTURE

As stated, a primary recommendation for Fairview is to establish a broader mentality within all residents, businesses, and organizations that it is a town of events. On the surface this will seem obvious, but declaring how the whole community plays part in this culture of event hosting can strongly support how events develop in Fairview. This will take time as cultural, or mindset changes do not happen overnight. Conversations, education, and relationship building will all be part of strengthening this philosophy. Fairview has an established event base so from this a deeper culture can be built and these are directions Fairview can go to embed this culture in the community.

All Spaces as Event Venues

From car dealerships to empty buildings to parking lots, all spaces can be seen as potential event venues. Three different examples exist to demonstrate this. First is how an Edmonton car dealership saw great success as an event host using its large, bright showroom as an opportunity to have people see its space, and subtly see its cars even though selling was not the focus of hosted events. Awards nights and association receptions were just two examples of the types of events that were hosted.

The evolution of 3x3 basketball highlights another way unique spaces are becoming event locations. Amateur and professional events all over the world, in large and small centres, are set up in squares and public spaces to provide unique and flexible settings. Both Saskatoon and Montreal have used squares in their downtown cores to host international tournaments.

A third example was the Singularity U Conference held in Edmonton in 2019.

Organizers used the empty riverside power plant for its wrap up party with guests raving about the transformed space and suggesting it become a permanent location for such events. This shows how empty buildings provide a blank canvas for event producers and can even inspire people visiting the space to see its potential for future, more permanent use.

All locations as event spaces shifts the perspective of everyone (businesses, building owners, institutions, recreational facilities) to see how they can engage differently with events. Non-traditional venues in Fairview can create unique experiences for guests and can increase the number of gatherings and events that are hosted as people consider how to use their spaces differently.

Event Summit

It was heard from many event operators in Fairview how they operate largely on their own and are relatively self-sufficient. While independence is valuable, this siloed approach misses opportunities for groups to work together, to exchange ideas, to allocated volunteers, or to event share equipment.

To support all Fairview events, it is recommended to annually host an event summit that brings all event organizers and owners to a facilitated session to promote communication and relationship building. This is also an opportunity for the Town to understand the challenges, opportunities, and barriers that exist to building and sustaining events in Fairview. This summit is not about one way communication and presenting, but is about listening, sharing, and creating connections. Key topics to be discussed could include:

- + How are events currently succeeding?
- + Volunteer management – how is each group doing this?
- + What is missing in Fairview that could further support event management or development?
- + How are events marketed and promoted?
- + What audiences are attending events?
- + What groups are underserved by events?
- + How is the event calendar laid out – is it effective for the various events?

Newcomers should be invited to and included in this Summit so they can see the various events and activities happening in town and potentially see opportunities to be involved. Introducing them at the beginning can help welcome them to the community and can support the breaking down of the cliquishness highlighted by many residents.

Additional to this summit, or perhaps at a separate event, it is recommended Fairview organize a ‘hackathon’ to help solve some of the most challenging problems related to events. Hackathons have traditionally been used in the tech and coding worlds to bring various minds together to solve complex problems, and the same spirit can work for Fairview. Challenges like event related transportation, catering, and event servicing could all be tackled through a session that leverages brainstorming in a way to consider any and all possible ideas.



Event Ambassadors

Especially during the summer, but ideally all year, Fairview can create a team of event ambassadors whose job is to communicate to businesses, organizations, and residents what is going on in town in the upcoming weeks or months. In Fairview it was heard that word of mouth is effective in sharing the goings on in town, but also that people and businesses are often unaware of what is coming up so they miss out on ways to support and promote events or to welcome visitors. Such a group can support word of mouth and become the broader voice of events in Fairview, including to newcomers as a way to help them break in and learn more about what is happening in the community. This group can also be present at key events or activities to inform visitors and participants about additional opportunities in Fairview and the region.

Ambassador Program

A broader program to educate businesses and organizations in welcoming visitors and supporting events that are in town can also be created. This builds on the inherent qualities that exist in Fairview as a tight-knit town, having strong pride in place, and in being a supportive community. It adds a layer by providing more structure to support questions visitors and event participants may have and to potentially enhance their visit.

These ambassadors, or ambassador organizations, would be trained on events or activities in the region, hidden gem experiences that people could try, or even straightforward things such as where to get certain supplies or driving routes to enjoy as part of their broader journey. Communication can also be two way as they will collect information heard from visitors and provide that back to the Town to further understand visitor opportunities and gaps.

To start, selecting a few businesses that could already be key areas visitors would come to (Heilan Beer House, Dunvegan Inn and Suites, recreation centre) could provide some focus with which to build this program and further engage residents and businesses in being welcoming hosts.

Guiding Principles

Having the community (its residences, businesses, officials, and organizations) develop a set of guiding principles related to the nature of events Fairview wants to host, nurture, and develop is a way to create collective buy-in. Such community stewardship better ensures considerations for events are coming from the public and not solely from Town administration, though they should of course have a seat at this table. These principles support the 'why' of events in Fairview (residents are welcomed and welcome others through unique and enduring events and experiences) and can be used going forward to guide what events to focus on and where to expend resources and energy.

SPORT

The presence of multiple facilities, sports organizations, and existing events presents great opportunity for Fairview to continue to build its sport hosting offerings. With a strong sport community, along with a past and recent history of hosting great events, sport can be a significant focus for Fairview in the further establishment of its event culture.

Tournament Enhancement

There is great potential with existing tournaments taking place in Fairview to find ways to enhance them and build on the current foundation. This could relate to any of the team sports that have a strong presence in Fairview such as volleyball, baseball, soccer, basketball, or hockey.

Series

The development of a broader series of three to four annual tournaments, spread through the region, can help create critical mass, rivalry, competition, and interest. Ideally these tournaments would involve the same teams throughout the year with points earned from each event that leads to an overall champion at the end. From a competition standpoint, this can help sport development in each community and, depending on the sport and situation, prepare teams for further regional or provincial competition.

From an economic impact standpoint, it sees people move throughout the region creating benefit for all, and in Fairview's case, takes advantage of the great venue assets it possesses and drives visitation to the region in shoulder seasons. Though each host would have unique issues to navigate, it would also allow the general planning to be shared across the region to reduce the burden on organizers.



Enhancement of Existing Events

Building on the strong tournament culture that exists in Fairview, especially around volleyball and basketball, events can use the 11% rule and implement subtle additions that complement participants' experience and help position Fairview's events as unique and inviting. Examples of such enhancements:

- + **Coaching clinics** – leveraging existing experience, or working with the related provincial sports organization, coaching clinics to further train local and regional coaches can be added to sporting events to provide further value and benefit. Half or full day sessions, before or in down times during a tournament, help develop and strengthen coaching in the region and is an added benefit that Fairview becomes known to provide its tournament participants.
- + **Youth experiences** – identifying unique experiences that Fairview can provide and build into its tournaments is another way to elevate the experience. These could be offered during off times at events, or even as pre or post tournament activities and would require strong advanced planning and connections between the sports organizations and experience providers. Not only does this provide participants with activities, but for Fairview this strengthens the mindset in town of becoming a leading event host as experience providers, while not organizers of the tournament, would see themselves as part of delivering it. Depending on the age and potential interests of participants, ideas could include:
 - + Use of the ski hill to provide participants the opportunity for lessons or to ski on their own
 - + Using the fine arts centre – partnering so tournament participants could try pottery, loom weaving, or even digital design
 - + Outdoor experiences – leveraging some of Fairview and Dunvegan's natural assets, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, boating, or even all-terrain vehicle experiences could be developed to highlight some of the unique geography in and around Fairview
 - + NWP partnership – perhaps more geared to high school aged athletes, but working with NWP to develop unique experiences based on their assets or programs can be an excellent way to provide something unique for tournament participants and to highlight what NWP offers

Invitational

A longer-term project for team sport organizers in Fairview is to develop an invitational tournament to recruit and attract some top teams for early season competition. This is modeled after the successful Maui Invitational in NCAA basketball in the United States, where the nation's top teams compete in an early season tournament that provides great competition and a benchmark for where those teams are at, as they start their seasons.

Alberta is different than Maui, but especially northwestern Alberta offers unique assets that can be enticing to visitors. Also, if the level of competition is developed to be at a high level, such an event will be a draw as top teams will want to be at this event to test themselves. This invitational should also include the experiences noted earlier to provide an overall unique competitive and visitor experience for participating teams.



