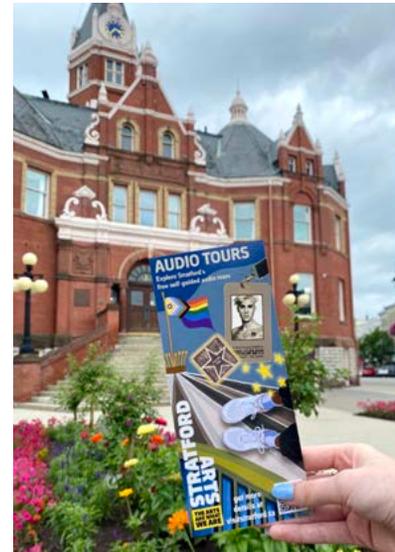


# 2023 Year in Review



# DESTINATION STRATFORD

**ARTS** THE ARTS ARE  
WHAT WE ARE



## 2023 YEAR IN REVIEW HIGHLIGHTS:

1. Destination Marketing
2. Destination Development
3. Destination Management
4. ADDENDUM: Lights On Stratford 2023/24



## VISION

Destination Stratford will be an internationally recognized leader in regenerative tourism, ensuring Stratford remains one of Canada's top year-round cultural destinations.

## MISSION

Develop, manage and market Stratford as a globally competitive cultural destination through regenerative, sustainable and socially responsible tourism that improves quality of life and prosperity throughout our community.

## DESTINATION BRAND PROMISE

The arts are what we are.

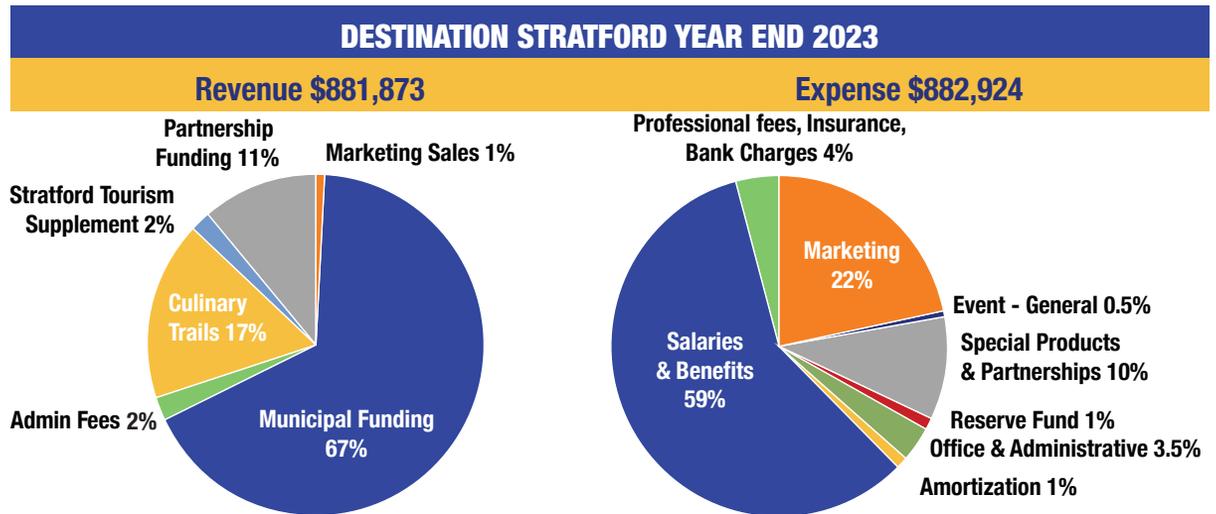
Destination Stratford has been the city's official Destination Marketing and Management Organization since 2007. We are a non-profit, government-funded organization with a purpose to develop, manage and promote "Destination Stratford" as a national and international tourism icon. The organization is industry-led by a volunteer Board of Directors – comprised of respected local civic, business and tourism leaders – and staffed with a dedicated team of destination marketing, development and management experts. Please visit our website to learn more: [VisitStratford.ca/about](http://VisitStratford.ca/about).

Managed by skilled and experienced tourism planners directly involved in the Stratford community, the goal of the organization is to strengthen the local economy and enrich the quality of life in the city of Stratford and surrounding region through regenerative tourism.

Destination Stratford is pleased to share highlights, performance results and successes for 2023.

## 2023 BUDGET

Destination Stratford's fiscal year ends December 31st. The following charts contain 2023's year-end unaudited revenues and expenses, forecasting a small operational deficit of \$1,051. Formal audited statements are completed each year in May and presented at Stratford City Council.



**1. DESTINATION MARKETING** Destination Stratford strategically built and executed impactful marketing campaigns to increase destination awareness and year-round visitation. These campaigns were thoughtfully executed across various channels including print, radio, digital, broadcast TV, regional billboards, social media and influencer marketing. Audiences were targeted to entice overnight visitors in both Canada and border US cities as well as regional visitors. Performance metrics include website statistics, record breaking culinary trail sales, and online views and engagement throughout social media channels.

**37**  
INFLUENCER  
CAMPAIGNS

**1,136,427**  
INFLUENCER CAMPAIGN SOCIAL MEDIA REACH



**33,038** LIKES

**2,332** COMMENTS

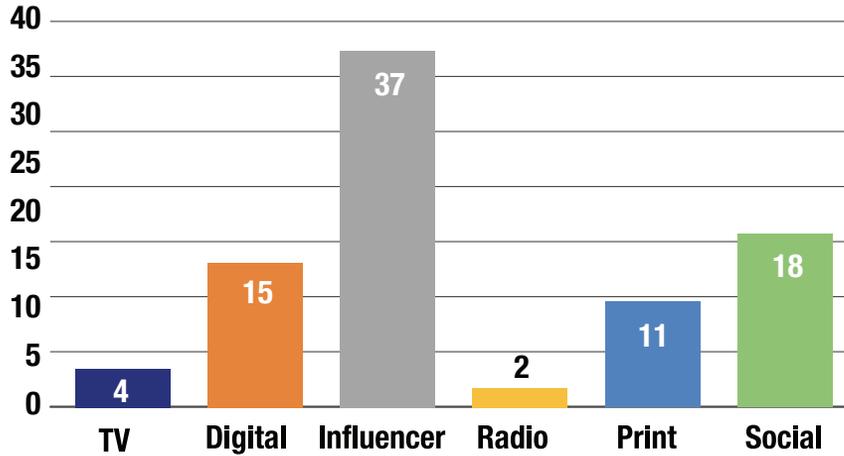
**29,173** SHARES + SAVES

**1,507,381** VIDEO VIEWS

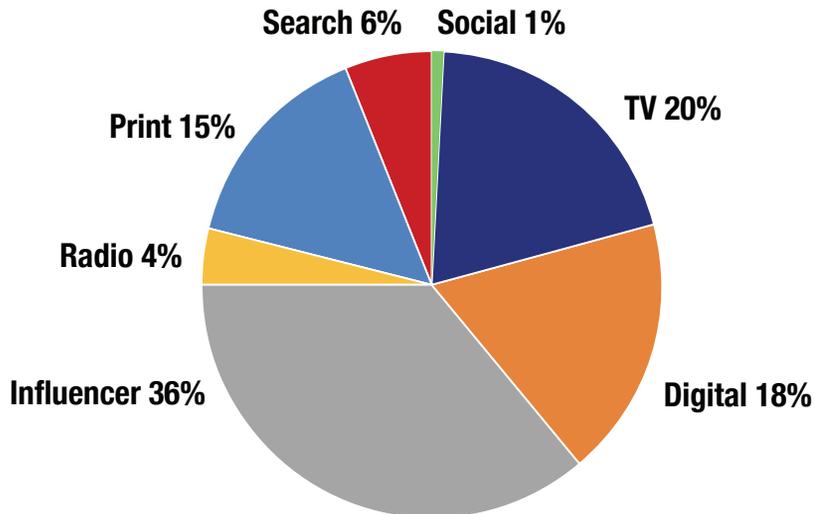
Destination Stratford captured **112 tourism related articles and blogs** across print, online and radio including content both owned and earned. The team distributed **19 press releases** and conducted **multiple interviews** across local and regional outlets; in addition to quarterly round-ups strategically sent to publications and freelancers. The captured articles covered an array of topics including Destination Stratford's marketing initiatives, tourism industry news, press release coverage, community events and collaborations as well as destination guides and curated blog posts.



## 2023 MARKETING CAMPAIGNS (87) BY CHANNEL



## 2023 ADVERTISING SPEND BY CHANNEL



## Digital Promotion with Google Ad Grants

In our second year with Louise Street Marketing working on our Google Search Ads using the Google Grants Program, Destination Stratford had over 32,000 new users visit our Web site and a total of 13% of our site traffic linking from the Google Ads. The quality of clicks from the ads in 2023 improved significantly with the number of pages viewed and the time on site increasing by 11% and 12% respectively. The 2023 total value in free ads gained through this program was \$70,100 and represents 41,000 clicks to the [VisitStratford.ca](https://www.visitstratford.ca) site. Louise Street Marketing is paid a monthly management fee for their work on our behalf.

