



Council Finance & Labour Relations Update

May 20, 2025

- 2025 YTD budget is on track
- 2024 Audited Financial Statements awaiting Board approval
- MAT Q1
- \$25,000 Ontario Seniors Community Grant Program | Stratford Walking Soccer
- \$50,000 OCAF Lights On Stratford grant application
- Stratford Destination Development Fund (DDF)
- Stratford After Dark / Après Theatre Music Pop-up Fund
- 2025 RESEARCH:
 - Stratford Tourism Resident Sentiment Survey
 - Tourism Supply-Chain Analysis Report
 - Indigenous Tourism Assessment

Destination Stratford 2025 Budget	2024 Adjusted	2024 Actual	2025 Adjusted	2025 Actual	Notes
				as of 2025-04-24	
REVENUE					
3999 · MAT DS PORTION	300,000	329,536	325,000	0	Estimate based on 2024
4050 · MARKETING SALES	138,500	137,947	143,250	19,816	
4260 · PARTNERSHIPS	722,800	696,108	747,552	651,441	
(4001 · City of Stratford Portion)	618,800	618,800	643,552	643,941	
4017 · CITY LOS CONTRIBUTION (MAT)	150,000	150,000	150,000	150,000	
9999 · TRANSFER FROM RESERVES	158,621	83,621	75,000	0	
TOTAL REVENUE	1,469,921	1,397,216	1,440,802	821,258	
EXPENSE					
5100 · CONTRACT AND CONSULTING	15,000	23,675	17,500	7,623	Destination Stewardship Cou
DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT					
5992 · STRATFORD AL FRESCO (MAT)	35,000	37,252	37,500	60	
5997 · LIGHTS ON STRATFORD (MAT)	300,000	300,000	300,000	300,000	City + DS matched contributi
5999 · SPORT TOURISM OFFICE (MAT)	75,000	49,283	72,500	17,833	
6480D · PAYROLL · DEVELOPMENT	157,991	151,117	165,761	56,297	Destination Development Pro
5950 · SPECIAL PROJECTS	78,000	57,291	65,000	28,228	Destination Development Fu
5990 · PARTNERSHIPS	31,000	36,125	31,750	3,875	
Total Development	676,991	631,072	672,511	406,293	
DESTINATION MARKETING					
6480M · PAYROLL · MARKETING	236,986	226,676	248,641	84,446	
6000 · MARKETING - INTERNET	19,475	20,627	19,477	3,995	
6150 · MARKETING - MEDIA & PRINT	132,590	121,456	97,490	48,855	
6151 · MARKETING - RADIO	2,500	0	2,500	0	
6152 · MARKETING - TRAILS, INFLUENCERS	130,971	133,824	138,750	8,384	
Total Marketing	522,522	502,586	506,858	145,679	
ADMINISTRATION					
5637 · BANK CHARGES	4,000	4,051	4,000	1,343	
5645 · INSURANCE	5,250	5,683	8,500	6,344	
5660 · TRAVEL	2,500	406	2,500	100	
6153 · PROFESSIONAL FEES	23,200	17,827	28,200	719	
6155 · FACILITY MAINTENANCE	2,000	2,359	4,750	0	
6480A · PAYROLL · ADMIN	131,659	125,931	138,134	46,914	
6540 · OFFICE EXPENDITURES	32,800	22,947	25,850	4,421	
6550 · EVENT EXPENSES	2,000	5,750	5,000	1,638	
7000 · TELEPHONE/COMMUNICATIONS	17,000	17,763	17,000	5,654	
Total Administration	220,409	202,717	233,934	67,133	
TOTAL EXPENSE	1,434,921	1,360,051	1,430,802	626,727	
5154 Transfer to Reserve	35,000	35,000.00	10,000	0	
NET REVENUE	0	2,165	0	194,530	

DESTINATION STRATFORD US- CANADA TARIFF STATEMENT

March 5, 2025

As a prominent Canadian cultural destination for over 70 years, Stratford has proudly welcomed and hosted millions of visitors from across Canada and around the world, including many from the United States.

With the unfortunate recent trade tariffs imposed by the United States on Canada, Stratford's community and economy may face significant challenges. Destination Stratford's mission is to improve the quality of life for all our residents and visitors, and we stand united with our city and country as we navigate through this period of uncertainty and disruption.

To our friends, families and visitors who reside south of the border, we recognize and are grateful for the deep friendship and ties that connect us, despite the current challenges. We will continue to welcome you as we always have.

To our fellow Canadians, we encourage everyone to support, explore and celebrate all the incredible destinations and experiences across our amazing country!

Stratford is a welcoming community, and we look forward to hosting your visit.



2024 YEAR IN REVIEW
DESTINATION
STRATFORD
ARTS THE ARTS ARE WHAT WE ARE



DESTINATION MARKETING Destination Stratford strategically crafted and executed impactful marketing campaigns designed to elevate destination awareness and drive year-round visitation. These campaigns were thoughtfully deployed across a range of platforms, including print, radio, digital media, broadcast television, regional billboards, social media, and influencer partnerships. As a result of influencer partnerships and joint collaborations, over 2 million people were reached through social media alone. Targeting both Canadian and U.S. border-city audiences, as well as regional visitors, the campaigns aimed to attract overnight stays. Performance metrics highlight notable achievements, including impressive website traffic, successful culinary trail sales, and exceptional engagement and storytelling across social media channels.