To use high school basketball as an example, building an event focused on attracting top 1A or 2A schools that are expected to compete at provincials in the spring, can be the aim. This helps position this Fairview tournament as one top teams know they need to be at. It would likely need to start as a regional event to develop the foundational planning and brand that could allow it to attract the best teams from further afield. An event like this takes advantage of Fairview's substantial gym infrastructure and tournament hosting experience to provide a unique competition.

Nurture Sport

With the abundance of outdoor opportunities, Fairview is in the position to identify core sports that can be nurtured to not only increase quality of life in town for residents, but to potentially create event opportunities.

With the Town's purchase of snowshoes, it is a prime example of an activity that can be looked at in this way, with a first step being to create more active participation in the sport using the purchased equipment. Organizing 'try snowshoeing' experiences for youth and adults, or winter sport camps that could include multiple sports to try (such as cross-country skiing, skating) are ways to engage people in the sport. Using open spaces near the recreation centre, at NWP, or at Cummings Lake are also great opportunities to expose people to those places.

A next step in this nurturing process would be the development of basic events or competitions that bring a further fun element for participants. Creating a youth snowshoe race or orienteering event in and around the ski hill are examples that can extend how people take part in the sport, while also experiencing another unique place in and around Fairview.

To continue the usage of snowshoeing, creating dedicated trails or a venue where people could consistently snowshoe is another layer in this nurturing plan. This does not have to mean massive investment but could take advantage of trails at Cummings Lake or existing locations where people could get out into nature using snowshoeing as the vehicle.

A last pillar in this process would be the hosting of events. Identifying existing ones or creating new to encourage competition and visitation brings this focused approach to a point that enables that initial investment in community snowshoes to pay broader dividends down the road. It is also a process that does not have to include significant capital outlay but primarily requires an investment of people and thinking on the part of the Town, or other organizations, to see it through. Snowshoeing is the example here, but canoeing, snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, orienteering, or trail running are other examples, among many, that could be considered by Fairview.

Core Sport Focus

To further develop sport hosting in Fairview, it may look to approach it from the perspective of identifying core sports. This can help streamline resource usage and minimize the creation of a scattered method that can less effectively use the assets available.

A core sport approach would see Fairview, and related venue and organizational partners, identify two to three sports with which it will focus its sport hosting efforts. It would mean related organizations would be encouraged and supported, financially or with other resources, in attracting or developing events. Events in chosen core sports would take precedence because of established clubs, expertise in town in those sports, a strong base of participation, and venues available to support hosting. For this approach, recommended sports are:

- + **Volleyball** – the existence of the Fairview Force Volleyball Club, a strong school sport presence and three gyms makes volleyball an excellent choice as a core sport. While Grande Prairie and Peace River have established clubs and sufficient gym space, in terms of comparable towns in the region, Beaverlodge has a club but appears to lack the same level of facility.
- + **Basketball** – the presence of school basketball in Fairview and established clubs in Grande Prairie and Peace River means a focus on attracting events is possible due to this base and the venues. The Warriors Club in Peace River has in the past held tournaments in Grimshaw, so relationship building with organizations like that could see them expand their reach further towards Fairview. The same could occur with clubs in Grande Prairie.
- + **Gymnastics** – With an established club, and with only Valleyview and Sexsmith being towns of similar size in the region with clubs, Fairview can look to gymnastics as another sport with some existing traction that could support event development.

With its strong presence and arena in Fairview, hockey could also be a core sport. However, unlike the sports listed above, many small towns have arenas and established hockey programs so it can be more competitive to develop additional hockey events.

Core Venue Focus

Similar to a focus on core sports is to select key venues and concentrate on identifying potential events that can work with existing spacing, amenities, and equipment. To start, selecting two venues (or sets of venues) with which to focus efforts on attracting or building events provides a level of focus, rather than attempting to deliver events equally for all venues. This is not to suggest other venues should not or could not host events, but instead that the Town zeroes its efforts, for the moment, on a select group.

Gyms

To many degrees, this is already happening, but presenting Fairview's multiple gymnasium assets as a package can position Fairview differently within the region. While it is important to continue to host home grown events and support local organizations, this combined asset of gym space is something

that rarely exists in smaller towns. Considering the space available, this means creating awareness and promoting to sport clubs and organizations in the region the potential to host larger events and how Fairview can be a viable option for those.

JA Hawker Pavilion

Recognizing there is some sensitivity to its usage and how that ties to NWP, this is a unique asset that has the potential to draw visitation and drive events and activities to Fairview. Already attracting visitors from around the region to rodeo related courses and programs, these could be expanded with more regular occurrence and support weekend visitation in town. It was noted, in the eyes of some residents, that Fairview does not see itself as a 'ranch culture' town but nonetheless this venue and related assets at NWP does present a unique opportunity for Fairview to consider.

Activities

Additional sport activities could be incorporated to better use facilities and tie into the overall sport event attraction chosen focus. Summer sport camps and training offer great opportunities to extend the use of facilities, provide activities for youth participation, and strengthen the visibility of sport in a community. If organized by the Town, this could also be an added source of revenue and could draw in participants from the outlying region.

Use of gym space for volleyball and basketball camps

- + This takes advantage of the abundance of gym space and could additionally provide opportunities for older youth to help coach younger participants.

Sport ball

- + Again, using the great gym space, sport ball for kids under four years of age is an option for Fairview to consider. These activities expose young people to a range of fundamental skills including running, jumping, and throwing through sport. The focus is on movement and exposure, as opposed to sport specific skills.

Dryland training for skiing

- + This could use indoor or outdoor spaces to help skiers get ready for the upcoming season. It could be seen as a value added component connected to the Fairview Ski Hill.

Additional use of arena

- + Recognizing the arena is primarily used for storage during the summer, if the possibility exists to move out that equipment for longer stretches, it could enable the arena to be used more broadly.
- + Box lacrosse, ball hockey, and roller hockey can all take advantage of the concrete surface in the arena when the ice is out.
- + If the ice can be put back in early (mid-August), it would open up the potential for pre-season camps for young hockey players. If other communities delay putting their ice in until later, this can present an opportunity for teams from outside Fairview to rent ice, generating revenue for the Town.

BUSINESS EVENTS

Business Events refer to gatherings such as conferences, trade shows, seminars, meetings, exhibitions, and other similar activities. They are organized by associations, corporations, not-for-profit organizations, and government bodies to promote and advance products, services, and ideas. These present an opportunity for Fairview to broaden its event hosting perspective and to leverage key attributes in the further development of its event hosting culture.

Critical Today and Evolution

In today's world, business events are gateways for people exchanging ideas, commercial interests, and in contributing to a region's overall development. Additionally, they introduce diversity, sustainability, and social expansion to a region. Economic growth, tourism promotion, intellectual and business innovation, and stronger communities are all results of business events which furthermore attract and cultivate talented individuals who contribute to ambitions of the region.

New approaches are also now being seen in event organizing. These include events with smaller environmental footprints and more significant societal handprints that are regenerating communities, nature, and local economies. It has become the perfect time to intentionally incorporate key sustainability concepts and go beyond to explore regenerative development principles and how these can help make events, organizations, and communities thrive and flourish.

Business Events Hub with NWP

Fairview is ideally placed to implement such a dedicated business events strategy as noted above. A partnership with Northwestern Polytechnic is crucial to this strategy and presents a unique opportunity that most communities of Fairview's size do not have.

A business events destination needs to have a solid post-secondary institution supporting the growth and development of the local economy, and Fairview has that with NWP. Polytechnics like NWP provide a skilled workforce vital for the success of many businesses and industries. They also facilitate research and development which can lead to innovations that drive economic growth.

Hosting events aligned with NWP's areas of expertise will attract industry professionals. In exchange, local businesses can network and showcase their products and services while exposing new talent to investment and livability opportunities in the destination. This creates a win-win relationship between the town and NWP, as both benefit from each other's presence and initiatives.