*“Stratford was one of the most 🏳️‍🌈 friendly cities we’ve been to! Not only was there lots of positive marketing in the shops and restaurants, but we also saw so many other queer couples walking around town together which made us feel so welcome 😊.” Megan & Julie*

*“Every shop, every restaurant is so welcoming, friendly and clearly understands how important hospitality is here.” Carolyn R.*

*“We had the best time!!! We honestly can’t stop raving about our visit. The interactive light show was incredible and the trails are so much fun and such a great way to spend a day!” Shelby B.*

# Social Media 2023 Growth

**INSTAGRAM** = 19% increase (Jan 2023: 11,977 | Dec 2023: 14,339)

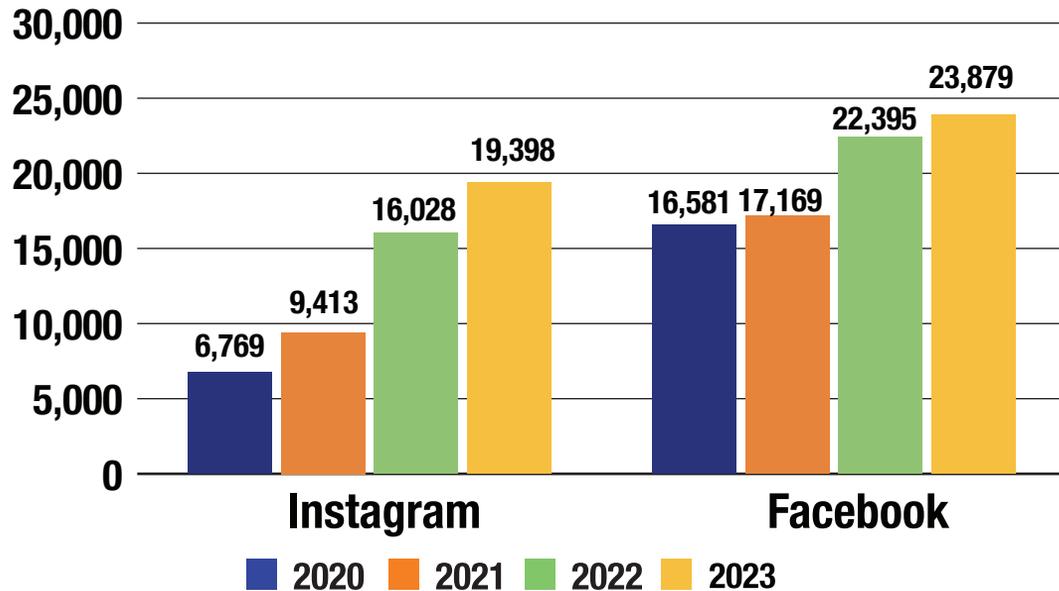
**FACEBOOK** = 4% increase (Jan 2023: 18,595 | Dec 2023: 19,328)

## DESTINATION STRATFORD + LIGHTS ON STRATFORD:

**INSTAGRAM** = 21% increase (Jan 2023: 16,028 | Dec 2023: 19,398)

**FACEBOOK** = 7% increase (Jan 2023: 22,395 | Dec 2023: 23,879)

Instagram & Facebook Follower Growth



# Top 10 engaged Instagram posts of 2023



Total Engagement: 1,494  
Total Reach: 7,042



Total Engagement: 1,373  
Total Reach: 5,720



Total Engagement: 1,076  
Total Reach: 11,357



Total Engagement: 1,039  
Total Reach: 13,528



Total Engagement: 970  
Total Reach: 4,252



Total Engagement: 900  
Total Reach: 8,962



Total Engagement: 858  
Total Reach: 4,569



Total Engagement: 715  
Total Reach: 7,898



Total Engagement: 703  
Total Reach: 5,473



Total Engagement: 693  
Total Reach: 7,524

# Top 10 engaged Facebook posts of 2023



1

Total Engagement: 4,479  
Total Reach: 248,143



2

Total Engagement: 1,598  
Total Reach: 73,445



3

Total Engagement: 1,306  
Total Reach: 16,859



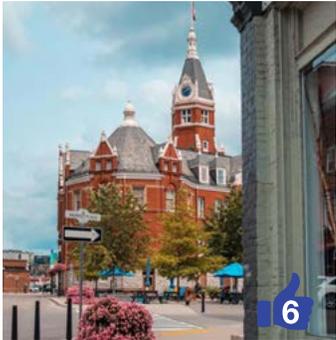
4

Total Engagement: 1,053  
Total Reach: 88,597



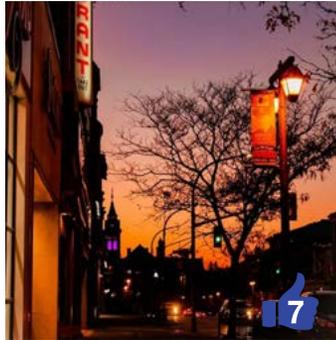
5

Total Engagement: 1,047  
Total Reach: 76,021



6

Total Engagement: 749  
Total Reach: 105,093



7

Total Engagement: 541  
Total Reach: 27,006



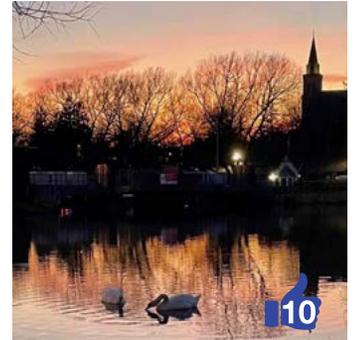
8

Total Engagement: 534  
Total Reach: 24,459



9

Total Engagement: 486  
Total Reach: 19,468



10

Total Engagement: 471  
Total Reach: 16,481



▶ 327K

Explore ON LOS  
 VIEWS: 327,331  
 ENGAGEMENT: 12,095



▶ 239K

The curious creature  
 VIEWS: 239,557  
 ENGAGEMENT: 13,480



▶ 137K

Curated KW LOS  
 VIEWS: 137,518  
 ENGAGEMENT: 4,588



▶ 84.7K

Curated KW  
 VIEWS: 84,716  
 ENGAGEMENT: 3,443



▶ 69.3K

Curated KW  
 VIEWS: 69,370  
 ENGAGEMENT: 2,103

# Top 10 Instagram reels of 2023



▶ 46.4K

Wandering Foodie Girl  
 VIEWS: 46,467  
 ENGAGEMENT: 2,070



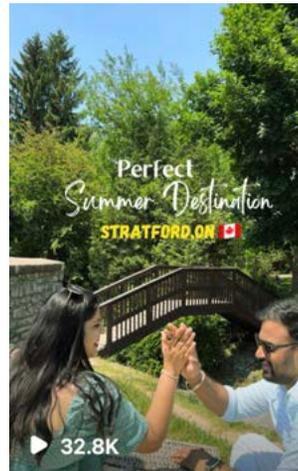
▶ 43.3K

TO Food Diary LOS  
 VIEWS: 43,313  
 ENGAGEMENT: 2,241



▶ 35.1K

TO Food Diary  
 VIEWS: 35,159  
 ENGAGEMENT: 1,944



▶ 32.8K

Wandering Foodie Girl  
 VIEWS: 32,813  
 ENGAGEMENT: 989



▶ 31.8K

Mint in Canada  
 VIEWS: 31,839  
 ENGAGEMENT: 1,056

"This reel is very helpful for my next visit to Stratford... thanks for sharing!"  
 - Harsh P. 📷

"Love love love, Stratford. Thanks for always highlighting the uniqueness of our city's many amazing small businesses."  
 - Phillip C. 📷

# Top 10 TikTok videos of 2023



**TikTok Stats:** 1,281 followers, 125,310 Views, 7,447 Engagements, 45% follower growth rate on TikTok in 2023

# Website Analytics

Direct & Referral: 32% (earned visits) + 4% Social Media

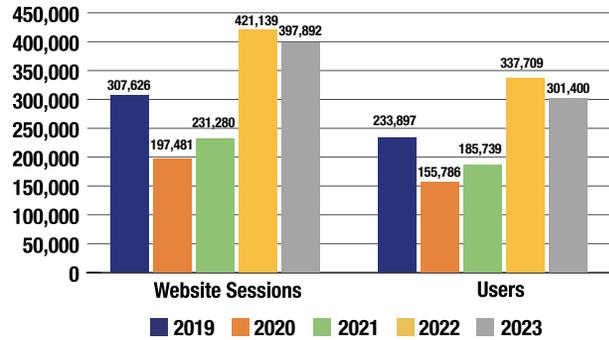
Google Grants: 13% (free Google search ads)

With phones and tablets representing 67% of VisitStratford.ca online traffic, Destination Stratford continues to take a mobile-first approach to improve the online user experience. In 2023, the continued revisions and daily maintenance of interactive maps, audio tours, cultural events calendar and high impact visual storytelling evolved this compelling resource for visitors to explore Stratford from their home and during their visit.