58

**INFLUENCER
COLLABORATIONS**



1,873,608

INFLUENCER COLLAB SOCIAL MEDIA REACH

55,693 **LIKES**

11,474 **COMMENTS**

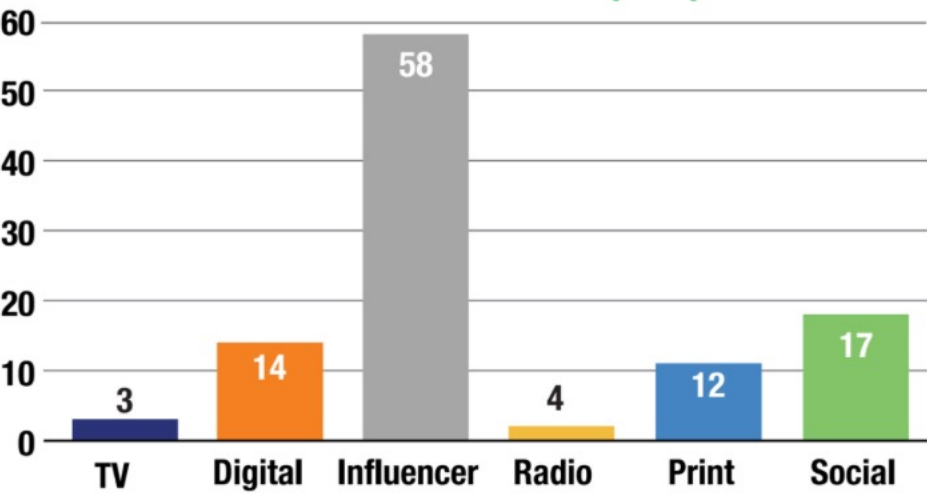
57,020 **SHARES + SAVES**

2,910,857 **VIDEO VIEWS**

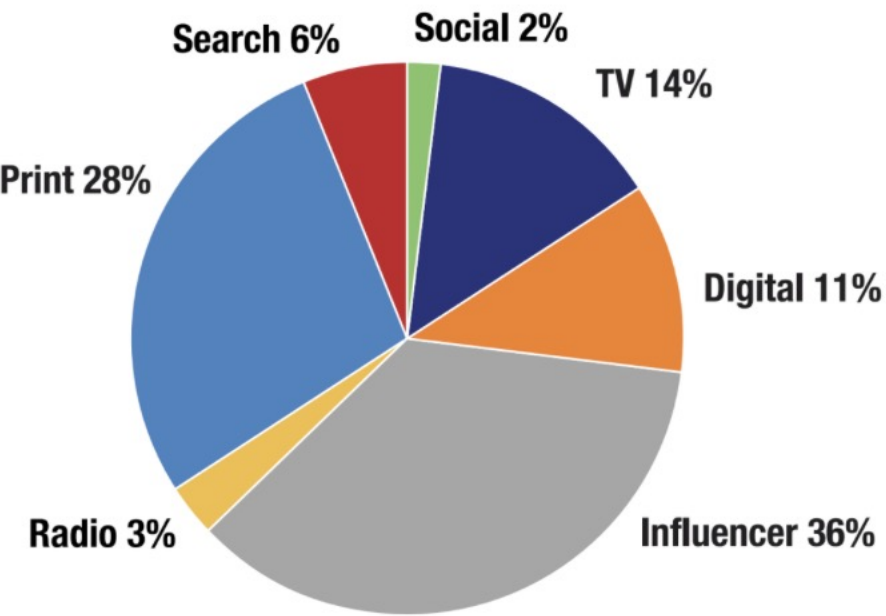
Destination Stratford secured over 90 tourism-related articles and features across various media platforms, including print, online, and radio, encompassing both owned and earned content. The team crafted 10 press releases and facilitated numerous interviews with local and regional outlets, in addition to sending quarterly round-ups to key publications and freelancers. The resulting articles spanned a wide range of subjects, such as Destination Stratford's marketing initiatives, industry news, press release coverage, community events, collaborative efforts, and curated blog posts.



2024 MARKETING CAMPAIGNS (108) BY CHANNEL



2024 ADVERTISING SPEND BY CHANNEL



Digital Promotion with Google Ad Grants

In our third year with Louise Street Marketing working on our Google Search Ads using the Google Grants Program, Destination Stratford had over 18,919 new users visit our Web site and a total of 9% of our site visits linking from the Google Ads. The quality of clicks from the ads in 2024 had some gains in the engagement rate and the time on site increasing by 28% and 70% respectively. The 2024 total value in free ads gained through this program was \$40,603. Louise Street Marketing is paid a monthly management fee for their work on our behalf.