The unique program offerings at NWP will enhance Fairview's reputation, making it more attractive to event organizers and attendees, while increasing outside visitation and contributing to the local economy. The following NWP offerings have the potential to be connected to business events:

- + Harley-Davidson® Training Centre – the only one in Canada
- + Western Canada's only Finning ThinkBIG service technician program
- + Animal Health Technology, along with a working farm

The Town and NWP campus offer the complete package for hosting successful events that can inspire attendees, provide growth opportunities for residents, and intrigue visitors to learn more about the region. A winning combination of knowledge capital, meeting locations, and facilities awaits and includes:

Physical assets:

- + Variety of beautiful indoor and outdoor spaces to suit in-person and hybrid meeting needs
- + State of the art audio visual equipment across meeting spaces
- + Centrally located campus with easy highway access and ample parking
- + On-campus accommodation and versatile catering services with licensed offerings
- + Proximity to additional accommodation options and offsite gathering venues
- + Full suite of recreation facilities within walking distance of meeting space
- + Art-filled and visually pleasing architecture and landscape
- + Built in theatre/convocation space on campus

Knowledge capital:

- + Unique economic sector related schools at NWP
- + Easy access to hands-on technical tours within the region
- + Variety of regional experts across the agriculture and food production sector
- + Culture and aptitude for diversity, equity, and inclusion at NWP
- + Vision to inspire growth – NWP’s broad mission is “To become the most entrepreneurial Polytechnic in Canada by 2034”. As a centre for entrepreneurial excellence, NWP will create an environment that inspires, incubates, and supports entrepreneurship in the community through anticipation, leadership, and strategic partnership.



Economic Sector Strategy

To set Fairview up for success in business event attraction and hosting, and to build on its noted advantages, the following approaches can be researched and scoped for capacity and fit. However, it is important to note strategy is continually evolving and it is paramount to keep on track of current micro and macro trends in order for a focused approach to yield. Connections with the Peace Region Economic Development Association could support how this comes alive for Fairview.

As delegate motivations to travel to attend events has evolved, the 'why' behind attending one event over another has become the north star. With this in mind, destinations that home in on their unique economic strengths when attracting or producing events are coming out clear winners.

For Fairview, the foundation for a successful business event strategy starts with the following:

Mapping

Researching and mapping Fairview and region's economic strengths, research areas of focus, and the experts or sector champions that provide knowledge proficiency. For example, making connections at the following research centres and associations could help identify opportunities within the agricultural meetings sector.

- + Peace Country Beef & Forage Association
- + Peace Region Living Lab
- + Sarda Ag Research

Additionally, the mapping of specific regional needs is essential, such as related to the talent crunch that is occurring the world over. Event hosting is a strategic way to position Fairview to fill immediate and medium-term skill gaps through talent attending events in a specific field.

Alignment

Aligning event strategy with provincial and municipal government priorities, as well as key stakeholder priorities, puts skin in the game for all parties. If NWP, as an example, has new student enrolment targets for particular schools, hosting an event in this sector can raise awareness and attract potential new attendees.

Fairview can also look to identify existing organizations with strengths in a chosen sector. Working with the Agriculture Society to determine different event opportunities that connect with the Society's priorities as well as the town's needs, is one illustration of this alignment.

Regional Collaboration

Working in collaboration with the region's economic development team can dovetail the event approach with a talent and investment strategy. Events can act as attractive hooks for new economic development target markets. For instance, hosting an event on an agricultural topic in which the region has experts working in innovative ways to solve sector challenges provides clear evidence the region is one to watch. Whenever local speakers or assets can be showcased the event will have deeper collaboration and business legacy opportunities.

Defining Business Event Assets

Jane Cunningham, Director of European Engagement at Destinations International, outlined what delegates really seek when attending business events.

“A focus on connected communities—the delegation, the conference topic, and the destination – is more engaging and stimulating than a PowerPoint presentation on what exists ‘out there’.”

Considering the wealth of what Fairview can offer in conference topics and sessions, as well as what exists in the region for people to experience, this can be a significant strength for the town.

Off-site venues

“Sitting in a convention centre for three straight days without a whisper of the outside community might be the dullest experience in the world,” Cunningham also said. A bold statement one may say, but according to research, this is bang on the money.

Event hosting has moved away from delegates sitting in the same space and learning through listening alone. Today’s delegates seek interactive experiences to understand the DNA of the event host location. Fairview can capitalize on this by creating an inventory of off-site venues (ones used for experiences within an event agenda). This will provide delegates with opportunities to try unique Fairview activities and can be dependent on event subject matter and delegate interest:

- + Local beer tasting reception at the Heilan Beer House
- + Introduction to Ukrainian dance culture
- + Bird house or bug hotel construction workshop, facilitated in partnership with Dunvegan Fish and Game.
- + Pottery experience through the Fine Arts Centre

Delegate experiences that align with the conference topic and give back to the local community in some way can also fall under corporate social responsibility (CSR). Using the bug hotel construction idea, if meeting organizers distributed the completed projects to local recipients to aid pollinating insect preservation, long term benefits could help the region’s agriculture sector. Thus, leaving a legacy from the meeting and strengthening the delegates’ understanding of the local ecosystem.

Technical tours

These can bring a topic to life and stimulate knowledge exchange and collaboration with local sector innovators. It puts delegates right in the middle of what is happening in a community so they view and respond to what is right before them. An example could be an agriculture conference touring the precision data management system being trialed on a farm near Fairview, where soil sampling and soil electrical conductivity equipment is utilized to improve crop yields.

Sponsorship

Fairview is a town of givers – corporate sponsorship practices are common. Event sponsorship is about much more than prominent brand signage and swag bags. Event organizers and corporate sponsors enter mutually beneficial partnerships to ensure priorities for both parties are met. Bespoke sponsorship packages related to food and beverage is but one option. A salad bar sponsored by the Dunvegan Market Gardens to highlight local ingredients while reducing event budget and carbon footprint of the event could be created. This sees a local grower ensure locally sourced product is used, which then demonstrates and tells the story of the region's unique offerings.

Staying on Top of Trends

The business events industry is notoriously fast paced. Keeping on top of event planners' evolving needs will assist with positioning Fairview as a location in which to host events. As important as it is to support an event organizer with potential speakers, suggestions on incorporating a wellness activity such as morning yoga, fun run, or swim into their meeting agenda can equally add significant value. These value-added elements not only position a host like Fairview as being invested in the event, but also provide a broader experience for delegates.

Whether it is led by the Town or other groups, event team education is also a key to keeping informed. A recommendation is to create a calendar of helpful Alberta industry events to attend for professional development and industry learning purposes. Indigenous Tourism Alberta's annual conference in December would be one suggestion, as would attending events that align with Fairview's strong agriculture sector.

Working to determine Fairview's major pain points from a social progress perspective will form part of the legacy framework shared in the Strategic Considerations section of this report. Staying on top of these aspects for Fairview is key to affecting positive change through the legacy a business event can deliver.



ADDITIONAL EVENT CONSIDERATIONS

The following outlines additional supportive elements Fairview can work on to further strengthen its event culture. These provide additional breadth of operational considerations as well as event ideas that demonstrate the wide range of potential in Fairview.

Calendar

An element of discussion from the Town as well as from respondents and stakeholders is how to manage the overall event calendar. This is to ensure different events have room to breathe within the year and that organizers, volunteers, and participants are not overly stretched.

It is known as well that certain times of the year are difficult for scheduling and planning events. With the agricultural focus around Fairview, seeding and harvest times can obviously be very busy for farmers in the area, potentially removing them from participating in events in any capacity. Summer is another challenging time with so many people away for large stretches at lakes or camping.

There are two key things the Town of Fairview can do so support this. First is to control what it can and establish all of its planned events as early as possible to promote and communicate those dates. This gets key event dates into the minds of other event organizers or participants. Positioning and presenting events early sends a subtle message to residents and other event organizers about the importance of the calendar for all and encourages other groups to follow suit in not only planning early but also in balancing out the event schedule.

The second way in which the Town can support this is in acting as the overall manager of the event calendar. From a literal sense, it is recognized this can be very challenging both in terms of people power to engage all groups but also in the ability it has to dictate alternative dates and times for organizations to host their events. However, even if it can manage this to a degree, it can help spread out events and further entrench the event culture mindset of supporting each other, which can be done by anchoring events to different dates. Should the need arise, even adjusting one or two events a year to more optimal times can help decrease participant, organizer, or volunteer burnout. The proposed event summit can also be used as a forum to discuss an overall event calendar with all participating groups.

Winter

There is a lack of winter events and experiences in Fairview. More and more northern cities and towns around the world have focused on embracing winter and identifying ways to celebrate it and encourage people to be outside. Edmonton's Winter City Strategy is one example of such an initiative and two elements of that plan can be considered for Fairview.