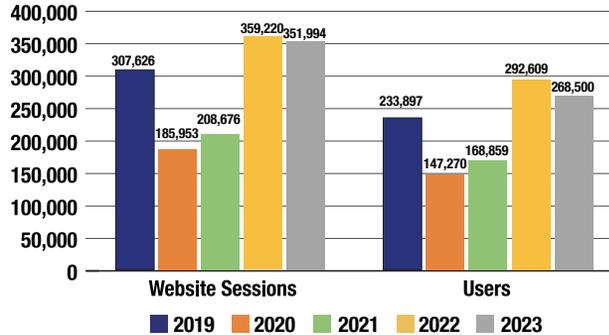
**Mobile 63% | Desktop & Smart TV 33% | Tablet 4%**



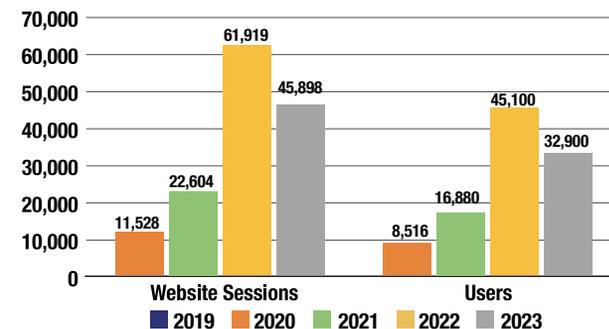
TOTAL WEB SESSIONS & USERS 2019 THROUGH 2023



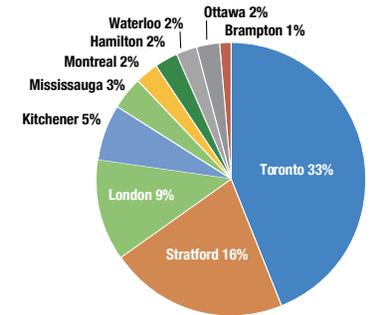
VISITSTRATFORD.CA 2019 THROUGH 2023



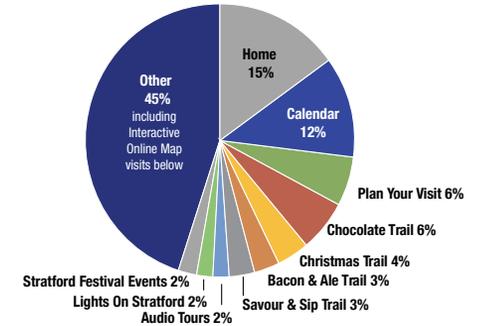
LIGHTSON STRATFORD.CA 2019 THROUGH 2023



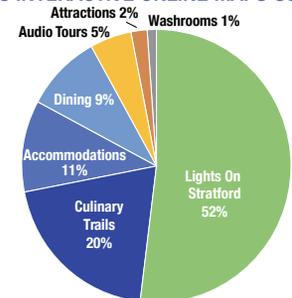
2023 TOP 10 SITE VISITOR LOCATIONS



2023 TOP 10 VISITSTRATFORD.CA PAGES



2023 INTERACTIVE ONLINE MAPS USAGE





**2. DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT** Our Guiding Principles for all of our Destination Development and Management initiatives are included in the diagram below. Each project must strive to holistically improve the quality of life within our community, build prosperity through the tourism economy, enhance the visitor experience, and maintain and expand our tourism and community infrastructure. Through these collaborative projects, Destination Stratford continues to build impactful partnerships with myriad community organizations and tourism operators.

In 2023, Destination Stratford continued building on creative destination development initiatives, which consisted of existing and new growth opportunities to increase visitation from October to May, specifically. We distributed \$35,000 to local arts organizations and cultural experience providers through the Destination Development Fund, a project led by our team in collaboration with RTO4 and Downtown Stratford BIA.

Destination Stratford recorded the highest culinary trail sales to date. We executed yet another year of success for both the 4th annual Lights On Stratford and Stratford AI Fresco, including winter pilots for year-round outdoor tables in Market Square and alcohol permitted in designated public spaces during the winter lights festival.

In addition, strategic destination development continued in a number of areas including: cycle tourism, welcoming community, sport tourism and the municipal cultural plan in partnership with the City of Stratford. Another important role of the organization is to pursue funding opportunities through upper levels of government, especially for tourism development grants where municipalities are not eligible. In 2023, as a non-profit entity separate from the City, Destination Stratford was able to secure over \$100,000 in Provincial and Federal funding for direct investment in our community, in addition to supporting many other grant applications by other Stratford organizations.



# Destination Stratford Culinary Trails

Destination Stratford's culinary trails have been in the market for 14 years; first launching with the Chocolate Trail in 2010. Destination Stratford offers 2 year-round trails (Chocolate and Bacon & Ale) as well as a seasonal Christmas Trail (November & December). New for 2023, another seasonal trail was added to the roster to encourage Al Fresco dining/curated picnics throughout downtown and in the City's park system. The New Savour & Sip Trail launched in May and ran through October and quickly became a new favourite. Each trail costs \$35 +HST and provides visitors with vouchers to redeem from a list of participating businesses; which also includes an interactive digital map of each location. The culinary trails are an incredible year-round activity available to visitors and offer an experience in all seasons of the year. We have seen tremendous success with our trails from both visitors and locals; selling thousands each year and hitting a record for trails sold in 2023; resulting in over **26,000 visits into participating businesses**. It's a fantastic opportunity for Destination Stratford to promote a range of retailers and restaurants through a unique, hands-on experience. It also allows us to track sales and increase traffic into the businesses on the trails and gives visitors a reason to stay longer to enjoy our destination. Currently, over 100 local businesses collectively are included across our 4 trails and the number of partners continues to grow each year.

Destination Stratford saw a tremendous increase in 2023 for culinary trails sales resulting in the highest number of sales ever! And that's before we add in the sales for the NEW Savour & Sip Trail.

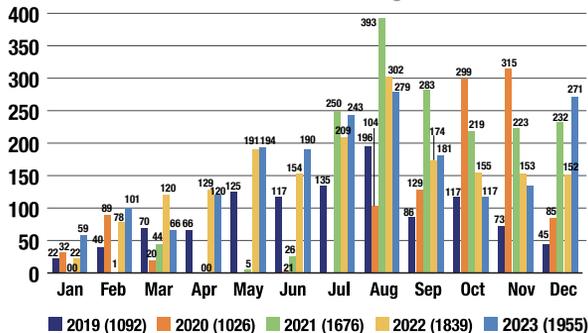
## PERCENTAGE INCREASE OVER PRE-PANDEMIC 2019

CHOCOLATE TRAIL	BACON & ALE TRAIL	CHRISTMAS TRAIL	SAVOUR & SIP TRAIL
+79%	+87%	+86%	NEW

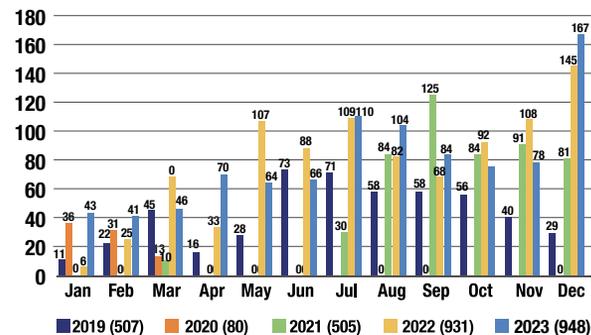
## CUMULATIVE TIME SPENT ON CULINARY TRAIL WEBSITE PAGES IN 2023

24,988 sessions for the year x 58 secs = <b>403 HOURS</b>	13,166 sessions for the year x 51 secs = <b>187 HOURS</b>	16,212 sessions for the year x 40 secs = <b>180 HOURS</b>	11,436 sessions as of May 10 x 44 secs = <b>140 HOURS</b>
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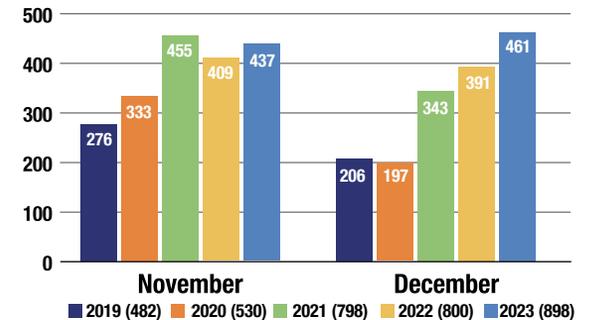
Chocolate Trail - 2019 through 2023



Bacon & Ale Trail - 2019 through 2023



Christmas Trail - 2019 through 2023



[visitstratford.ca/chocolatetrail](http://visitstratford.ca/chocolatetrail)

[visitstratford.ca/bacontrail](http://visitstratford.ca/bacontrail)

[visitstratford.ca/christmastrail](http://visitstratford.ca/christmastrail)

[visitstratford.ca/savourtrail](http://visitstratford.ca/savourtrail)

# The Savour & Sip Trail

Destination Stratford was thrilled to launch a brand-new seasonal culinary trail that aligned with the Al Fresco dining season running May - October. Introducing the **Savour & Sip Trail** - a new culinary trail focused on showcasing local businesses who have carefully chosen savoury and sweet delights for trail participants to enjoy. The Savour & Sip Trail encouraged outdoor dining by featuring take-out items to help curate a unique outdoor experience through picnics, and DIY charcuterie boards to enjoy in various outdoor settings throughout the city and park system. Trail participants enjoyed a wide variety of local offers such as cheese, meat, housemade breads, local preserves, sandwiches, salads and an assortment of desserts and cold beverages. The products along the trail focused largely on locally made and prepared in Stratford/surrounding regions.

The team developed a launch strategy, aligning partnerships and advertising to promote the new trail. There were fifteen media and social media collaborations executed, which generated awareness and 645 trails sales.

As a result, the trail also received generated media coverage in various regional and local publications including:

- The Kit
- Culinary Tourism Alliance
- Hamilton Spectator
- CTV Kitchener
- Toronto Star
- Auburnlane.com
- Adult Lifestyle Magazine
- Stratford Times
- CJCS Radio
- Beacon Herald



*"We explored both the Savour & Sip Trail and the Chocolate Trail, which is the perfect way to discover local businesses there if you're not familiar with the town." Date night yyz*



*"We absolutely loved the Savour & Sip Trail – it's day date goals! I'm already planning a second (and third, and fourth) visit!" Lena Almedia*



*"Great way to visit so many amazing small businesses in town."  
- Hayle's Electric & Contracting*



*"Such a great way to experience Stratford."  
- Angela's Gelato*



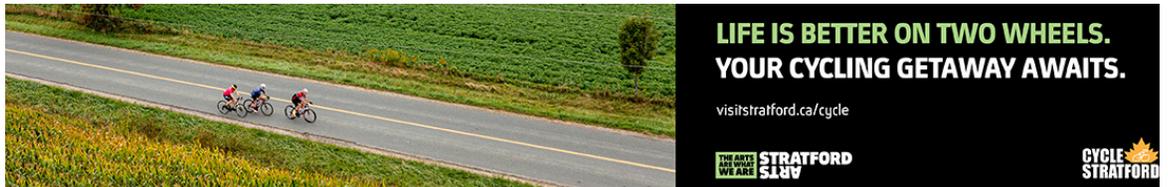
# Cycle Tourism

Building on the success since 2021, a collaborative effort to strategically develop Cycle Tourism in the region was continued in partnership with Perth County, the Town of St. Marys and RTO4, with the robust, informative pocket-sized cycle map to promote key cycling routes including city, rural, gravel and mountain bike. 2023 updates to the map included switching the Perth County routes to their new Signature Routes that stemmed from the new Perth County Cycle Tourism Strategy created with Ontario By Bike. Thousands of maps were handed out to residents and visitors at regional businesses and visitor centres, and received positive feedback for its size, content, and overall usability.