“From superlative restaurants and trendy cafes to great indie shopping, a thriving art scene and beautiful walking and hiking trails, Stratford’s attractions are myriad, multifaceted and enjoyable in every season.” Danny S

“Stratford is such a great little town with so many amazing things to do and places to eat and shop and also the perfect destination for a wedding!” Jessica S

“Just a three hour drive (from Michigan) and yet a world away, Stratford is one of my favorite weekend getaway destinations.” Liz M



Top 10 Instagram reels of 2024



1.2M
VIEWS: 1,237,958
ENGAGEMENT: 44,446



340K
VIEWS: 338,434
ENGAGEMENT: 24,808



319K
VIEWS: 319,269
ENGAGEMENT: 12,911



180K
VIEWS: 180,712
ENGAGEMENT: 2,381



97.9K
VIEWS: 97,469
ENGAGEMENT: 8,331



103K
VIEWS: 96,890
ENGAGEMENT: 3,338



66.9K
VIEWS: 66,969
ENGAGEMENT: 6,017



61.3K
VIEWS: 61,357
ENGAGEMENT: 2,300



51.6K
VIEWS: 51,681
ENGAGEMENT: 2,205



41.5K
VIEWS: 41,561
ENGAGEMENT: 1,317

*"Wandering through
Lights on Stratford
felt like stepping into a
winter dream—glowing
displays, cozy vibes, and
a little bit of magic in
every corner. Definitely a
must-see and something
we are excited to make
a yearly tradition!!"*
@inspiredbyyouradventures

Destination Stratford Culinary Trails

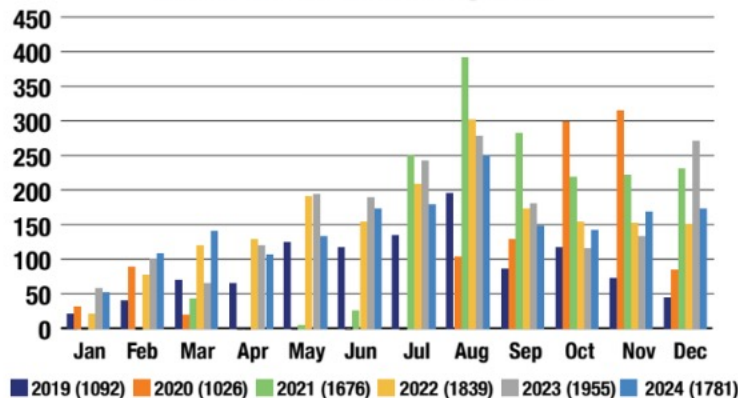
Destination Stratford's culinary trails have been a cornerstone of the city's tourism offerings for 14 years, having first debuted with the Chocolate Trail in 2010. The program currently features two year-round trails—the Chocolate Trail and the Bacon & Ale Trail—along with two highly successful seasonal offerings: the Christmas Trail (November and December) and the Savour & Sip Trail (May through October). Each trail, priced at \$35 + HST, provides participants with vouchers that can be redeemed at a curated selection of participating businesses, complemented by an interactive digital map for easy navigation.

These culinary trails represent a remarkable year-round attraction, offering a diverse, seasonal experience for visitors. The trails have garnered significant popularity, drawing both locals and visitors alike with thousands of passes sold annually. This initiative not only supports the local economy by driving traffic to participating businesses but also provides a dynamic platform for Destination Stratford to promote its range of retailers and dining establishments through an engaging, hands-on experience. Furthermore, it enables Destination Stratford to track sales and monitor the increased foot traffic to businesses, while encouraging visitors to extend their stay and fully immerse themselves in the offerings of our vibrant destination.

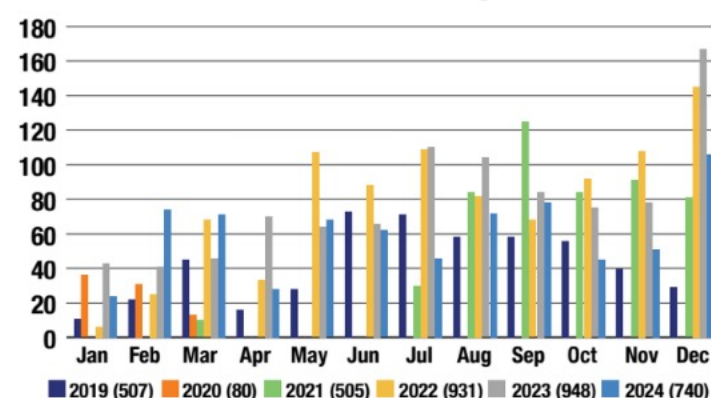
In 2024, over 110 local businesses collectively participated across our 4 culinary trails. **These participants saw over 20,000 visits to their businesses!**

Destination Stratford has seen a consistent rise in culinary trails sales across all 4 trails, resulting in over 20,000 local businesses visited in 2024