The combination of light and darkness is one core element Fairview can consider. Being as north as it is, throughout the winter sunlight is at a premium. Rather than seeing this as a challenge, it instead is an opportunity. Creating light installations, lantern lit trail walks, or even headlamp cross-country ski or snowshoe experiences are all ways to use the darkness as an advantage.

Creating experiences that get people outside and engaging with each other are also vital. With the success of Summer's End, creating a bookend festival in early March could be a great way to conclude the winter season and move into spring and summer. Pond hockey tournaments, cross-country ski and snowshoe experiences, and the aforementioned light installations are but a few examples of elements that could encourage people to get outside and experiencing winter differently. Two great nearby Francophone events could be leveraged as templates – the Carnaval St-Isidore as well as the Flying Canoe Volant Festival in Edmonton. In St-Isidore, outdoor events are largely focused during the day for both families and adults and get people out in the heart of winter viewing snow sculptures or hopping on sleigh rides. Flying Canoe Volant takes a slightly different tack using the darkness as its canvas for numerous light installations throughout a ravine in the city's French Quarter. Its additional incorporation of Métis culture provides another unique angle from which to tell stories. As with St-Isidore, all activities are designed with the intention of creating gathering during the darkest and coldest times of the year.

Arts and Culture

The strong fine arts, music, theatre, and dance communities in Fairview provide it a unique strength it can utilize in event development. Many of these groups already have events of their own that the Town could look to support and enhance. However, further opportunities may exist to create experiences for residents and visitor attracting events that highlight this unique component of life in Fairview.

Nights of Dance

It is not often in a town of Fairview's size that two significant dance groups, such as Veselka and Mitelka, call it home. With the theatre now under the operating eye of the Town, hosting a night of dance featuring both of these groups is something that could highlight the theatre's importance but also feature the amazing talent in the community.

Dinner Theatre

The inaugural dinner theatre events held in 2022 proved to be very well received. As these continue, two additional components could be considered:

- + **Involvement of youth** – sensing from the initial events, it was more difficult than in prior years to attract and include theatrical talent. An angle to take is to focus further on including young residents of Fairview to give them another connection to their hometown and to possibly also bring to life unique talents that exist in the community, under the tutelage of more experienced performers.
- + **A truly Fairview dinner** – to further make it a Fairview experience, curating a menu using ingredients entirely grown or bred in the Fairview region could help residents see, in front of them, a demonstration of the uniqueness and importance of agriculture in the region. With the presence of a Red Seal Chef in Fairview, he could be included to support with the preparation of the menu.

Town as Gallery

The Fine Arts Centre provides a fantastic base for artistic expression and the displaying of pieces. However, it is said that the gallery itself is at times too small to truly feature the works of Fairview residents. To show these works, an option is to work with local businesses, venues, and spaces to have them host a rotating set of pieces. The first thing this accomplishes is to allow the art to be featured more prominently, removing the space barrier in the Fine Arts Centre. Secondly this also connects the broader community to the importance of art in Fairview. It allows developing artists the opportunity to show some initial pieces outside of the intensity of a gallery show.

Ski Hill Concert

Obviously, the ski hill provides a great space for winter recreation to those from Fairview and region. However, it also provides a natural amphitheatre that can be used to host concerts or a music festival. What makes this an ideal venue is the ability to have a stage just outside the chalet and to use the amenities within the chalet. With the beautiful view attendees would have in looking beyond the chalet, it presents an opportunity for people to have a great cultural experience.

Audiences

As a core recommendation is to craft a deeper event culture throughout Fairview, narrowing down to specific audiences to target is more challenging. It is strongly recommended that each event in Fairview clearly articulate its target audience to focus on. The more focus, the easier that audience sees itself tied to a particular event and the more likely they are to engage in it. Even with that level of focus, which helps both planning and marketing, people outside that defined target will still find interest and engage. Some events, such as Summer's End, will provide broad experiences that appeal to different segments and will then consider the exercise of audience definition differently.

Research did indicate that events focused on families are important for Fairview to consider. This is important for two main reasons. One is that the nature of how families engage in events is now different. In feedback from stakeholders, it is rarer now for kids to be left at home with a sitter while adults partake in an event or activity. Kids are much more likely to be included in a broad range of events than they were even 25 or 30 years ago. The other reason family type events can be valuable for Fairview relates to the connection with younger residents (as outlined in the Volunteerism and Youth pillar). Identifying more ways to connect with and include youth can further develop in their minds the importance and value of living in Fairview.

An additional market that was identified to have potential from an event perspective is seniors. While there are many activities for them, events geared more at older residents of Fairview could enhance their quality of life and engage volunteers and ideas differently than may currently occur.

Free or Charge

Whether events should be free or have an entry cost is one additional consideration in event development. Free events may, on the surface, be seen to provide value but unfortunately as participants have then not invested anything into the event, their perception of value is set at zero. So even if they did enjoy the experience, asking them next time to pay even a nominal amount may turn them off from participating.

Charging a nominal amount is not necessarily about revenue generation but is more about people having a level of investment in the event in question. That way if work gets busy, or the weather is not ideal, they are more likely to still attend because of their investment.

Free events still do have a place. Summer's End, as an example, has a primary intention of bringing the community together and celebrating those that may be heading off in the fall to school or other opportunities. As such, charging to do that could be seen as a barrier. Instead, keeping the festival fresh with new elements drives people to want to return and invest annually with their time. However, adding some paid components to an event like Summer's End, such as an outdoor concert the night before or unique outdoor dining experiences, can create different layers of ways people are able to engage and invest.

Free can have a place in event hosting, but it must be used carefully so participants recognize the value they are receiving.



Volunteerism & Youth

The presence and contributions of volunteers are vital in so many levels of society. As it relates to event hosting and management, volunteer involvement is paramount. Even prior to the pandemic, while Canada is seen to be a strong volunteering nation, average annual volunteer hours had declined between 2004 and 2017, according to the Conference Board of Canada. This has only been exacerbated by the pandemic and organizations in Fairview have noticed this decline and the challenges in getting people to return to volunteering and supporting events.

A prime recommendation of this report is for Fairview to focus on being the leader in northwestern Alberta for volunteerism. Creating a culture of volunteerism through youth, long-time residents, and newcomers will position Fairview to support its organizations and events, while nurturing new ideas and plans. Such a mindset of volunteering exists within some residents of Fairview but not enough to sustain and grow what already occurs, let alone new concepts. Achieving a broadly accepted volunteer culture will take time, but investing in it and continuing to develop it will pay dividends for the town as well as its events and activities. In part this is about people seeing the enjoyment in the act of contributing back and not as an activity they have to or are compelled to do.

A related element of this pillar is the retention of youth. While not strictly focused on volunteerism, though their engagement there is vital, it is about identifying additional ways to create connections with younger residents that will encourage them to remain in Fairview or to return later in life to establish homes and raise families.

Existing Situation

The volume of volunteers is important, but the nurturing of volunteers is an equally crucial component Fairview needs to focus on to ensure events, activities, and organizations best engage volunteers. Significant issues have been noted that need to be addressed in Fairview. These include:

- + **Volunteer burnout** – too few volunteers to ensure operation of events, activities, and organizations
- + **Integration of volunteers** – when new volunteers make the choice to engage, how they are integrated, and how their ideas and experiences are used is a challenge in Fairview
- + **Young volunteers** – volunteerism is often heavily supported by people over the age of 55, so creating a culture of volunteering within younger residents not only replenishes and deepens the volunteer pool, but creates additional ties for that age demographic back to Fairview

Listening

An additional aspect that was noted from the research is the need to listen to volunteers and those who join an organization. It is one thing to invite and recruit volunteers, but another to ensure they are heard and valued. One example was provided from someone who joined a longstanding Fairview organization but whose ideas for growth and sustainability were not heard. This individual chose to step away, denying the organization a member and someone willing to invest time. Not every idea from a volunteer must be incorporated, but a need exists to create a broader culture of listening so volunteers are encouraged and comfortable sharing thoughts and ideas that may grow organizations.

Volunteer Database

Currently in Fairview word of mouth and personal connections are primarily used to recruit volunteers for various events, activities, and organizations. While this can still continue, the development of a more robust database of volunteer needs as well as people, with specific skills and interests noted, can help better identify and match needs to those that can fill them. This also has the potential to broaden connections in the community, so volunteers and organizations alike are more aware of what is available in the community.