To continue the development of Cycle Tourism, the organizations continue to partner on promotional opportunities with the Ontario By Bike Network, and other cycling outlets, to utilize their promotion and resources in expanding this fast growing tourism segment.

[VisitStratford.ca/cycle](https://VisitStratford.ca/cycle)

*“With a growing number of bicycle friendly businesses, the city offers a variety of accommodations, restaurants ranging from fine dining to quick eats, and services to support every cyclist’s needs.” Jennifer Nickel, Cycle Stratford*



**LIFE IS BETTER ON TWO WHEELS.  
YOUR CYCLING GETAWAY AWAITS.**

[visits Stratford.ca/cycle](https://visits Stratford.ca/cycle)

THE ARTS  
AND WHAT  
WE ARE  
**STRATFORD**  
SLIV

**CYCLE  
STRATFORD**

# Stratford Al Fresco

Building on its success from the previous 3 years, Stratford Al Fresco dining areas were in as high demand in 2023 as they have been since the start. Destination Stratford's Al Fresco staff provided visitor information at the welcome hut in Market Square, and daily cleaning and maintenance of Al Fresco tables at all locations, especially first thing each morning, and at peak use times during the day. The liquor-with-food bylaw remained in place and was very successful with a wide variety of participating restaurants.

NEW for 2023 was the expansion of the Al Fresco table season and the liquor-with-food bylaw. The City agreed to a pilot allowing the Al Fresco tables to remain year-round, and for the liquor-with-food bylaw to be in effect for Lights On Stratford December 15, 2023 to January 13, 2024 with local businesses offering warm boozy and non-boozy beverages to be enjoyed at the light displays. Due to the success of this initiative, we look forward to working with the City to make this Bylaw amendment permanent. A year-round European approach to liquor in public spaces, together with our creative local culinary sector, uniquely positions Stratford as a progressive destination that is clearly differentiated from other competing Ontario locations.

[VisitStratford.ca/alfresco](https://www.visitstratford.ca/alfresco)





THE ARTS  
ARE WHAT  
WE ARE

STRATFORD  
ARTS



**2023-2027**

# Sport Tourism Strategy



FINAL DRAFT:  
2022-12-21

## Sport Tourism

During 2022, the City of Stratford partnered with investStratford and Destination Stratford to develop a Sport Tourism Strategy for the City. The final Stratford Sport Tourism Strategy was presented to City Council in January 2023, where Council directed the steering committee to explore funding opportunities and partnerships to create an organizational structure and funding model for inclusion in the City of Stratford 2024 budget. In late 2023, Destination Stratford secured matching Provincial grant funds to hire a Stratford Sport Tourism Director and is moving ahead with that process as of January 2024.

The Sport Tourism Strategy includes:

- economic impact, size and scope of existing sport tourism opportunities – including an inventory of capital assets (infrastructure) and human assets (volunteer groups, local sport associations)
- the results of exploring the potential to expand those existing opportunities and to identify new areas for growth, complete with financial and socio-community impacts, effects and outcomes
- recommended technology tools that link sport bookings to tourism assets, amplifying the visitor experience with local retail, food/beverage and accommodation providers
- a needs analysis for growth and potential funding opportunities

[VisitStratford.ca/sporttourism](https://VisitStratford.ca/sporttourism)

# Municipal Cultural Plan

The City of Stratford, in partnership with Destination Stratford, started work in 2022 on a Municipal Cultural Plan for Stratford.

The project, funded by the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario (FedDev Ontario) via Regional Tourism Organization 4 (RTO4), assessed the City's current cultural assets, gathered information through public consultations and provided recommendations for growth and next steps.

STEPS Public Art was selected as the consultant to lead this work, and started public consultation on the Municipal Cultural Plan in October 2022. The final Municipal Cultural Plan was presented to City Council in June 2023. A position to take on first-year priorities and actions from the Plan is in the 2024 City budget process.

The Municipal Cultural Plan offers guidance on the long-term and short-term growth of Stratford's cultural fabric and community and knits together policies covering a wide range of areas and cultural sectors into a growth strategy that sets the city on a path towards its desired long-term vision.

Through November 2022, over 250 connections and conversations were had with community members, key cultural

stakeholders, Stratford City staff, Council, and the incoming and outgoing Mayors, relating to the Municipal Cultural Plan. These community conversations were through a public survey on Engage Stratford, online and in-person stakeholder focus groups, one-to-one interviews and a Data Gathering Station in Market Square.

Through the Cultural Plan, we envisage providing a refreshed perspective and action-oriented strategies that will help find ways to support:

- Community involvement and ownership of local cultural initiatives
- Enhance cross-sectoral partnerships and cooperations between City departments, including diverse City committees, such as heritage, planning, events, public works, and parks
- Create democratic cultural policy by better understanding what people are doing and want to do
- Development of meaningful and respectful relationships across various cultural stakeholder groups
- Programs and services that respond to the desires of the community
- Communication and cooperation among the creative sector and other community groups
- Effective integration of arts and culture into the larger community
- Greater awareness and understanding of the cultural sector's potential economic impact
- Visibility of community artists, cultural workers, and organizations
- Improvement of community safety while increasing greater social and cultural inclusion (especially for communities that may not traditionally be engaged in programming)
- Develop and enhance the cultural facilities that enable access to cultural activities and the development of larger audiences
- Increased public and private support for culture

[VisitStratford.ca/municipalculturalplan](https://www.visitstratford.ca/municipalculturalplan)





**3. DESTINATION MANAGEMENT** Destination Stratford continues to prioritize destination management year-round; working closely with various community stakeholders and the City of Stratford to enhance the destination and ultimately improve both the visitor experience and quality of life for residents. In 2023, the organization, along with the community, identified and defined what it means for Stratford to be a “welcoming community”; increasing inclusivity and attractiveness to residents and visitors.

**Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Initiatives** Our initial diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) project goals to engage and empower leaders within the Destination Stratford business, public and community catchment area to identify and dismantle personal and systemic racism and other biases within organizational structures, practices, and policies; and provide internal Destination Stratford board members and stakeholders access to learning experiences (skills, language, and tools) designed to understand how to identify and dismantle racism and bias, were completed as of May 2021. In 2022 and 2023, we collaboratively defined what it means to be a “welcoming community” and brought this definition to Stratford City Council for formal recognition to continue EDIAR awareness and action within our community, especially for our front-line tourism teams and residents. The Welcoming Community Statement was presented in July 2023 to City Council via delegation by Mending the Chasm. In 2024, a case study from Mending the Chasm about the work that has been done in Stratford will be completed and posted for the public.

### Welcoming Community Initiative

In concert with the collaborative community work on the Welcoming Community Statement, and the City’s hiring of a Manager of Inclusion, Equity and Indigenous Initiatives, a Community Equity Collective was formed. Destination Stratford remains committed to the work that was started, and fully participates in this ongoing journey with other like-minded community businesses and organizations.

The overall goals of this Welcoming Community engagement were to:

- Reach out to prospective partners, activating involvement from deeper reaches of our community, to join us in working with a facilitator to lay the groundwork for defining what “welcoming community” means to our city.

- Collectively defining “welcoming community” for Stratford with those drawn to join in.
- Presenting our definition to Stratford City Council for formal recognition of Stratford’s vision of being a “welcoming community” using this collaborative definition.
- Reach out to the local workforce, especially businesses with public-facing staff and those in the manufacturing sector, to work towards the aspirational goal of being a truly welcoming community with everyone drawing from the collective definition.

[VisitStratford.ca/welcoming-community](https://www.visitstratford.ca/welcoming-community)

### Downtown Dollars

**Downtown dollar sales continued to be strong in 2023 with over \$108,000 in sales.**

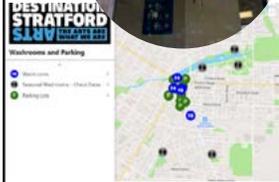
Frontline staff at Destination Stratford facilitate the sale of downtown dollars, which significantly impacts the downtown businesses.

[VisitStratford.ca/downtown-dollars](https://www.visitstratford.ca/downtown-dollars)





The high-traffic interactive digital maps on [VisitStratford.ca](https://www.visitstratford.ca) were launched in 2020 and are updated daily as a resource and guide for visitors and locals to explore the city based on interests, location and events.