Chocolate Trail - 2019 through 2024



Bacon & Ale Trail - 2019 through 2024



PERCENTAGE INCREASE OVER PRE-PANDEMIC 2019

CHOCOLATE
TRAIL

+79%

BACON
& ALE TRAIL

+87%

CHRISTMAS
TRAIL

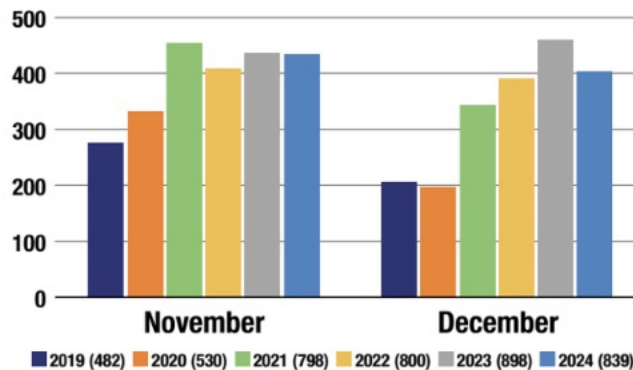
+86%

SAVOUR &
SIP TRAIL

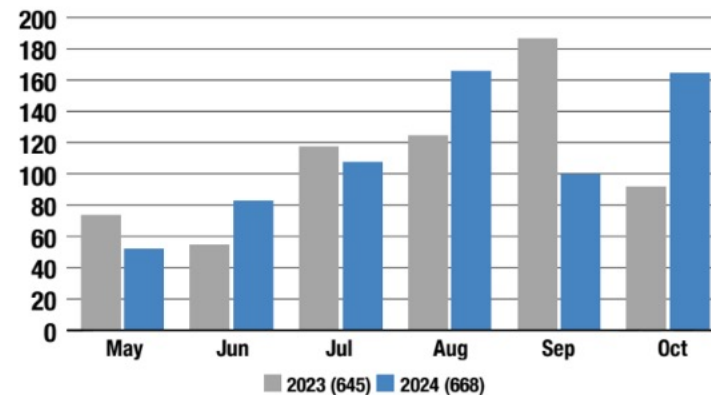
NEW

**OVER 100,000 LOCAL BUSINESSES
VISITED OVER THE LAST 5 YEARS**

Christmas Trail - 2019 through 2024



Savour & Sip Trail - 2023 & 2024



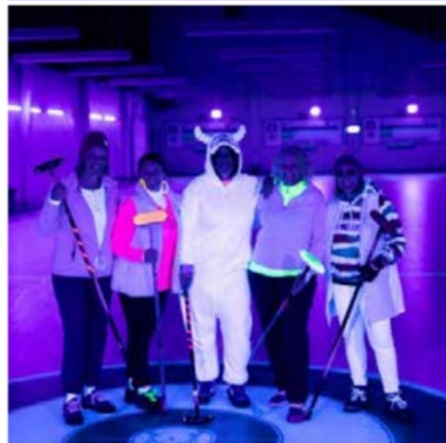
Stratford Al Fresco

Building on its success from the previous 4 years, Stratford Al Fresco dining areas were in as high demand in 2024 as they have been since the start. Destination Stratford's Al Fresco staff provided visitor information and seasonal daily cleaning and maintenance of Al Fresco tables at all locations, especially first thing each morning, and at peak use times during the day.

NEW for 2024, Stratford City Council adopted Destination Stratford's recommended liquor-with-food in public spaces bylaw revisions to remove restrictions regarding consumer purchases and containers and to expand it to a year-round program with a wide variety of participating restaurants. With Al Fresco tables remaining outside year-round and events like Lights On Stratford in the winter, local businesses are offering both warm alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages to be enjoyed during our chilly months. 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





Sport Tourism

2024 marked a transformative year for Stratford Sport Tourism, as efforts focused on fostering partnerships, developing strategies, and delivering impactful initiatives that enriched the community.

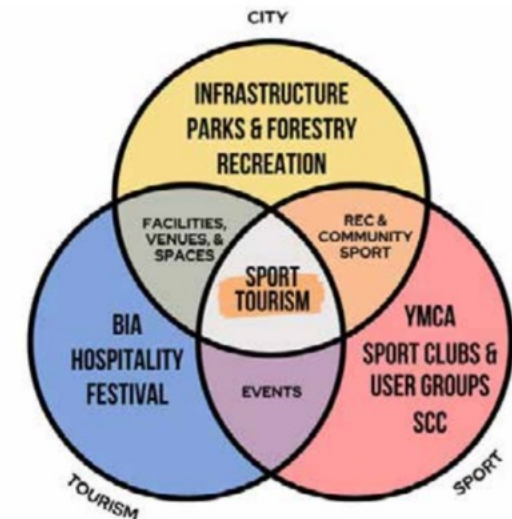
- The appointment of a dedicated Sport Tourism Director in March 2024 brought strategic leadership and a renewed focus on integrating sport tourism into the city's broader tourism vision.
- Over 30 new partnerships were established locally and beyond, laying the foundation for shared success across sport, recreation, and tourism sectors.
- Efforts were focused on aligning sport tourism with the overall strategies of the BIA and local businesses. This work emphasized the value of sport tourism as an asset rather than a challenge, fostering a shared vision and collaboration to enhance the local tourism experience.
- Comprehensive grant application packages totaling \$8,485,000 were assembled in collaboration with local partners, targeting the expansion of offerings and enhancement of resources.
- Successful glow-in-the-dark curling experiences were held in partnership with

the Stratford Country Club as part of Lights On Stratford. Glow & Throw attracted over 550 participants over 5 weeks and received overwhelmingly positive feedback, including testimonials such as:

"The family experience of Glow and Throw Curling was excellent. We had no experienced curlers, and it felt really comfortable playing for fun and not worrying about technique or abilities...Everybody had an amazing time, and we would go again if the opportunity ever arises.." – Monique B

"I was so pleased with the afternoon. From a kind hello when we entered, to excellent instruction, everything was covered. The venue was beautiful, the hot chocolate made with care, and the Glow added a fun element.." – Marjori M

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 gathered information through public consultations and provided recommendations for growth and next steps. The final Municipal Cultural Plan was presented to City Council in June 2023. 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.

In 2024, the position of Culture, Sport & Sponsorship Coordinator within the City of Stratford's Community Services department began in August. Destination Stratford has regular meetings and communications with Community Services in order to move forward on fulfilling the intentions of the Municipal Cultural Plan.

VisitStratford.ca/municipalculturalplan



Poet Laureate

The Stratford Poet Laureate Program aims to celebrate and elevate the literary arts through written and spoken word. The program will collect, save, and share unique stories from Stratford and the surrounding area. These stories reflect our community's character, both now and for years to come.