The purchase or usage of a free, or low cost, online tool would allow volunteers to add themselves to a list that could then be referenced by events or organizations. The additional element of volunteers noting specific skills or areas of interest could further help target and match them to interesting experiences. Champions exist within the Fairview community that could support development of this endeavour. One example is Teresa Bell, who works at NWP but through the arts has run a youth show in Peace River for 15 years, largely supported by younger volunteers working on the production. 4H, with its presence and history in rural areas, and its emphasis on volunteerism, is another organization that could potentially support in understanding how to build a volunteer pool.

Volunteer Training

An existing challenge in Fairview is the usage and engagement of volunteers in town. As has been noted, incorporating the ideas and skills of volunteers does not always occur, thus negatively impacting their experience and limiting how the event or organization in question benefits from volunteers' skills.

To support improvement in this area, the development of a volunteer education program is recommended. This can benefit the town by further strengthening how organizations or events engage volunteers and can also help contributors develop a better understanding of how to integrate and offer their help to an event. As a core driver of events, and being in the best position to broadly understand what is occurring in Fairview, the Town should be the instigators of this program. The creation of modules that could be delivered once a year (or more frequently if warranted) will provide sufficient substance for all involved. Topics for these modules can be tailored to additional needs but could include:

- + Volunteer recruitment and role description development
- + Idea sharing and development
- + Incorporation of new voices and skills
- + Succession planning
- + Skills matching
- + Volunteer experience (how to create a great experience for volunteers)
- + Retention
- + Volunteer feedback

Event or organization specific training would need to be done to onboard people specifically to those entities, but the broad education proposed above will create a better prepared volunteer community and will set up organizations with a better understanding on the usage of such help. This program could also be rolled out to organizers in the region to support broader event and volunteer development, while also positioning Fairview and event leader.

Youth Volunteering

A core audience to develop as volunteers is younger residents of Fairview. With school, extra-curricular activities, and other commitments, volunteering has been noted to not be a priority for youth in the community. Core to the direction of Fairview becoming a leader in volunteerism, it is recommended that schools be engaged to hear from students how they view volunteering and what roles they could play as young residents in supporting the community.

This engagement can take the form of presenting in front of school assemblies or, ideally and if possible, class by class. The presentations would simply introduce volunteering and its importance to the Fairview. From there, two requests of the students would be asked:

- + **First** – Have them discuss at a future date in their classes their definitions of volunteering. Understand what that means to them and why they would, or would not, want to do it. This can provide youthful insight into what may motivate them to participate, rather than providing a top down approach.
- + **Second** – have them develop ideas about how they might volunteer and where they would see their interests and skills best come through to help the community. These ideas can then be matched to people or organizations in Fairview that could benefit from the identified ideas. These ideas can lead to a volunteer day where Fairview students enact some of their ideas to bring light to the value and importance the town places on volunteering.

The aim of such a program is more about creating a mindset within younger members of the community around volunteering than about volume of hours they contribute. However, these volunteer activities can provide valuable contributions into the overall system and support the development of the needed volunteer culture in Fairview.

Youth Connection

Pride in place and in being residents of Fairview is strong and present. However, that does not preclude young residents of the community moving away, especially after high school, to pursue educational or work opportunities. Encouraging young people to stay is important, but it is also vital to recognize this situation has and will continue to be part of Fairview's reality. Family, and the multi-generational nature of Fairview, will maintain ties for many, but focusing on ways to further create connections for youth back to Fairview is important so that after post-secondary education is complete or later in life, they may consider a return. This is a way to support and mitigate that population gap of people 20-40 that is occurring in town. Below are ways Fairview can embrace this reality to further establish ties for young residents back to their home community, that may become stronger later in life.

Event Development

Taking a deeper look into events that are of interest and matter to younger residents of Fairview, especially for ages 10-25, can be an important step in better understanding what resonates with these cohorts. Taking this information to develop youth focused events, activities, and organizations (which can complement existing sports and arts opportunities in town) can help create hooks that remain in the minds of young residents years after. These positive experiences and memories become important

in later life decisions on where to call home and raise families. If young residents feel ignored, even if completely unintentional, those bonds are not created and are less strong than possible. A further step to this could see youth organizing their own events built on their ideas and initiative.

Departing Package

When it is known that a younger resident is leaving for school or work, Fairview can provide them with a 'package from home' as a congratulations and formal send off. This could include products from local producers, photo books with memories specific to that individual, well wishes from local residents, or introductions to people in the location they are moving to, among various possibilities. The intention here is not to be resigned to the fact they are leaving, but to create an additional touchpoint before they go that may stick with them as something very unique their hometown did to embrace their future.

Messages from Home

If young residents have strong ties and relationships back to their hometown, there is a greater likelihood of interest in maintaining those connections while they are away. To help with this, getting email addresses and contact information for them can allow connections to continue. With this contact information, connections can be maintained in two ways – firstly by delivering updates on Fairview sent to them twice a year. These updates can include stories on people back home, interesting happenings, or even opportunities that exist in Fairview. A good example of such a story would be that of Mackenzie Fingerhut who has returned to Fairview to farm with his family, while also forming a farming data management side business called MJ Ag Solutions.

Secondly, creating connections to people originally from Fairview in their new places of residence is another way to subtly encourage ties to back home. While this may not be possible in all places people move to, helping create localized 'Fairview groups' can forge connections in new communities and ease adjustment to life in a new home. These home away from home connections act as another attachment back to Fairview.

School Partnerships

Creating partnerships between the high schools and Town to host school reunions earlier than the usual 20-year reunion schedule to gather those that have left for academic or other opportunities, is another angle from which to create ties to youth. This would help amplify the opportunities of returning to town to live. While the usual reunion activities could still be held, things like real estate prices, new business successes – such as the Heilan Beer House or Grand Hotel reinvention – and agriculture innovation stories could be presented. It could also be a way to highlight and celebrate the contributions of Fairview High School and St. Thomas More alumni even if these achievements are elsewhere in the province.

Youth Council

The creation of a youth council is another way to more frequently tap into what younger residents of Fairview are thinking and doing. Engaging young people from 12-17 for their insights could be done with 3-4 meetings a year and could be done with Town Council, Town Administration, or both. This embeds more regular touchpoints with youth and could focus on all ranges of topics including recreation, events/activities, career, education, and life in general in Fairview. Terms of reference could include establishing this as a purely advisory board but with the potential for the Youth Council to partake in more expansive projects as required.

Service and Asset Sharing

Volunteering clearly plays a crucial role in supporting the many organizations in Fairview, but service and asset sharing between organizations is another way to exchange knowledge and deliver support services to help streamline and simplify operations. For many organizations there is likely overlap in need for such services as insurance, accounting, legal, and governance, among the obvious ones. Multi-organization applications for insurance, the creation of shareable legal contract templates, and centralized grant writing may create added capacity and cost-savings to help organizations. Additionally, there may be events where organizations can share physical assets they possess. Of course, the Town has core assets to rent (chairs, tables, tents), but groups may have other useful pieces (lighting, fencing, screens, sound equipment, etc.) that could be shared rather than people having to seek from further afield. This is a different way of volunteering that is in the spirit of making Fairview a leading event host and helps people see roles they may play in developing that culture.

As a further layer, the FuseSocial model from Wood Buffalo provides a good case study and may be adapted to suit Fairview's needs and capacity in sharing services. FuseSocial formed in 2013 with the merging of three philosophically and practically like-minded organizations:

- + Leadership Wood Buffalo
- + Non-profit Sector Link Wood Buffalo
- + Volunteer Wood Buffalo

By forming one agency, FuseSocial was able to familiarize itself with organizations' operations to create collective impact, collaboration and social innovation while continuing to deliver great programs. Additionally, it outlined the following strategic objectives to best support the community:

- + **Inward** – Prioritize the development of board members, leaders, staff, and volunteers.
- + **Be sustainable** – Enhance the management of the community's human and fiscal resources
- + **Have impact** – Foster a network of relationships that enable social change
- + **Build capacity** – Deliver best in class programs and services

Though a smaller community than Wood Buffalo, in Fairview this premise could support organization and event management by better bringing together like services to eliminate duplication among groups. This different angle on volunteering again comes from the same intention of finding ways to use skills and expertise to support and contribute to the greater cause of Fairview's development.



Municipal

The support of events, activities, and visitation in Fairview takes many people, organizations, and ideas. There are core elements to be considered for Fairview to truly establish a strong foundation from which it can build an event host and volunteerism culture. Aspects of items listed below already work well to support events, however an expanded focus on each is recommended to strengthen and further support initiatives in Fairview.