**3,261**

WASHROOMS



**7,906**

ATTRactions



**20,108**

SELF-GUIDED AUDIO  
WALKING TOURS



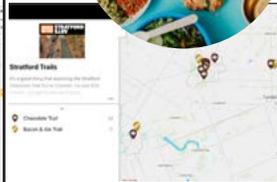
**34,250**

DINING



**40,985**

ACCOMMODATIONS



**77,638**

CULINARY TRAILS



**196,592**

LIGHTS ON STRATFORD

# Boathouse Public Washroom Expansion Project

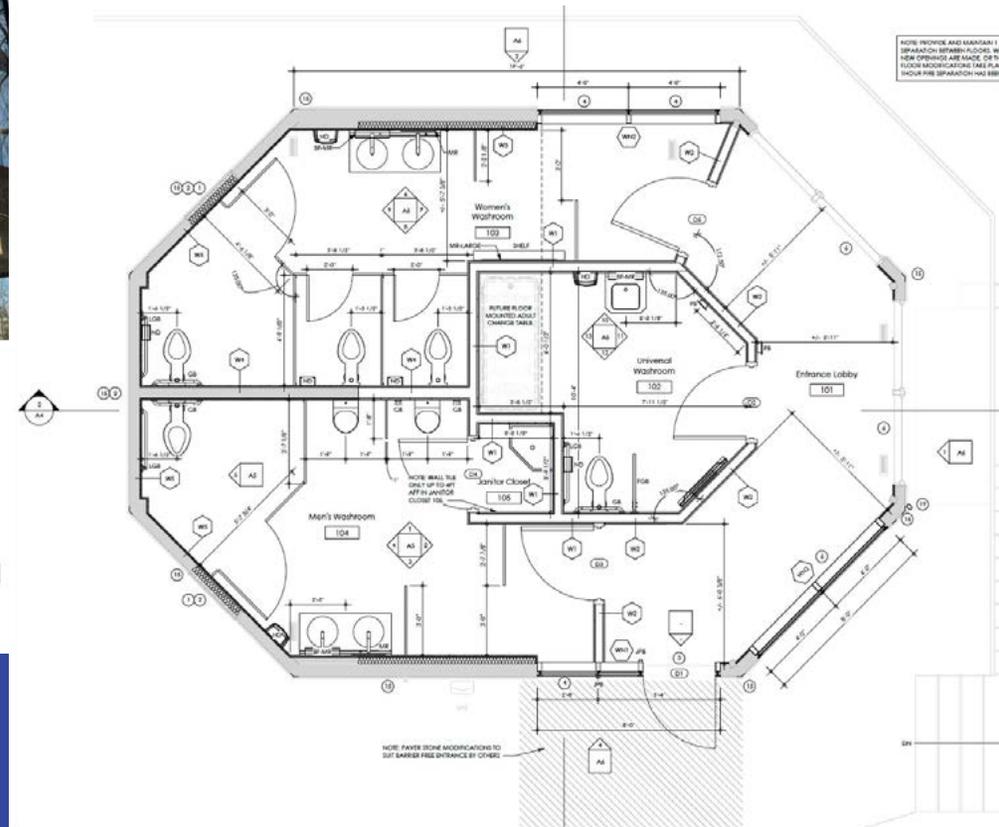
A great example of a Destination Management infrastructure initiative is the Boathouse Public Washroom Expansion Project. In 2021, Destination Stratford proposed the idea of combining our Boathouse Tourism Kiosk with the outdated seasonal washrooms into a modern, fully accessible, and greatly expanded year-round public washroom. As project lead, Destination Stratford successfully obtained Federal funding to contribute a majority of the cost for this public infrastructure project, and worked in partnership with the City and Community Services to manage the renovation. The upgraded public facility was unveiled and opened in 2023 with daily hours of 8:30am to 9:00pm year-round! Not only is this a critically important infrastructure project for the economic recovery and sustainability of our tourism sector, but it is also a necessary investment in being a healthy, welcoming community. Year-round, accessible, and safe public washrooms are foundational in our ability to have vibrant public spaces that truly benefit and serve everyone – including visitors and those who call Stratford home.

[VisitStratford.ca/boathouse](https://VisitStratford.ca/boathouse)



**Accessible Tourism Award  
WINNER**

Destination Stratford is thrilled to report that the Stratford Boathouse Washroom Project received the Provincial Accessible Tourism Award at the 2023 Ontario Tourism Summit. The facility has been officially verified as accessible on the AccessNow site and app.





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**LIGHTS ON STRATFORD  
2023/24 WINTER FESTIVAL REPORT**

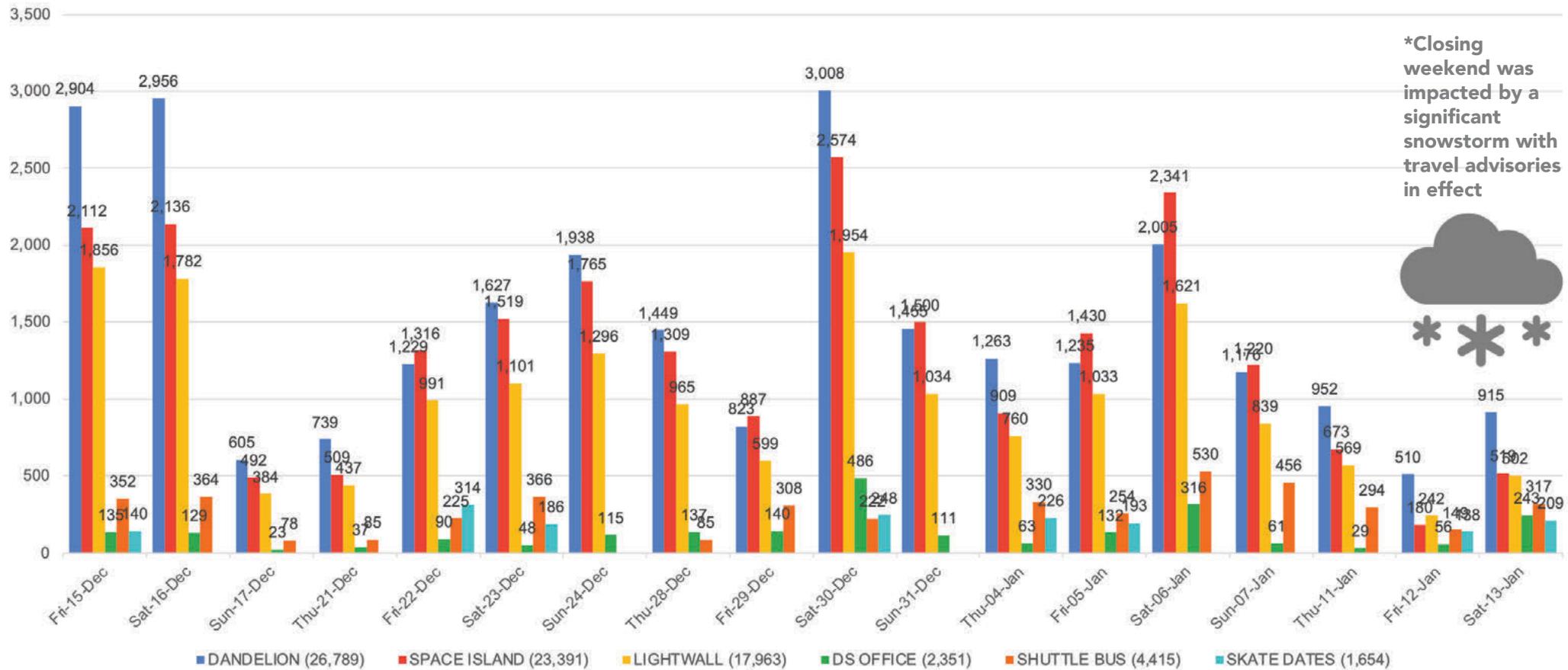




**4 YEAR PROJECTION**

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
<b>Festival Attendance</b> Combined across main locations  150K 100K 50K 0 Stratford & Area Resident Visitor (>40km)  Total Patron Count	2020/21 30K	2021/22 80K	2022/23 83K	2023/24 76K	2024/25 112K	2025/26 120K	2026/27 128K	2027/28 135K
<b>Daily Av. Attendance</b> Combined across main locations	-	1,818	1,860	4,254	4,869	5,217	5,565	5,869
<b>Production Days</b> *Closed early due to Covid shutdown	30+	44	45	18	23	23	23	23
<b>Main Light Art Installations</b>	4	5	6	5	7	8	8	8
<b>Additional Cultural Activations</b>	0	2	8	10	15	18	20	20
<b>Funding</b> DS = Destination Stratford	\$422K CITY \$0 GRANTS & PARTNERS \$311K SPONSORS \$111K	\$470K CITY \$0 GRANTS & PARTNERS \$407K SPONSORS \$63k	\$740K CITY \$0 GRANTS & PARTNERS \$669K SPONSORS \$71K	\$575K CITY \$150K DS \$150K GRANTS & PARTNERS \$200K SPONSORS \$75K	\$625K CITY \$150K DS \$150K GRANTS & PARTNERS \$200K SPONSORS \$125K	\$650K CITY \$150K DS \$150K GRANTS & PARTNERS \$225K SPONSORS \$125K	\$675K CITY \$150K DS \$150K GRANTS & PARTNERS \$225K SPONSORS \$150K	\$675K CITY \$150K DS \$150K GRANTS & PARTNERS \$225K SPONSORS \$150K

# Lights On Stratford 2023/24 Attendance Across Main Displays (Total: 76,563 | Daily Avg: 4,254)



Lights On Stratford staff recorded attendance at each of the main locations throughout the festival. The combined total is 76,563 patrons with attendance at each main location listed in the chart above.