The poet laureate writes poetry about the area, composes poems for special events, participates in public performances, works with local poets and writers, and acts as a literary ambassador for the city and the region. The work of the poet laureate culminates with the creation of a legacy project which is a unique and lasting contribution to the community.

This initial Stratford Poet Laureate program is a three-year pilot project (February 2025 to February 2028) managed by Destination Stratford and Stratford Public Library, and is formally recognized by City of Stratford Council via the Community Services department.

visitstratford.ca/poetlaureate



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.



Tearaway Maps After receiving visitor and partner feedback regarding the usage of paper maps, Destination Stratford created a new tearaway map in 2024. These maps are easy to use due to their size and that they come in pads of 50. These maps are clean for marking locations for visitors, without bleed-through, and are small enough to carry easily. The maps were well-used and received positive feedback from users. There were at least 167 map pads picked up or delivered by the Destination Stratford team to our tourism partners in 2024 and a reprint is planned to prepare for another busy year.



Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Initiatives

In continuing with our initial diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) project goals, Destination Stratford incorporates this work across our projects. In 2024, Destination Stratford team members worked with Community Services on their New Horizons grant to bring ideas to help shape how this grant could impact our community. These meetings resulted in a newcomers to Stratford breakfast and bus tour, plus a multicultural celebration. A few other events were grown and cultivated from these group meetings that celebrated several facets of our community.

Another Welcoming Community initiative from 2024, in collaboration with the Stratford Public Library and the City of Stratford's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Department, was Welcome to Stratford resources in the form of an online directory and physical welcome package. These resources assist newcomers to Stratford in finding services that they will need to set themselves up in our community. A community that is a welcome place to live is also a welcome place to visit.

In 2024, Destination Stratford was pleased to financially support the Chinese cultural event in City Hall Auditorium in August and the Navaratri celebration in October. Using our development funds to support the sharing of culture for our residents was something new for our organization and we were proud to play a role in these celebrations.

Destination Stratford remains committed to DEI, and fully participates in this ongoing journey with other like-minded community businesses and organizations.

2025 AND BEYOND

Destination Stratford is excited to work collaboratively with our community towards realizing the vision contained in our 2030 Strategic Plan.

In practical, tangible terms, Destination Stratford is committed to:

- An inclusive, collaborative and community-first approach to developing and marketing Stratford as a year-round cultural destination.
- Creating annual work plans, starting in 2025, with prioritized destination development and marketing initiatives informed by our Strategic Plan and by community input, and tied to the annual budgets.
- Transitioning our Stratford Tourism Office into a Welcome Centre with continual cultural activations that benefit visitors, residents and local businesses.
- Creating new Sport Tourism and Sport Development opportunities that fit the size, scale and seasonality of Stratford.
- Working in partnership with the City of Stratford and local organizations to collaboratively implement the Municipal Cultural Plan through enabling local arts and culture and supporting placemaking.
- Continuing to host Tourism Advisory Committee meetings each Spring and Fall including specific committees for Accommodation, Culinary, Retail, Sport, and Festival & Events.
- Forming a new Destination Stewardship Council that brings a more diverse community perspective to help determine and shape destination development priorities and indicators.
- Continuing to present reports and fiscal updates to Stratford City Council regularly throughout the year.
- Creating and publicly sharing a refined annual Year-In-Review report that links back to the annual work plan as well as the Strategic Plan to evaluate progress over time.



“Back in the 1950s, the founding of the Stratford Festival made Stratford a top Canadian cultural travel destination. The theatre season has grown over the years to almost eight months, but it is vital for local tourism partners to have visitor trade 12 months of the year. Creating winter cultural activations like Lights On Stratford and developing new sport tourism opportunities are part of a smart strategy to expand the visitor economy and help our community thrive year round.”

Anita Gaffney,
*Executive Director,
Stratford Festival*

A night scene at a winter festival. In the foreground, a crowd of people in winter clothing is walking on a snow-covered path. To the left, there's a white tent. In the background, there are large, colorful light sculptures, including a large blue one on the right and a red one on the left. Strings of warm white lights are strung across the top of the scene. The text "LIGHTS ON STRATFORD" is overlaid in large, bold, multi-colored letters. Below it, "WINTER FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS" is in smaller white letters, and "2024/25 REPORT" is in large green letters. At the bottom center, there is a logo for "DESTINATION STRATFORD ARTS" with the tagline "THE ARTS ARE WHAT WE ARE".

LIGHTS ON STRATFORD

WINTER FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS

2024/25 REPORT

**DESTINATION
STRATFORD**
ARTS THE ARTS ARE
WHAT WE ARE

LIGHTS ON STRATFORD

WINTER FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS

Over six extended weekends between Dec. 13, 2024 through to Jan. 19, 2025, record numbers of festivalgoers immersed themselves in the Canadian premieres of This Is Loop's Emergence and Chalk River Labs' Stargate in Market Square. Visitors delighted in Amigo & Amigo's Shrooms and Trumpet Flowers on Tom Patterson Island. They experienced LightWall, HEART, Everbright, LightBridge, Tower of Light, Free Hop-On-Hop-Off shuttle buses, student works at University of Waterloo Stratford School, and the Makers Space light exhibit at the Stratford Public Library.