The term 'Municipal' is used here to represent the importance of these aspects to the town as a whole. While it will have a role to play in these, the term is not used to imply Town of Fairview administration must lead and fully manage all aspects listed below.

Northwestern Polytechnic

It has been frequently noted in this report how important the relationship with Northwestern Polytechnic is for Fairview. As a major employer in town, with the students and visitors it attracts, and with the opportunities it presents for the future, NWP is linked in many ways to Fairview.

While this relationship will not directly connect to all events, volunteerism, or aspects of tourism, it would be negligent to not address and consider how NWP ties into the overall fabric of Fairview and how it has the potential to significantly support the proposed culture. The desire on the part of NWP to grow student enrolment in Fairview by 18% over the coming years also provides ample opportunity to connect with these new students and provide them a memorable experience while completing their respective programs. While activities and connections do exist between the Town and NWP, a four-pronged approach is recommended to further link the two.

Remove the Invisible Fence

In conversations with stakeholders, people consistently discussed the importance of NWP, but the underlying tone was that it is very removed or distant to everyday life in Fairview. This needs to change so residents see NWP not as an isolated entity, but as an integrated part of the community. It is recognized that these cannot be mandated upon NWP, but the following are four suggestions to support integration and removal of this invisible fence:

- + **Ex-Officio member of key committees** – key committees or planning groups that exist within Fairview, events or otherwise, should include a representative from NWP. Even if this simply opens a communication channel and creates awareness between both sides, it can be valuable to strengthening the relationship and ensuring NWP knows it is valued and important in the community.



- + **Create touchpoints** – identify ways that the community can touch the campus. Supporting an open house at NWP where residents get the chance to tour and see examples of the great work and training being done on campus is one touchpoint to be considered. Another can be in the creation of an art walk and tour to highlight some of the incredible and unique art that is present across campus. Enabling visitors to view the ‘Toy Box’ motorcycle collection (ones that are allowed to be viewed and similar to what was done in 2021 with the Reynolds Alberta Museum) is one more example of a unique touchpoint unparalleled in the region or province.
- + **NWP as event space** – using the various and unique spaces at NWP to host meetings or events can also encourage a breaking of any real or perceived barriers between Fairview and campus. This connects to the prior recommendation of all spaces being seen as potential venues and everyone seeing themselves event hosts. From the atrium to the lecture theatres to the large Room 144, there are plenty of options to consider. Even having the Town consider hosting a Council meeting or committee meetings periodically on campus, could further important connections.
- + **Facilities** – with the Town now operating multiple facilities previously run by NWP, it presents an opportunity to address stakeholder concerns about accessibility to venues. With some perceived to be too costly to access, especially the theatre, adjusting rental prices can be a way for the Town to further demonstrate commitment to quality of life in Fairview and to leverage what it has from NWP. A balance must be struck to not have these facility operations be a drain on Town finances, but further usage can be of value on economic and social fronts.

Student Engagement

As students come to campus, even if it is just for a short six or eight week stint, the Town and the business community can work to provide a welcome and introduction to Fairview. This could be as simple as highlighting key services, restaurants, or outdoor experiences people may be able to use and try when time away from their studies permits. It could also go deeper to be offers from businesses or student rate access to places like the recreation centre or Fine Arts Centre. While eight weeks is not necessarily a long time for someone to determine if Fairview is a place they would want to stay longer, small touchpoints and a welcoming environment can present an image of town that will stick with people.

Event Support

There already exist numerous events that take place on the NWP campus. For over 16 years, in the spring the Northwest Regional Skills Canada Competition has been held at the Fairview Campus of NWP and over the last decade a permaculture seminar has also been hosted. These two examples can use the concept of 11% with the Town identifying ways it can support those events and help position them as key components of what takes place in Fairview.

For the Northwest Regional Skills Canada Competition, leveraging Fairview’s social media platforms could be one 11% example. Providing competition results while tagging in social media handles of the Alberta and national Skills Canada organizations can help to further establish Fairview as an important stop in this competition and as a core supporter of the trades.

Welding Rodeo

A proposed welding rodeo event was seen to be so popular in August of 2022 that it was delayed until more planning could be done to support its delivery. Partnering with NWP to support the organization and visibility of this event is recommended for Fairview. This can leverage the event organizing capabilities of the Town with the subject matter expertise of NWP. Not only can this bring visitors to town but can also act as another way to highlight the training programs and career possibilities available in Fairview and region connected to NWP.

The rodeo can be valuable in highlighting the existence of the Women of Steel program, Finning's ThinkBIG program that is aiming for an all-female intake, and the fact two of the five female welding instructors in Canada are in Fairview. Partnerships with Alberta Women Entrepreneurs or Women Building Futures could tie well into this event.

It can also tie to the great inclusivity work being done at NWP to provide trades opportunities to amputees or those with developmental disabilities. Promoting these examples helps bring a focus to Fairview to uniquely position it as a centre supporting diversity in the trades through great work being done by NWP.

Similar to one held in Calgary earlier in 2023, a youth competition can highlight to local and regional youth about the potential in trades careers and the fact training is available at or near to home. This could be tied existing kids camps NWP hosts, to early education for young students, or to employment opportunities and apprenticeships in the area.



Regional Approach

There is importance in focusing on the Town of Fairview and in its supporting events, volunteerism, and economic activity. That said, a regional mindset where understanding what else in the vicinity can drive visitation, support events, or when combined with the town can create greater impact, is something to be considered and developed. Beyond what is already done regionally, Fairview can use its events as the core of this approach to create connections with those outside town and to further welcome them in, as partners, participants, visitors, or volunteers.

Creating broader understanding of what Fairview and the region offer may not pay immediate dividends but will plant seeds in visitors who will know more about what is available in the region for future visits. To be clear, this is not about positioning the Town of Fairview over the M.D. of Fairview nor the other way around. It is about 1+1=3 and how both, and other jurisdictions, can collaborate as a broad region for the benefit of all.

There are multiple ways this can occur:

Regional Tours

Outlining itineraries of experiences within the region allow people to see what is possible with Fairview as the base. Depending on the season, experiencing Honey Fest in Falher, the Christmas market in Sexsmith, snowmobiling near Hines Creek, or even opportunities further away like the Tumbler Ridge UNESCO Geopark, are all examples that can help connect people to various events and experiences through the region.

MoveUp Magazine Partnership

The presence of the MoveUp magazine and the stories it tells can be a great vehicle through which Fairview can position itself as a hub and what is available in town and the region. Contributing regular submissions of interesting resident stories, unique experiences, or events, and how visitors can experience the region, is a way to get more information in the hands of potential visitors. Also using the back pages of MoveUp are great to ensure Fairview and region events are being posted and highlighted.

Event Rentals Outside of Town Proper

As Fairview continues to grow its inventory of event equipment and supplies, renting them to groups outside town can increase revenue and usage, but also creates another way in which this regional mentality can be built. It strengthens Fairview as a leading event host and supporter of the region.

Regional Presenters

For business events that Fairview may host in town, seeing the broader region as a place from which to identify examples of interesting work being done is important. This further demonstrates to attendees what is happening in and around Fairview, and that Fairview is at the heart of bringing this together. An example could be approaching Annette Rossdale from Front Porch Farm in Northern Sunrise County as a great keynote speaker or workshop host for the permaculture conference. Her work improving the health of her land and promoting the biodiversity of natural habitats makes her a key expert to speak about what makes this corner of northern Alberta an agricultural haven.

Regional Recreation/Events Committee

The existing recreation advisory committee, which includes two members from the Town, two from the M.D., and one member-at-large, has become more focused on facilities, reducing its effectiveness in developing programming. However, regional recreation discussions, in relation to both activities and events, remain important. Through stakeholder conversations, a suggestion was raised to leverage some aspects of the model of the Peace Library System (PLS) in creating a new recreation board.

The spirit of the PLS is to centralize library management for the region and to leverage provincial granting programs to allow individual jurisdictions access to library services. Each jurisdiction contributes a membership fee from which funding on a per capita basis is used to support library material purchases. This set up creates efficiencies that allow more people to access books and library assets.

The idea with recreation is to consider setting up a similar central board that can look to support recreation, events, and activities throughout the M.D. of Fairview and beyond. A critical mass of jurisdictions within the region together can discuss how best to share expertise, facilities, and to create efficiencies to increase event hosting and recreational experiences in the area.