*“I look forward to Lights on Stratford every year. It’s an amazing festival. Definitely worth the drive from Mississauga.”*

**Eleanor Manzo Lloyd, Instagram**

*“Congratulations on another amazing and well orchestrated Lights on Stratford season. Cannot wait for next year!”*

**Sheri Maguire, LinkedIn**

*“Beautiful!!! Already looking forward to next year!!”*

**@bradshaws1895, Instagram**

*“We loved visiting Stratford! And you convinced us to go back in the winter 🥰”*

**@ajourneyinspired Candace & Geoff, Instagram**

*“Extraordinary Experience! Thank you to everyone who made us light up this winter.”*

**Rosemary Delong, LinkedIn**

*“We took in this event this weekend. Really enjoyed the Dandelion display downtown and the display on the island. Shuttle bus was fun too.”*

**Ann McEwan, Facebook**

## PATRONS | PLACE OF RESIDENCE

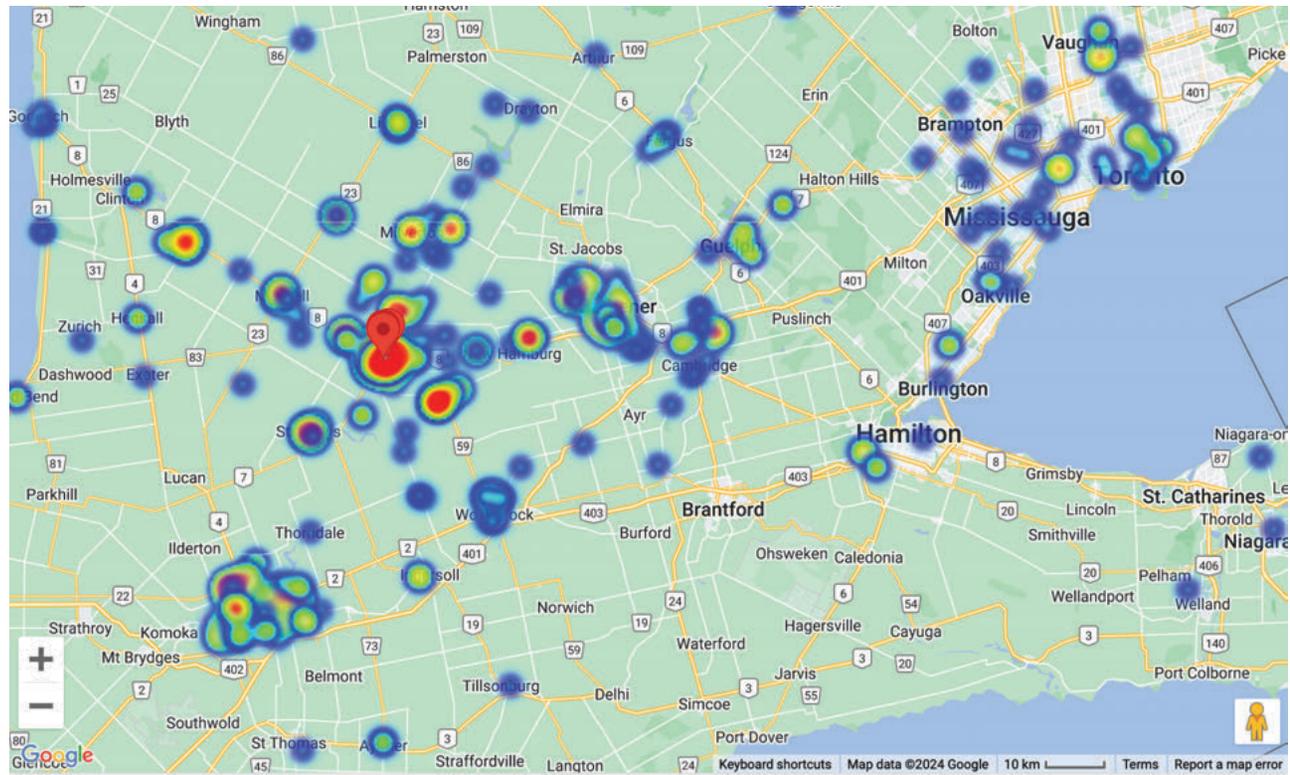
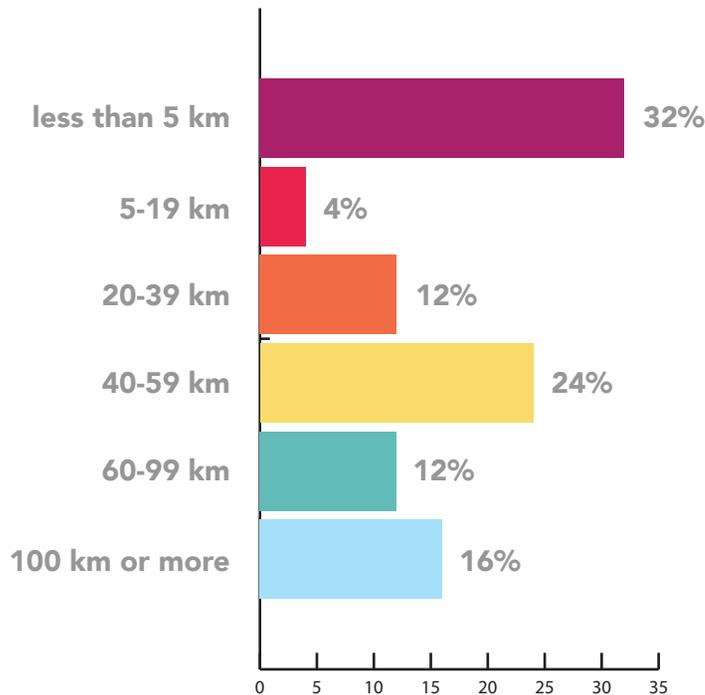
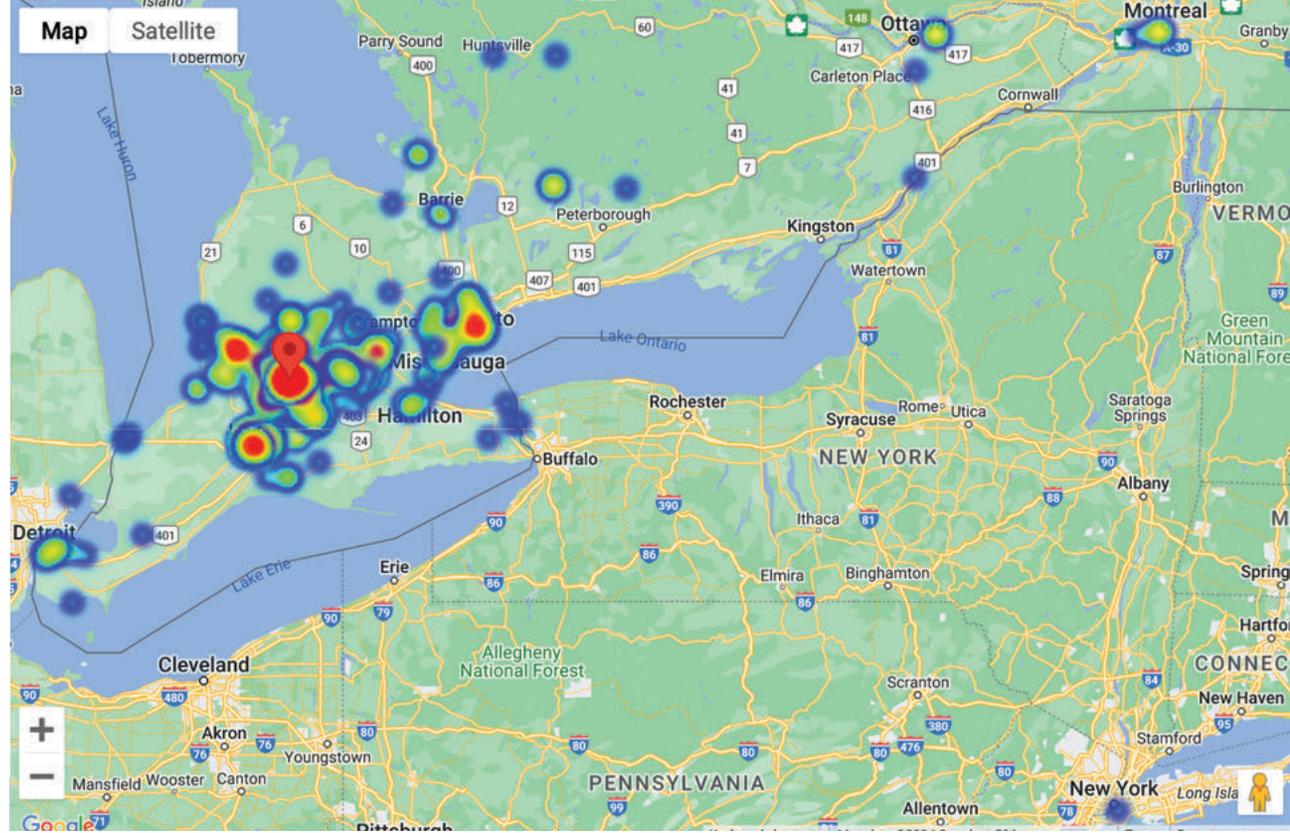
Mobility data reports (provided by Propulso: Ethical Data Intelligence Platform - propulso.io) for the December 15, 2023 to January 13, 2024 festival period used mobility data to accurately provide the place of residence of patrons that visited the geo-fenced Lights On Stratford main locations (Market Square, Tom Patterson Island, Veterans Drive Bandshell and LightWall).

Patron residence location is reflected in the 2 heat-maps to the right, with red being the highest density.

## PATRONS | TRAVEL DISTANCE

Similarly, the mobility data reports provide the distance from the patron place of residence to Stratford.

The average travel distance was 33.4 km with 32% local, 16% regional and 52% from over 40km away.