With a multitude of cultural events including live music pop-ups, silent discos, glow-in-the-dark curling, and an incredible NYX performance at the Tom Patterson Theatre, winter in Stratford has never been so bright!



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 strive to continually reduce our environmental footprint.

We improve the quality of life within our community.

LIGHTS ON STRATFORD

WINTER FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS



3 YEAR PROJECTION

Festival Attendance Combined across main locations

Stratford & Area Resident
Visitor (>40km)

Patron Count
(Market Square, Tom
Patterson Island, DS
Welcome Centre,
LightWall, Shuttle Bus)

2020/21

2021/22

2022/23

2023/24

2024/25

2025/26

2026/27

2027/28

150K

100K

50K

30K

80K

83K

76K

86K

100K

120K

135K

Daily Av. Attendance Combined across main locations

-

1,818

1,860

4,254

3,758

4,348

5,217

5,869

Production Days

30

*Closed early due
to Covid shutdown

44

45

18

23

23

23

23

Main Light Art Installations

4

5

6

5

7

8

8

8

Additional Cultural Activations

0

2

8

10

15

18

20

20

Funding

DS = Destination Stratford
MAT = Municipal
Accommodation Tax

\$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

\$600K

CITY MAT \$150K
DS \$150K
GRANTS &
PARTNERS \$200K
SPONSORS \$100K

\$650K

CITY MAT \$150K
DS \$150K
GRANTS &
PARTNERS \$225K
SPONSORS \$125K

\$675K

CITY MAT \$150K
DS \$150K
GRANTS &
PARTNERS \$225K
SPONSORS \$150K

\$675K

CITY MAT \$150K
DS \$150K
GRANTS &
PARTNERS \$225K
SPONSORS \$150K

FOUNDING PARTNERS



2024/25 GOLD SPONSORS



MARKET SQUARE

2024/25 SILVER SPONSORS

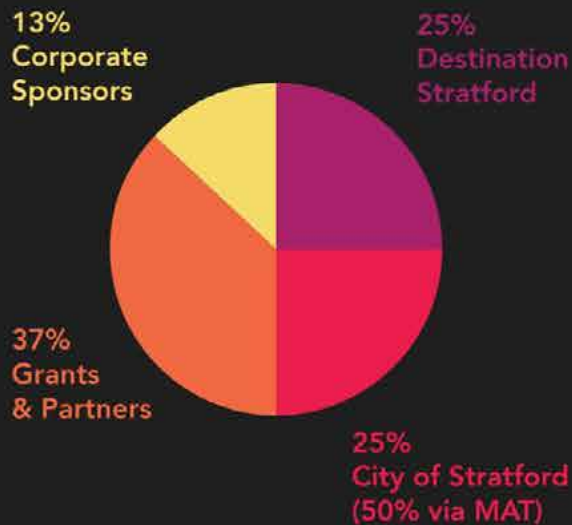


2024/25 BRONZE SPONSORS



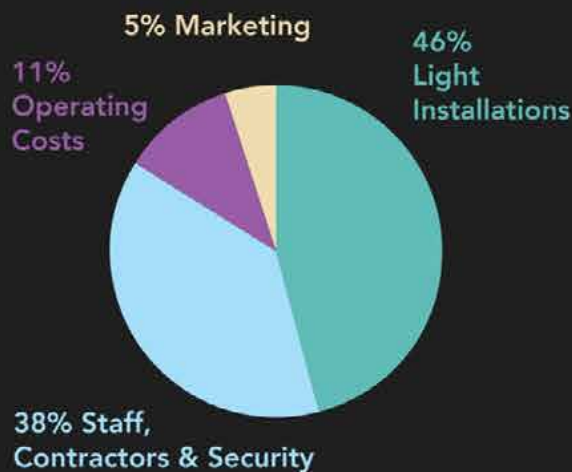
2024/25 BUDGET | FUNDING

The Lights On Stratford 2024/25 funding sources (excluding in-kind) include:



2024/25 BUDGET | EXPENSES

The unaudited annual budget for 2024/25 is approx. \$600,000 (excluding in-kind):



2024/25 IN-KIND SUPPORTERS



2024/25 COMMUNITY SPONSORS



GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

Funded by: Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario
 Financed par: Agence fédérale de développement économique pour le Sud-est (Canada)



This project is funded in part by the Government of Canada through the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario (FedDev Ontario).



This award has been graciously assisted by Experientia Ontario, a program of the Government of Ontario through the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming.