At this stage, collecting funds to distribute for growing recreation or events, as PLS does for libraries, should be considered in the future and be secondary to the value of interacting and discussing shared opportunities to strengthen the region. In the future a per capita membership fee from participating jurisdictions can be collected, held, and treated like a condominium reserve fund for the first three to four years, building up a base. After that, funds collected could help event hosting in various parts of the region, which collectively supports visitation and economic impact. Terms of reference would need to be established as to how jurisdictions would contribute and could apply to use those funds.



Tourism

The instigation for this project was looking at ways to grow events in Fairview and that aim, along with strengthening volunteerism, remains at the core of analysis and recommendations. It is important, however, to acknowledge overall tourism and visitation components that should be considered by Fairview as it continues towards its objectives. While both events and visitation can go hand-in-hand, identifying other opportunities and experiences to draw people to Fairview, or to enhance or expand their stays, can be valuable in improving economic impact and supporting growth in the community.

Outlined below are recommendations related to supporting broader resident and visitor experiences to Fairview and its immediate region. Though the focus of tourism is to support visitor experiences, tourism development must also, and perhaps primarily, work for residents. Focusing first on residents means supporting their needs and interests, and it is often those same interests that visitors have.

Regional Mindset

Building on the earlier regional approach concept, it is important for Fairview to consider the broader whole of the region when it considers visitation and tourism. Talking about the area as one will better help connect it to the outlying assets and can encourage visitors to such places as Dunvegan, see Fairview as more than just a supply outlet. Nothing official needs to be done but subtle language shifts to discuss experiences and recreation opportunities in the 'Fairview area' will better help orient people and enable them to see the breadth of opportunities, even if they are not directly in town.

Outdoors

The incredible outdoor spaces around Fairview present some very unique opportunities for both tourism and event development. Visitors may be interested in canoeing along the Peace River or cross-country skiing in the unique topography around the Fairview Ski Hill, but these areas can also inspire event organizers to create unique competitions and experiences visitors can try.

Historical event examples in Fairview demonstrate the spirit of events as adventures unto themselves, such as Numb Bum and the Dunvegan Gold Rush triathlon. Other off road biking and ice racing events have more recently been held in the region. It is this spirit of adventure with outdoor events that needs to be encouraged. The name and brand recognition these former events possess can be valuable and could be the spark to bring them, or something similar, back to Fairview.

As Alberta is a province full of outdoor experiences, a key to this for Fairview and the region is to determine how to best position its experiences. Participatory adventure is the recommended direction for these experiences. This mindset allows people to enter and 'adventure' at their own pace. It also encourages youth participation in various activities that creates further connections for them in appreciating life in the region, either as a resident or visitor.

Dunvegan

Despite the historical importance and beautiful setting, it was striking in conversations with stakeholders the number of times it was mentioned that many locals and those from the region are unfamiliar with what is available at Historic Dunvegan. As a significant asset, it is important that residents in the region be able to speak to what it offers to help promote what it offers. As such, improving the awareness and collaboration between Fairview and Dunvegan is important. Despite these recommendations, it is recognized that there are multiple stakeholders at Dunvegan between the Province of Alberta, the M.D. of Fairview, and the Dunvegan Beaver People that all must be considered and consulted as any work goes forward.

Visitor Services

On key, busy weekends the Town, with permission from Historic Dunvegan, could station its ambassadors to answer questions about the region and to provide additional information about Fairview. This can support the telling of a broader Fairview story to visitors to potentially extend stays or drive visitation into town to experience what is available.

Indigenous Stories

From recent research done by Indigenous Tourism Alberta (ITA), an intriguing quote was revealed: "I want my visitors to have reconciliation with the land – with their land, our land. Recognizing the land. Words come from the land. Guidance comes from the land."

The telling of Indigenous stories, culture, and history is an important component of truth and reconciliation in Canada. Building on the quote, a unique opportunity exists to listen to the Dunvegan Beaver People to understand how stories about the land around Fairview and the ties to Dunvegan can be better told. Despite this space being outside of Town limits, it is important for Fairview to play a role in the conversation and to understand how it can support. This is additionally pertinent considering the importance Alberta is placing on properly and collaboratively developing Indigenous tourism across the province.

Market Gardens

This multi-generational asset is another regional gem with which the Town can look to connect and engage. Seeing it as an asset within the broader Town of Fairview region provides another opportunity to deepen and potentially extend stays for people to the area. As with getting locations in the town to consider themselves as event venues, this could equally be done with the Market Gardens, if they are open to that consideration. Additionally, the overall importance of agriculture and crop development in the region can be further brought to life by highlighting this unique asset and its geographical location.



Business Opportunities

Events do take place at Dunvegan, but it was clear that currently nothing other than wedding ceremonies and basic events are possible. An independent business could take the mantle of managing all the logistics, catering, permits, and other planning, to support greater use of Historic Dunvegan as an event space (and could ultimately work on other events in Fairview and region). With everything able to be hosted in one place, more groups and people would likely consider using Dunvegan as an event space. The Town could rent its tents and assets to improve their usage, and visitors would be more likely to stay and spend time in Fairview. It is recognized that challenges exist to this including staffing limitations at Historic Dunvegan, as well the presence of multiple stakeholders in that region. However, the beauty and importance of the spaces make it worth considering how to explore other ways people can experience it.

Downtown

As was noted earlier, downtowns in cities and towns big and small faced challenges pre-pandemic and those have only been exacerbated post-pandemic. Fairview has not seen a significant decline in businesses in its downtown area, which provides a great foundation, however stakeholders have identified the need to further establish it as a place to visit, to gather, and to spend time. This is for residents as much, if not more, than visitors but both will benefit. Adding such vibrancy is not met with simple solutions, but there are some opportunities Fairview has to bring additional life downtown.

Wayfinding

One of these has already been worked on and that is wayfinding. The archway acts like a beacon by being visible from the highway and provides an obvious entry point for visitors to know how to access the core of Fairview. Additional signage in downtown and leading into Fairview can further help orient people and make them aware of the various amenities available in town. An illustrated map of all the great facilities in Fairview could also be created and included in publications, online, or even to cover windows of empty buildings. This helps people orient to where facilities are and to the breadth of what is available in Fairview.

Art

Fairview is blessed with the Fine Arts Centre and many fine artists. Another way to add vibrancy to downtown is to lean into this talent and identify ways public art can be incorporated into the downtown core. From murals to street art, to larger installations, to snow and ice art in the winter, or even temporary or pop up displays, the Town can work with local artists, businesses, and building owners to identify ways and places that this fundamental element of Fairview comes to life.

Street life can also be enhanced with open air performances by Fairview's dance groups or musicians. With dances forming a significant part of the culture of Fairview by being included in many events, a street dance event is another way to consider how to bring people downtown and create activities in which they can participate.

Such art focused projects in Fairview provide a great backdrop to other experiences people will have in town and highlights the talent and amenities in the community. However, there are examples where the art itself has become the focus. Chemainus, BC, a town of just over 3,000 people, is a prime example with its significant collection of murals and sculptures, now nearing 70 pieces. These tell various stories about the area's history, Vancouver Island, and the town itself. Such a collection does not have to be Fairview's goal, but instead a focus on how to create curiosity about the community and to enhance visitors' stays should be, and its strong artistic culture can support that.

Business and Organization Involvement

Activating streets through business engagement is often a great way to create visibility for those offerings and to provide street life for residents and visitors alike. The nature of small business in Fairview can make this challenging with operators often having very small staff numbers and very little downtime away from work. Rather than aim for regular activation, the Town can advocate for broader business involvement for two events a year – Summer's End being the obvious one and aiming for similar support for a winter event.

The nature of this activation can also be a challenge but simply asking businesses to lean into what they already do, rather than create a whole separate activity, can kickstart involvement in such activation. For restaurants, it may be simply serving from the street or creating pop-up patios. A venue like the Grand Hotel may wish to put a stage on the sidewalk to feature local artists, much like they are doing inside. Even businesses that are not located downtown, such as Heilan Beer House, could do small, temporary locations downtown for those one or two events a year. While the activity can be important, of bigger importance is for whatever is done to people focused to encourage gathering, mingling, and engagement.

To create lasting awareness and visitation, a business passport can be created and tied to events so participants have a reminder and additional reasons to return to businesses. This could include individual promotions or separate prizes and benefits for returning to businesses in the weeks following a Fairview event.