## MARKETING | STRATEGY

Destination Stratford strategically aligned impactful and measurable marketing campaigns to promote the 4th annual Lights On Stratford Winter Festival of Lights.

The primary goal was to 1) position Stratford as a premier winter destination, 2) create a sense of urgency to experience Lights On Stratford, and 3) align tourism partnerships in all sectors to encourage participation from the local community, day trips and overnight visits.

## MARKETING | KEY INITIATIVES

- Created compelling video and photo assets for use in marketing campaigns and across all Destination Stratford and Lights On Stratford social channels and websites
- Collaborated with local businesses to create customized packages and offers
- Aligned marketing campaigns across all mediums (TV, Radio, Print, Digital, Social Media)
- Targeted various markets/demographics to increase visitation
- Generated media coverage through hosted visits, influencer partnerships and organic online storytelling
- Encouraged User Generated Content (UGC) for sharing on social media and increasing word-of-mouth promotion

## MARKETING | TARGET MARKETS

1. Toronto/GTA regions (priority to capture overnight stays)
2. Kitchener-Waterloo
3. London

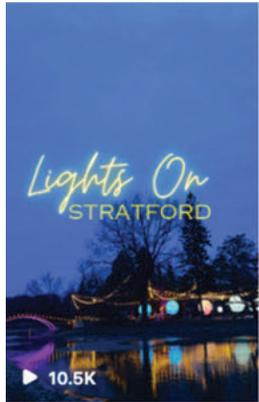
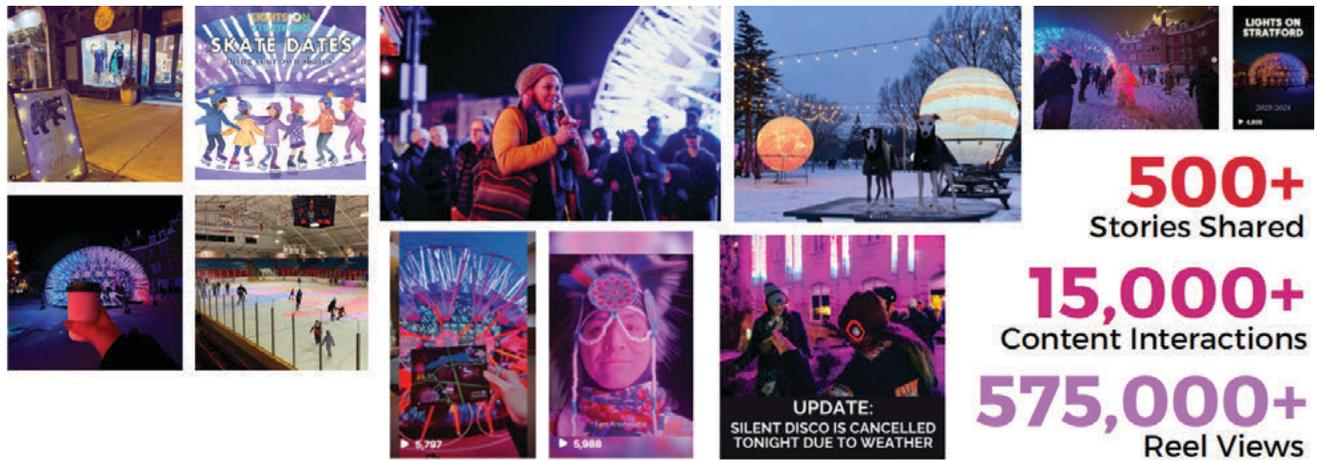
## MARKETING | CAMPAIGNS

- Broadcast Television with Bell Media (CTV)
- Radio Campaigns (Virgin 105.3, CJCS 107.1 & 2day 107.7)
- Print (Canada Travel & Lifestyle Magazine, Horizon Travel Magazine, Stratford Beacon Herald)
- Digital Billboards (Toronto's largest highway screen network featuring 18-screens on 401, 403, 407, 427). Yonge and Dundas Media Tower. Rotating ads in London, Kitchener, Cambridge, Mississauga, Woodstock and Port Credit
- Social Media Influencer Partnerships
- Media Press Trip



## SOCIAL MEDIA | STRATEGY

During the festival, we highlighted the central exhibits and the array of cultural activations scattered across the city. This included not only headline events like Skate Dates and Silent Discos organized by Lights On Stratford but also supplementary activities like sponsored Music Pop-Ups, Winter Al Fresco restaurant experiences, accommodation packages, promotions, late-night retail events, and various other engaging initiatives throughout the city.



Total Views: 10,579  
Engagement: 342



Total Views: 137,268  
Engagement: 4585



Total Views: 324,268  
Engagement: 12,040



Total Views: 5345  
Engagement: 225

## SOCIAL MEDIA | INFLUENCERS & COLLABORATORS

A pivotal aspect of our promotional efforts involved collaborations with influencers and content creators. By inviting them to experience Lights On Stratford and encouraging them to share their perspectives, we successfully leveraged their reach to connect with wider audiences. This strategic partnership played a significant role in enhancing the festival's visibility and resonance across diverse demographics.

## SOCIAL MEDIA | USER GENERATED CONTENT

A key element of the Lights On Stratford social media strategy involved actively encouraging User Generated Content (UGC). Through both original posts and resharing story posts, our goal was to foster an online atmosphere that mirrors our vibrant community and sparks excitement through shared experiences. User Generated Content not only contributed to our content diversity but also generated enthusiasm, ensuring continuous engagement from festival-goers.



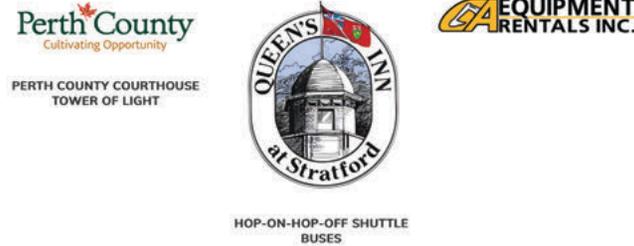
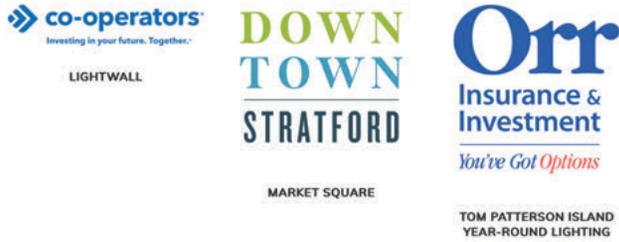
FOUNDING PARTNERS



2023/24 IN-KIND SUPPORTERS



2023/24 GOLD SPONSORS

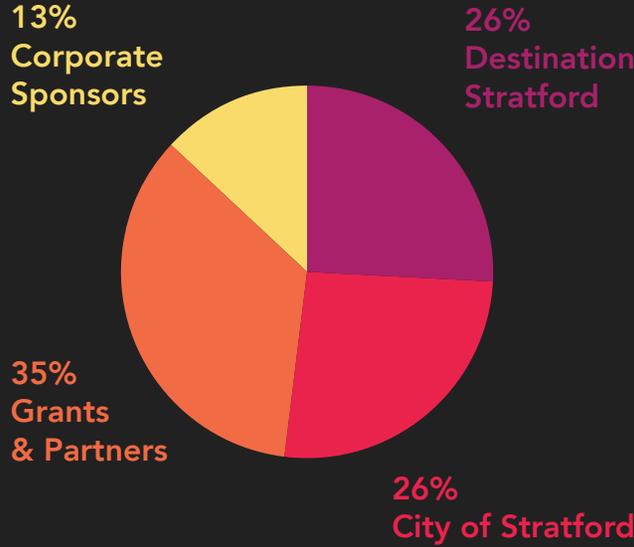


2023/24 SILVER SPONSORS



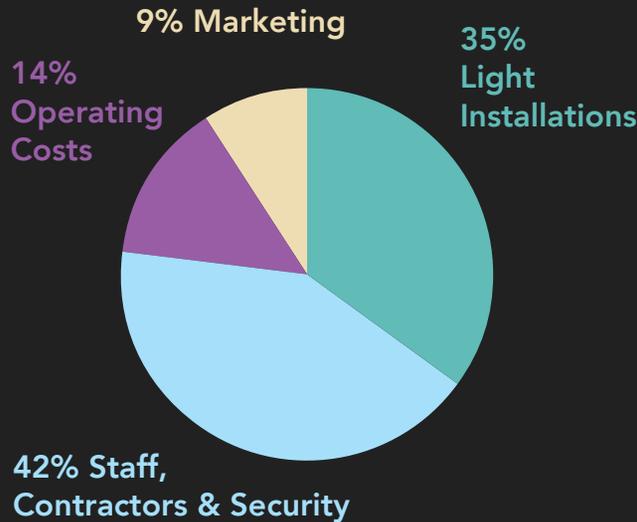
2023/24 BUDGET | FUNDING

The Lights On Stratford 2023/24 funding sources include:



2023/24 BUDGET | EXPENSES

The forecasted total annual budget for 2023/24 is approx. \$575,000:



2023/24 BRONZE SPONSORS



2023/24 COMMUNITY SPONSORS



GOVERNMENT SUPPORT



This event has been financially assisted by the Ontario Cultural Attractions Fund a program of the Government of Ontario through the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport, administered by the Ontario Cultural Attractions Fund Corporation



## 2023/24 BIA SURVEY | BACKGROUND

Downtown Stratford BIA surveyed its members between January 26, 2024 and February 7, 2024 about the 2023/24 Lights On Stratford winter festival and received **36 responses**.

This year, total combined attendance across the main light displays was 76,563 in 18 days of production. In comparison, last winter was 83,715 in 45 days of production.