PATRONS | PLACE OF RESIDENCE

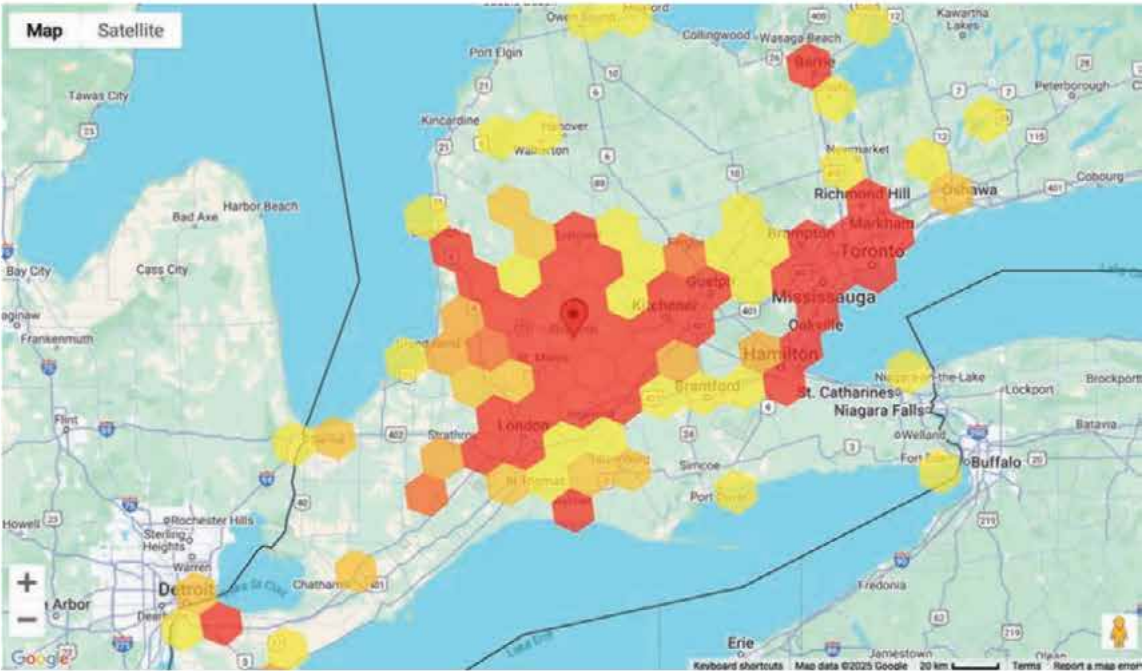
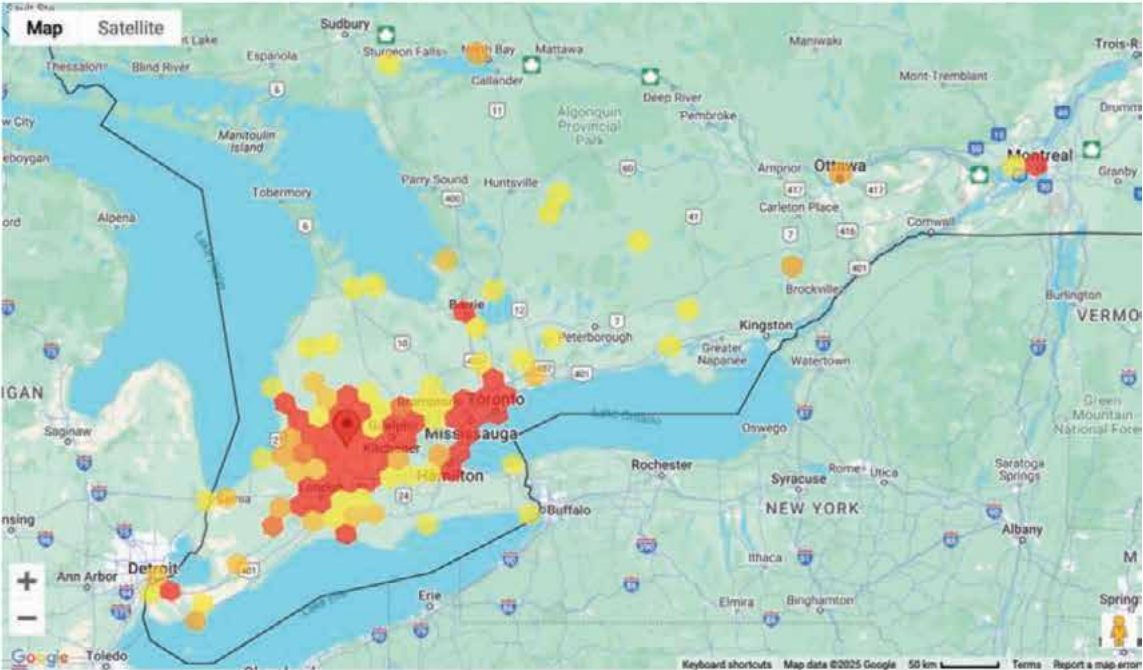
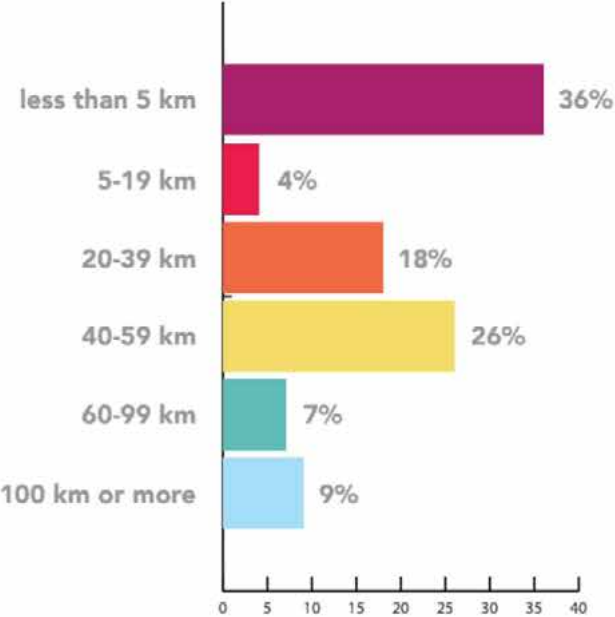
Mobility data reports (provided by Propulso: Ethical Data Intelligence Platform - propulso.io) for the December 13, 2024 to January 19, 2025 festival period used mobility data to accurately provide the place of residence of patrons that visited the geo-fenced Lights On Stratford main locations (Market 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 35.7 km with 36% local, 22% regional and 42% from over 40km away.