Streets as Venues

Festivals and markets have long used streets as venues for diverse and unique activities. Sports is now catching up seeing a range of spaces as having potential for hosting events. 3x3 basketball has been one sport that has used streets well, and with a solid basketball foundation in Fairview, summer or fall tournaments could be organized to attract competitive and recreational teams from the region. Another option could be working with Athletics Alberta and their Mini-Legends program. This track and field program gives kids an opportunity to learn and try core athletics disciplines in different settings. This could be done on a cost-recovery basis charging kids a nominal amount to participate and could invite day visitation from the region to downtown.

Assets

Fairview possesses some very unique assets with potential to bring visitors to town and enhance the trips of those coming through the region. Developing these, in conjunction with related partners, can round out experiences in town and support the work being done on the events front.

Harley Davidson and Motorcycle Toy Box

As referenced earlier, creating a tourism experience for people to see the unique motorcycles at NWP, and to know the connection to the Harley Davidson training program, has significant potential. The breadth of the collection is unique in Alberta and holds strong tourism potential for the niche audience of motorcycle enthusiasts.

Canso Plane

The Fairview Aircraft Restoration Society's (FARS) work on the Canso plane presents a unique opportunity as well for Fairview. The fascinating history of the plane itself, and the story that brought it to Fairview can both be shared with potential visitors. The willingness of FARS to show the plane and to have kids experience being inside it, presents a great starting point to a discussion of how to have it become a destination in town for visitors to experience.

Dunvegan Market Gardens

As was referenced earlier in this report, working with the ownership family of the Dunvegan Market Gardens to consider other ways for people to experience their space is of potential value to Fairview and the Gardens. This could include children's experiences to learn about how produce is grown, hosting cooking lessons for people to learn how to use the great produce, or even having top chefs prepare long table meals that take advantage of the beautiful setting and long days of the region.

NWP Art

With a collection that includes a Group of Seven painting, NWP possesses unique artwork throughout campus that can be a draw for those with interest and curiosity for art. Creating tours that highlight these pieces provides a unique experience for visitors to Fairview and the region, while also exposing people to the academic work at the core of what NWP does.

As it focuses on events, developing these visitor assets may not be an immediate priority for the Town. It may also not be solely on its shoulders to do, but these assets do present interesting potential to invite those coming to Fairview for events, to see family, or even those camping in the region to have experiences unlike anything they could find in the region.

Funding Opportunities

There exist multiple funding opportunities that Fairview can consider for support of event planning, operations, as well as event related expenses. The following lists select funding streams to review. Some may indicate a closure of applications but in many cases there are multiple windows in which requests for funding may be submitted.

Sport Tournaments

The Alberta Government's Community Initiatives Program (February 21, 2023) could be used on tournament events as new programming and event-hosting costs, as well as event marketing, fall under what these funds can support.

Venue Development

The Community Facility Enhancement Program, announced by the Alberta Government on February 21, 2023, could be utilized to support enhancement of facilities. For example, the gyms in town could get enhanced scoreboards, scorers tables, or dressing rooms, while for JA Hawker Pavilion it could equally be used for change rooms or enhanced stables for horses and livestock. Alternatively, it could potentially be used for outdoor equipment to activate key spaces, such as portable basketball backboards, rims, and stanchions that could support 3x3 events downtown.

Travel Alberta Product Development Fund

This fund has three streams (investments to grow existing businesses, investments to diversify existing offerings, investments to support new tourism product) that Fairview and the M.D. could consider to support existing entities such as Dunvegan or the development of new ideas such as the Canso plane.

Travel Alberta Cooperative Investment Fund

This program supports activation and promotion of revenue-based events and festivals and ones that drive overnight visitation. This may be of consideration for Fairview now, or into the future (assuming it continues to be offered), to help such events as Summer's End continue to develop.

Municipal Project Fund & Membership Services Projects

Delivered through the Peace Region Economic Development Alliance, additional funding has been granted to regional economic development agencies. Fairview may wish to consider undertaking projects, activities, or promotional activities that can benefit from this pool of funding.

Next Steps

The goal of this report is to provide Fairview a strategic foundation from which it can build its plans for management and hosting of events. This includes the entrenchment of an event hosting culture and the development of a community spirit for volunteerism, with many actions outlined that move this plan forward and get Fairview on its way to achieving its goals.

Town representatives will have the clearest sense of organizational capacity and ability, and thus what recommended actions make the most initial sense to move the plan forward. That said, the following are an external perspective on recommendations for initial steps in implementing this plan.

Conversations with potential event venues

Planting the seed through conversations with town stakeholders that all spaces can be event venues is a valuable activity for Fairview to do early in execution of the plan. This will accomplish three main things:

- + It will start to open building and space owners' or operators' minds about what is possible with their respective spaces and will challenge them to see them in a different light.
- + It will spark potential event ideas that may not have previously existed.
- + It will be one connection for people to make in terms of Fairview's move to entrench an event hosting culture in town.

Host event summit

Hosting of the event summit will bring together the range of event operators, volunteers, participants, and businesses in town to engage in a joint conversation about events in Fairview. The conversations will enable them to share ideas and expose opportunities and challenges that can further propel forward Fairview's event culture and event hosting potential. It will also subtly emphasize that growth to becoming more of an event destination is a community initiative and one that can be jointly owned.

Conversations with core sports

The potential of identifying core sports around which events will be built has been outlined as a possible direction in this report. Holding conversations with the sports suggested, or others, is a valuable step in determining the sport event potential in town. The tournament ideas that are also outlined in this report can be floated to these sports, but it remains important that these organizations be heard and listened to first to truly understand how they see themselves in relation to future events and what is possible.

Identify economic sectors

The first step to considering the potential for business events is to identify the core economic sectors that Fairview wishes to focus on. This will come from a combination of what exists in town and the region, the areas of focus of NWP, and directions of future economic development that may be in the works. This will mean engaging with NWP, business owners, and groups such as the Peace Region Economic Development Alliance to paint a clearer picture of areas of growth potential and how business events could support those.

Organization Volunteer Training

Hosting volunteer training sessions will provide a strong foundation from which to consider the other recommendations related to volunteerism. Essentially this provides another touchpoint with event organizers and begins to introduce the idea of Fairview becoming a hub for volunteerism in the region. It will also expose opportunities and gaps in volunteering that can improve other report recommendations such as youth volunteering and how best to develop a volunteer database.

NWP Relationship

As has been noted throughout this report, the relationship with NWP is vital to many aspects of how Fairview develops its event and volunteer cultures. Identifying ways through what is recommended in this report, or beyond, to tighten the connections with NWP is crucial. Straightforward things like regular meetings between the Town, key Fairview stakeholders, and school representatives or including NWP representatives as ex officio members of core Town committees can go a long way to opening the door to deeper and more mutually beneficial ways to work together.

These suggested key steps can be considered by the Town along with the other tactical recommendations included in this report to build out an implementation plan that matches needs, timelines, and resources. Some recommendations may feel easily actionable or may already be occurring so may move higher on the list in moving this plan forward and beginning to develop traction in the community.



Conclusion

Fairview is a unique community. Its people, its relationships, its facilities, and its landscape, all put it in an enviable position as it considers how to become an even greater place for its residents and for those that spend time visiting in town or the region. It will take work to use this desirable situation to its advantage, though Fairview appears committed to the short and long term planning required. With this commitment and the leadership in Fairview, it can see it through.

The execution of this plan, however, is not all the responsibility of Town administration. It is vital that the community, NWP, and the region be brought in to contribute their expertise and ideas to this plan. Not only do these relationships broaden the ideas and share the effort, but it also sees this plan become one that is community driven and owned. This means more people and organizations have a stake in what happens and see the potential for what Fairview can achieve.

There is versatility in this plan for Fairview to best determine an implementation plan that works with its resources and its understanding of what actions best set the plan on course and provide the most initial impact. Actions that get the community aware of and on board with this plan early in the process can pay dividends further down the road with more people engaged and involved in its delivery. It is being recommended to Fairview to create significant cultural development around events and volunteerism, both of which will take a full community effort to deliver.

Fairview is not a typical prairie town. It is one with many inherent gems and a consistent focus on creating a great place for people to call home, which is as true for multi-generational residents as it is for newcomers. The Town has already made a bold statement by engaging in such planning. Now, with its strong leadership and clear objectives, it can embark on the challenging but valuable work of becoming a place with events and a spirit of giving to back to the community at the heart of its existence.