The daily average combined attendance across all the main festival locations this winter was 4,254/day. The daily average from last winter was 1,860/day. That's an increase of more than double the daily average attendance. December 30th was the highest recorded attendance ever, with 3,008 people at the Dandelion installation (previous record was also in Market Square last winter on Jan. 21 with 2,135 people visiting The Pool installation). The hop-on-hop-off free shuttle bus (in collaboration with Stratford Transit) had a ridership of 4,415 people.

## 2023/24 BIA SURVEY | RESULTS

**78%** Satisfied or Very Satisfied with the 2022/23 Lights On Stratford festival of winter lights. **6%** Dissatisfied or Very Dissatisfied.

**75%** Agree or Strongly Agree that Lights On Stratford is an effective strategy for growing a cultural tourism draw in the winter. **8%** Disagree or Strongly Disagree.

**78%** Agree or Strongly Agree that Lights On Stratford is effective in activating the downtown and park system for the community and visitors during the 4-week festival period. **8%** Disagree or Strongly Disagree.

**7.78** (weighted average out of 10) for how likely are you to recommend future Lights On Stratford festivals to friends or colleagues.

*“I cannot emphasize enough, the significance of tourism development during nonpeak and shoulder season periods. The picturesque landscapes and cultural richness of Stratford are not confined to a single season but extend seamlessly throughout the year.*

*Initiatives such as Lights On Stratford and Stratford Sport Tourism have played and will play a pivotal role in transforming Stratford into a year-round destination.*

*The strategic collaboration between Destination Stratford and these initiatives as well as the broader tourism sector will be instrumental in creating a robust and viable year-round local economy. By diversifying the offerings and embracing the unique attributes of each season, Stratford will become a beacon for those seeking enriching experiences in all weather conditions.*

*The commitment to year-round tourism development in Stratford will not only elevate its status as a sought-after destination but will also create a lasting impact on the local economy and community spirit. Lights On Stratford and Stratford Sport Tourism are just two opportunities that exemplify the success that can come with a collaborative approach, open minds, and a desire to make Stratford flourish throughout the entire year.”*

**Shelley Windsor, Vice President  
Windsor Hospitality Inc.**

*“The Stratford Festival is pleased to continue to support Destination Stratford and Lights On Stratford. This event helps to invigorate the downtown core and park system during December and January, and encourages visitors to experience our beautiful city outside of the traditional tourist season. We share Destination Stratford’s goal of making Stratford a 4-season cultural destination, which creates a positive economic impact for the City, and strengthens the retail, restaurant, and accommodation sectors. This event continues to gain popularity – what started as a COVID recovery event has turned into an annual tradition for many. Bravo!”*

**Shelley Stevenson, Administrative Director,  
Stratford Festival**

*“It was an absolute pleasure and privilege to work with Destination Stratford in preparation and through participation in this year’s Lights On Stratford Winter Festival. It was heartening to see the many faces and hear stories from the multitude of locals and tourists who enjoyed the exhibits and enthusiastically patronized our local establishments during the cold winter weeks of December and January. It is exactly this kind of initiative that effectively ensures the success of local business through attracting tourism and locals alike to check out all that Stratford has to offer 12 months of the year.”*

**Ryan Stokes, Owner,  
Black Swan Brewing Co.**

*“This year at The Parlour Inn, we’ve had a great response to the Lights On Stratford winter light festival, with at least 20 room bookings more than last year. Our guests have commented how nice it is to have something so pretty to brighten up the dull winter blues! We look forward to next year’s event, where we plan to light up our building even more making it a sparkling beacon in the night!”*

**Steve Ireson, Manager, Operations/Food & Beverage,  
The Parlour Inn**



*“Looking forward to next year! Really hope I can help open the event with grass dancing!”*

**Chris Mejaki**

*“Destination Stratford is a priceless tourism partner for the Stratford Perth Museum. We've never seen so many visitors in the shoulder season. We are happy to report that Lights On Stratford is responsible for generating over 50% of the museum's seasonal holiday visitors.*

*Together we strive to attract a rapidly changing and diverse community. We share resources that offer cultural activities for all demographics. This event augments ongoing museum programs and provides opportunity for elaborative and enriching content that is connected to Lights On themes. Our Heritage Trails are available year-round, but during Lights On we offer a corresponding outdoor lit space. Also, we offer nightlight story walks, snowshoeing, ghost tours and complementary astronomy programming.*

*Stratford Perth Museum looks forward to continued partnership and collaboration with Destination Stratford. Without question, Destination Stratford has pulled out all the stops to help Stratford thrive as a year-round cultural destination.”*

**Kelly McIntosh, General Manager,  
Stratford Perth Museum**

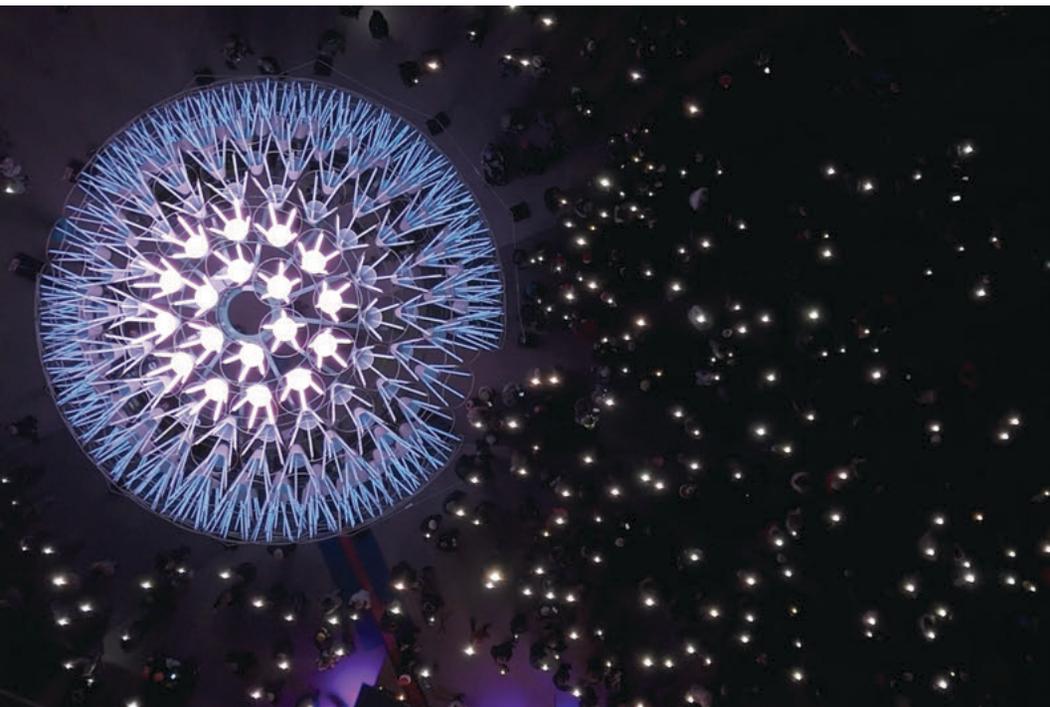


*“Lights On Stratford! What a delightful event it turned out to be! As newcomers to the area, my wife, son, and I braved the rain to experience the charming Lunar Lamp Posts and the unexpected dance party that unfolded. It was a warm and welcoming introduction to the community.*

*Opening night, Stratford Summer Music staff visited the Dandelion in Market Square. Imagine the sheer delight of witnessing countless wishes for our community soar into the night sky, accompanied by the melodic tunes of local musicians echoing from nearby cafes and restaurants.*

*As the new Executive Director of Stratford Summer Music, I can say that Lights On Stratford brought a wonderful, inclusive, and exciting event to our city. This event is more than just lights; it's a celebration of the vibrant spirit that defines Stratford. The blend of lights, music, and community was heartwarming, and we're eager to continue supporting this event and all that Destination Stratford has to offer. We look forward to collaborating and partnering with Destination Stratford towards making Stratford shine as a 4-season cultural destination.”*

**Crystal L. Spicer, Executive Director,  
Stratford Summer Music**





*“Lights On Stratford had a significant positive impact on business at The Starlight. Our music night that coincided with the opening of Lights On Stratford and that was sponsored by Lights On Stratford was one of our busiest evenings to date and we also were able to raise \$300 for The Local. We had multiple customers come in to order mulled wine, hot chocolates and our Lights On Spritz to go while they enjoyed the exhibits. We look forward to watching LOS grow in future years as well as its impact on downtown businesses.”*

**Megan Jones, Co-owner, The Starlight Bar**

*“We definitely noticed a bump in guests during the live music, especially on the Friday night. Lights On Stratford in general brought a lot of people into the restaurant and hotel over the period. Staff made a point of asking what brought people in and Lights On Stratford was mentioned a great deal. The postcards with the list of locations were a popular takeaway.”*

**Ryan O’Donnell, Owner/General Manager,  
Mercer Kitchen + Beer Hall + Hotel**

*“Wellspring Stratford Cancer Support Centre proudly collaborated with the Lights On Stratford Winter Festival as the chosen charity to illuminate the season with hope. This partnership symbolized a collective effort to raise awareness and support for those facing the challenges of cancer within the community.”*

**Lisa Stacey, Wellspring Cancer Support Centre**



# LIGHTS ON STRATFORD MANIFESTO

We bring light and joy to Stratford's public spaces.

We believe in the importance of public art.

We are free to the public and accessible for everyone to participate.

We are a cultural anchor tenant that enables additional events and experiences.

We celebrate and embrace winter.

We help grow a vibrant year-round visitor economy for the region.

We improve the quality of life within our community.