2024/25 BIA SURVEY | BACKGROUND

Downtown Stratford BIA surveyed its members between February 5, 2025 and February 14, 2025 about Lights On Stratford 2024/25 and received **34 RESPONSES**.

Survey respondent comments included:

"I met customers from as far away as Michigan, as well as from the GTA, London, Kitchener, etc... who have regularly visited for the Theatre, but came specifically for LOS this year."

"I like how it brings people together. I loved seeing groups of friends and families out enjoying the lights together. I wish it was longer :)"

"Well-organized, engaging, and clearly well-marketed based on our conversations with customers."

"Great family and friends activities that only enhances Stratford as a place to visit or enjoy as a resident."

"I love everything about Lights ON!"

2024/25 BIA SURVEY | RESULTS

79% Satisfied or Very Satisfied with the 2024/25 Lights On Stratford festival of winter lights. **0%** Dissatisfied or Very Dissatisfied.

88% Agree or Strongly Agree that Lights On Stratford is an effective strategy for growing a cultural tourism draw in the winter. **9%** Disagree and **0%** Strongly Disagree.

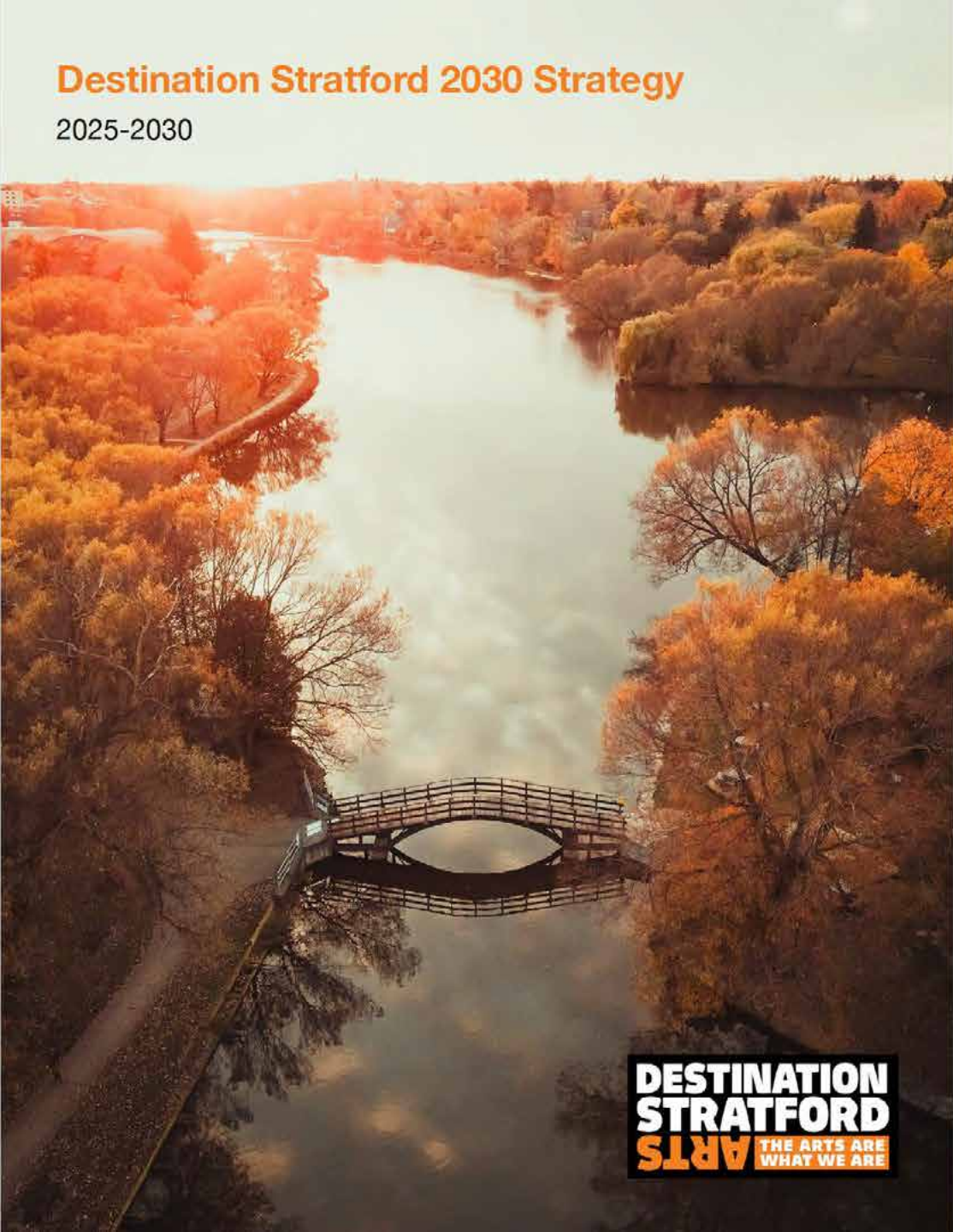
76% Agree or Strongly Agree that Lights On Stratford is effective in activating the downtown and park system for the community and visitors during the festival period. **6%** Disagree and **0%** Strongly Disagree.

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



Destination Stratford 2030 Strategy

2025-2030



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Experience Ontario 2025



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